

*chris hall*

*tales sad, savidj nd  
obscure*

## **a journey**

beforehand  
dissolving stars  
sparkled on th surface  
v th relentless  
                    incoming tide

at dawn  
she stirr'd  
though none saw her rising  
be it     from cradl nor carriageway  
neither by pasture nor by portal  
either behind th cedar  
or beside th sea

in th morning  
she laught  
loud n long  
nd those that were near her  
in stabl or at staging post  
marvell'd at her energy  
her glee  
th prancing step

mid-morning  
she cried  
though no-one dared venture  
whether those tears  
spilt beneath arbour nd canopy  
flowing in th face  
v mistral nd maelstrom  
indicated grief or cathartic epiphani

at noon  
she screamd  
though those in earshot  
standing by th breakwater  
or riding th high tor  
could not be sure  
whether that shriek  
was hollerd in ecstasi  
abandonment  
or in th sheerest v terrors

after th noontide  
she spoke  
yet no-one heard her  
there on th promontri  
in sight v th lighthouse opposite th cob  
nd th clogs v th fishermen  
nor did they notate  
phrase or utterance  
functional  
    notional  
        or abstracted

at evening  
there was silence  
nd none could tell  
be they passenger  
    participant  
or innocent bystanda  
whether it signified  
reflection at sunset  
or th mute realisation  
that nothing  
    was as  
        it had ever  
            appeard t be

come nightfall  
all that remaind  
were the essentials

th knowledge that afterward  
eternal stars  
would sparkl from th depths  
v an infinite universe

dark                    wherever nd forever  
                         here nd there  
                         open t th possibilities  
                         v a myriad illuminations

## th wayfare v th white hare

i have seen th white hare  
                                scampa th night  
  seeking th circl  
  crossing th square  
seen it caper nd scuttl  
                                under th drift moon  
                                neath briar n root  
boxinclever  
leaping th wikkid arc  
spanning th awesome parabola  
spied it hitherwards n thetherwards  
                                fording th brill  
                                blazing th purpl  
reeling th ground over th heddihill  
scudding between                        apogee  
  perigee  
scaling th sky  
                        hurtling beyond fisick  
                                beyond fantasm  
  speculatid  
  lusiv  
  nonsubstantial

th woodland awaiting  
    nd i in attendance  
    sniffin th smoke  
    touching th mirrors  
    in that frail glade  
by th lost lair  
v th wan wild dove  
    furrowing innocence  
    feigning fertiliti  
            at th rim v th lake  
            neath th haunch v th hill

having not askt  
since nor befor  
ever whatnever  
owt v those others  
    others nd their seeing

th perceivance v th throng

nor anguisht whether  
we had given  
    harbour nd sanctuary  
    t th ineffabl beast  
            nd run th perimeter  
            in th desolate day

f these things  
matter but scarceli  
    given th circumstance  
    nd th perennial conundrum  
        pondering th spaces  
        twixt th words v cantankerous men

come th dawnbreak  
in th raucous morning  
    respite  
    resurrection  
th aftercall                  resonant in earshot  
                                echolalia

n from th indefinite distance                  th burnisht horn  
  a child's cry

daylong th wayfare  
noonday th zenith                  forshaddoing arrival  
  th diurnal dilemma  
  in th fluctuate light  
  at th brink v cold summer  
  portending autumn  
  n th impendence v winter



nd at eventide  
vespers  
th traces v memori  
recall  
recapture

th quiet arrival  
v th wicker guest

harbinj v  
events recurring  
          resolving

embers still burning

we th remaining

littl v it v our making

## quintet

once he had sat  
in th pretend café  
listening t Satie  
on th rudimentri headphones  
just down  
from th Roman baths

(with their singular refurbishment  
v virtual water

subfusc  
eerie lighting

nd ersatz

irrelevant music

where famous poets

on occasion

read their work

alongside creative writing students from th local college  
some v whom were studying history)

wondering precisely  
how t word  
th missive to  
his friend th flautist  
gently intimating  
that his latest work  
a putative quintet

on a chamber scale

did not include  
a part f her instrument  
as he felt  
its fundamentl sonoriti  
was v a nature  
all too human  
n potentially sibilant  
to express th essential spirituality  
a central imperativ  
v its basic aesthetic;

nd that he hoped  
this present  
creativ idiosyncrasy  
would not impair  
their longterm amiti  
nor preclude  
any further  
collaboration

it was

with some distress

she later learnt

that in his effects

they had found

sometime after

his gentl yet

inexplicabl death

a manuscript score

v an unfinisht opus

f th customari

four stringd instruments

along with

a tenor saxophone

initiall'd

not signd

as was his wont

as was his practice

## a neolithic tale

you may have noticed  
or i may have mentiond  
th way that seagulls  
came inland

