

*Peter E. Murphy (he/him) was born in Wales and grew up in New York where he managed a night club, operated heavy equipment and drove a taxi. Author of eleven books and chapbooks of poetry and prose, his work has appeared in The Common, Diode, Guernica, Hippocampus, The New Welsh Review, Rattle, and elsewhere. He is the founder of Murphy Writing of Stockton University.*

---

# The Diaspora of Light

Peter E. Murphy

When he saw it shooting from the eyes  
of his students, Plato realized that, like imagination,  
light must be restrained. So he tried to chain  
it in a cave like the wild thing it is  
and invented stories to explain the folly  
of perception. This light has traveled far  
to ignite us. And because it is always moving,  
it cannot be held . . . or saved.

You might say its greatest strength  
is that it knows it is dying. And when it does,  
it breaks into a million colors.  
Does it sadden you to learn that goldfish  
see more of these colors than you do? Bees,  
birds, lizards . . . they too see what you cannot see.

When we were one-celled and luminescent  
in the pond that spawned us, there was no space  
in our peculiar jelly for doubt to metastasize.  
Why then, knowing our brilliance would fade,  
did we abandon that world to walk upright?  
Our folly is that we believed we would be happy  
in exile, far from a homeland  
to which we will never return.  
Is it a strength for you? Or a weakness,  
knowing that you will die? Is this why,  
when light ebbs during the cooler months,  
you find it difficult to lift your body  
from your bed, and you cannot stem the tide  
of water leaking from your eyes?