at a yungaday  
th oddest v times

nd y may have realised  
as i kept silent                  th child  
   peering at y from th opposite bank  
switcht from telescope t binocular  
in a manner most uneven

i know y intimated  
this concernd y                      not unduly  
that y kept fast y stride  
within those sites v demolition  
peculiar t your domain

n though i was there  
as y lay in wait behind shop windows  
wielding y wooden cutlass  
nd cursing that all who walkt abroad  
were grown beings                    i could not help but wonder  
if it would be he  
who might just pass  
across y rim v vengeance

as we grew apace  
us in th dire days

half untroubld  
half unsung

you it was  
who never dared nor dreamd  
v being seen againen  
when frequenting        a former address  
i heard tell  
that when y backward glance  
held hard his image

your terror  
as recited in th newsprint  
sprawld in th waiting room  
servd merely t counterpoint  
th utter disbelief        v y captors

now  
as y sit in that cell  
reservd f you as microcosm  
nd receive                      y one  
   unsuspecting visitor  
  
you will surely marvel  
that those whites n pupils  
staring at y through shatterproof glass  
as once they gazed  
across an expanse v water  
  
have aged  
th time it took  
f seagulls t turn pterodactyl

## th surgeon's sturgeon

th sunderer

born v contempt

took hold v th fishknife

nd set it

with a certain exquisite perception

t th rear v th gills:

th scream

emanating from that

global liquid eye

held no surprises

f one who accepted

th open-mouthd

acts v respiration

peculiar t fishes



n with his scalpel

(lately wielded  
f th benefit v

sullied livers  
brief intestines;

then  
patiently returned t th sheath  
ready

without th luxury v greed  
f th summons t dissect  
th next delicaci)

incised th contours v his skull with virtuosity  
n placed his brain  
ungarnisht upon th altar

th fish  
equipt with th vision  
blinkd n  
flapt its fins

v merely two sides

at th dryness  
v so much

fresh air

## icarus descended

across my path  
too yonder for tracing  
glazed by the parch of the heat  
the bones and the feathers

scattered by winds  
too diverse to amass  
diluted with gloss  
the sand engulfing  
the bones and the feathers  
deadweight  
relic of

the lost continent

the Master Comedian  
respectfully fingering  
holding up  
full to the light and the heat  
inpecting

the bones and the feathers

glue on the digits  
touched by wax

wanting

o so wanting them fixed  
unable to match them  
the Comedy Man  
clown with no face

weeps at the sand  
mask cracked distorted

and the angel  
shattered by mistrust  
sternum-split cleaven  
akimbo awaiting  
                    renaissance  
at the hands                      of the Courtless Jester

bone and feather and funny hands  
grovelling in the powder  
                    crackle-croak exasperate  
shifting the mask  
from jowl to cheekbone  
irritated by the crevice  
                    pinions entombed by the amber

not knowing  
the missing piece  
stolen                      some eras ago

## fenician

times when  
messiahs raged  
nd cut their kindred  
he kept counsel

occasions that  
choirboys n spindthrifths  
laid them end t end  
silence was his byword

thus it was  
around fall  
when warlocks avenjd him  
n blind faith

                    never th keenest v diadems  
left its mark on th walls v th workhouse  
he chose  
                    t stake his claim upon millennium  
                    somewhere at th back end v th sun

in th beginning  
th glare dazld him  
cauterizing th worthless partition v reason  
unbelittld  
nd t th observant lens  
th traces v blood  
fleckd by th sharp edge v th eggshell  
across th surface v his intial skin  
offendid  
    only th most literate  
he survyvd  
though jokes n sinecures  
were never t his liking   yes  
he survyvd               without wraps  
                            without baublz  
nd in his wanderings  
he would have chosen  
never t die  
one v these               experimentl deaths:

v a sudden                      made narrative  
v a sudden                      vivid  
   unearthd

a veiny being in a negated age  
spirit scorcht n painful upon th breath  
came he t places  
                                 preternatural

nd there  
in th parchd heat v th hurricane  
huskt n ashen v eye  
th spectre claimd him

thus celebrant  
thus mandrake  
sacramental nd abrim with sap  
drew he at length  
t where they coincide                      th cradl n th furnace

nd as with antichrists n frail dancers  
th flame itself  
put an end t him:

in these days                debauchd by pity  
                                     astonisht at mercy

in these days  
taken by forces            less than molecular

you nd i  
recoil                        look each other  
                                     up n down

                                     waging th war on behalf v bastardy  
   eager t waylay  
   decisive tidings  
   concerning th fate v th yule

yet  
even at this strange hour  
when they choke th living daylights  
nd ask if it                were all foretold  
i still stare out at  
those unquencht essences  
those  
                         forester's tales

and



## chantreuse

deemd animal  
she came on in  
    out v th forests  
    out v th swampland  
came in t cities  
    uttering prehistory  
    seeking fabulousnesses  
        bred v a primitive science;  
deemd animal  
she came on in  
    out v th sunlight  
    sometime after:  
n perhaps  
th latterday curse  
    betoknd in incident  
    gatherd in th backrooms nd across landings  
belied her masteri;  
  
no matter said she  
i have seen dead sons  
creep out between th silences  
n th wanton glories v my flesh  
were not t be lost  
on th signposts v my daughters  
    left unsaid  
    within th contours n cultures  
v an intimidatid universe

th crippled bartender  
watcht her performances  
wildly  
    through his glass eye (revolutionary that he be)  
    n polisht th keys v th upright  
    t mystify her songs:

nd yet  
f all this gaudy magick  
the age  
    lay still a-dying;

soldiers nd derided queens  
rememberd her epigrams  
purely spasmodically;

all those heroes  
taught her by warmongers n granpappas  
rarely emitted  
any kind v  
    mystic flamboyance  
nd dukes n old men  
bargaind in th aisles n urinals v her craft:

singularly did she tug at th sun  
t wrench it t th night-time;  
singularly nd singl  
did she parade th riverbank  
looking f toads  
n other amphibians;

at outside tables nd on inside stools  
her chant could be pickt out                      being spent;

deemd indeed  
of nd amongst th poor  
was she left t wander  
th spires n stumbling blocks  
now refuted  
                    as she crumbld in th alleyways

there so she be  
beyond mythology  
siezen by th medicinl  
incarcerated by th contrasymphathetic  
when nemesis came a-calling  
nd left there wailing  
defeated by th substance  
n confoundid by th illusion:

come th coda  
a transpired awakening  
thru an unpredicted  
    (nd in th main  
    virtually unsought)  
series v revenges  
both extravagant nd inconspicuous  
nd certain familiar  
    hitherto unexpected  
        educings n rememberings

thus  
at th instant v denial  
    denying nothing  
unafeard v th onslaught v spring  
catching th voice n finding th lilt

casting aside  
th parsifals n th morganas  
nd dancing on th dream  
    (bold th intoning  
    th ear resonant)  
        libertine her meanders  
        unfetterd her return

with a nod t th croupier  
turn'd her arse t th all v it

and  
at th first dawn

cascadid  
smouldering  
(torchin  
scorchin)

ubiquitous nd inescapabl

onward t th perimeters

expansiv

shameless

hailing th hench v her

definitiv  
valedictori

ringing th riley

claiming transcendence

## **a transylvanian tragedy**

in parenthesis  
th garlic lookt  
hardly amiss  
hanging there  
uneaten

in parenthesis  
th angl at which  
th bat clung  
provoked no argument

in parenthesis  
th elegant traveller  
evinced no comment  
excepting that  
concernd with th sartorial

n yet  
he thought  
wincing in reflection  
something untoward was amiss

it wasn't that  
discretion botherd him  
nay even  
th tilt v th tumbler  
emitted nothing  
but fresh red wine

yet still it came t pass  
as he sat  
idle v aspect  
in conspiracy with th saxophomist  
wishing t burn mountains  
wondering which ace t play  
th stupid remembrances  
v all those lies nd lays  
pushd th sombre  
t th back v his mind  
as night                      crept on in

at length

th countess n th count  
suckt him dry  
as they had done  
his total ancestry                      and  
                    in that strange morningtide  
                    he would inherit  
                    dirt n pinewood  
th strains v jazzmusic  
                    emblaznd upon th dawn

there they found him  
th jester n th mastermind  
nd there they built him  
only a tiny monument

n as y pass by  
in th wake v y journeyings  
you will find  
that y put away  
y quill n journal                      leaving rebirth t history  
   nd his dark deeds  
   t th cartografa



## nocturne at kindltide

later, th cup replenisht  
th tabulature reset

at length, from there without  
owlsound  
a darker rustling

under th mantl  
within th resonant hearth  
th remnants v elm  
radiant  
embering

spontaneousli rekindling

skyward th pleiades  
seven th sisters

lucifer falling  
venus arising

nd in th intrepid gloaming  
an awaitening quietude  
midst which she imparted  
th miracl's that transpir'd  
in th foothills v skirrid

intoned a capella  
cantoris contra decani

antiphonl  
collectiv

ex cathedra

th while divulging  
forbaden forbidden  
th various assorted  
unavowd  
serial felonies

committed in th sight v th holy mountain