

*chris hall*

# selected poems 2

## epigrafi

art is alkemi

it is            th taking v raw elements  
8            nd turning them into            fenomina

art is alkemi

it is not       mereli a depiction  
                 v visual landscapes  
                 or peopld streetseens  
                 nor th arrangement  
                                 v discoverd objects  
                 living  
                 still  
                 or otherwise

art is alkemi

it is            th taking v raw fenomina  
                 nd turning them into            earth

art is alkemi

it is not      cascading falls  
                 play v th waves  
                 th liquidising v pigment  
                 th trickl v tears  
it is            th taking v raw elements  
                 nd turning them into            water

art is alkemi

it is not      th incandescent v th passions  
                 th leap n flicker v th striving imagination  
                 that flame that scorches  
                                 synapses nd ganglia  
                 volcanic eruptions  
                 notions v th incendiari  
it is            th taking v phenomenal elements  
                 nd turning them into            fire

art is alkemi

it is not      n act v pure transcendence  
                  above nd beyond  
                  th canopi nd panolpli  
                  a flight t th stars  
                  nor a fleeting glimpse  
                  v th face v th divine  
                  th cheating v death  
                  or a claim t immortaliti

it is

alkemi    th taking v elementl fenomina  
                  nd turning them into

air

art is alkemi

it is not      quintysensuali relativ  
                 a matter v taste  
                 a means v defining  
                 reinvention  
                 scraps v  
                         autobiografi  
                 psycho  
                         therapi  
                 th charting v paradigms  
                 mapping v th mind  
                         no more than  
                         an assemblidj v signifiers  
                 t be imbued with  
                 postmodern ironi  
  
                 no no no

it is            empiricl  
                 extant  
                 everpresent

art is alkemi

it is            th taking v  
                 nd turning them into

## five surrealist paintings

man standing

th man standing  
by grey lake

by grey lake against crisp horizon  
russitbrick wall;

in th foreground  
crumblinartyfacts

grey lake  
against horizon  
russitbrick wall  
nd in th foreground  
plinth  
sundial  
caryatid

t th side  
lampstand n shaddocast

bottom corner  
red mullet

th woman  
in her hand  
hourglass

hourglass in her hand  
at her feet  
basilisk

over there  
beyond basilisk  
by th gramophone  
orarari  
lectern

beneath th lectern  
early salmon

th young girl  
beneath th linden;  
by her side  
hobbihorse  
alongside hobbihorse

aardvark  
albatross

coalscuttl  
candifloss

in th sky  
two moons  
gainst th skyline  
glass mountain  
waterfall

leaping th waterfall  
dead centre  
butterd turbot



infant boy  
scampering towards  
sunrise t th left  
sunset t th right  
crossing th canvas  
deep dark forest  
behind th forest  
pyramid  
eye

th deep dark forest  
eye in th pyramid;

watching infant  
th grayling

th cat  
th black cat  
staring from widowsill  
out t th courtyard  
n th empty phaeton  
th scarlet fountain  
th secret templ  
th distant garden  
th pathway t th pavilion  
th rose in th orangery  
purpl turtl  
th writing on th carapace  
th blood on th flagstone

no fish

## no ifs

i am a man more  
sinnin than cinder genst  
having emerjd  
out v th great no where  
uttering onli  
screechen catterwaul  
from th outset  
dreaming alone  
nd given t ructions  
whyforwayfare  
ever th tendenci  
t th magnetic poles

it was however  
yonder by th lichgate  
that th first hints v th heathen  
gave way t th hymns v th heretic  
nd those fierce visions  
(yes i said visions)  
v a prophesied  
here nd now

nd when they said  
it was  
    time t wake up  
shaking th cradl nd smashing th skylight  
i held clenchtight  
t th tenets v th dreamstate  
nd th imperativs v nightmare

t this day  
there cannot be  
even th slightest  
    trace v regret  
nor spurious soothsaying  
    no ands  
    no buts  
amendments  
codicils  
    th one truth being  
    beyond all others  
        there are no ifs in histori

this then was  
    th starting point  
    th setting out  
shorn v manifesto nd v balderdash  
unlaydnd nd unburdnd  
by th encumbrances v ancestri  
blind tradition  
tyranni v  
    a semblant inheritance

so when y ask me  
how come  
i sit here in th windoseat  
cracking th heads from shellfish  
n pretending t be  
part v th graffiti  
th reply  
tho not necessarily elydid  
purposefulli obscurantist  
will still be  
in need v deconstruction  
discernment  
some measure  
v disentangling

nd maybe  
(yes i said just maybe)  
i might have answerd  
that they came looking  
f a younger man  
full v hope  
springsong  
a measure v empathi  
iskra  
that spark

nd yet  
(yes yet)  
it can still be promulgated  
that in this dreamin city  
those fine  
(so fine)  
butresses fly  
against them surjinspires

nd i espy  
down there by th riverbank  
that old bridge  
clings on regardless  
    v wagonloads  
    vagabonds  
    th muleteers

nd in th end  
(if end there be)  
let it be said  
there was onli  
one passage possibl  
nd that would always be  
th one that was taken

now  
when night comes  
i will myself surmise  
was it here?  
or there?  
or someplace in th great wherever  
that which was lost  
can be now be retrievd  
gatherd  
comprehendid?

nd will  
even i                      sinbad th sinnaman  
as a last resort

look up t th vast expanse v th highest v all th heavens  
nd th lowest depths v th deepest v all th hells  
nd breathe that one word

kismet

## why i do not play cricket

i have a fear  
v th hard red ball  
hurtling towards me  
be i                    holding th willow  
or on th receiving end  
in a mid-off position  
v th vicious swipe  
v th opposing opener

v my frame n lenses  
thus rendering  
my vital spectacles  
virtually inoperative

nd tends t be  
deliverd with  
particular relish  
in th direction v  
those tortured souls  
who are not  
good at games

i have a terror  
a mortal terror  
v being renderd  
effectively blind  
not by that hard ball itself  
but by  
                  th smithereening

n i live in dread  
v th casual ridicule  
not v                    th rival team's skipper  
                  but that which sneers  
from th lips v my own



nd yes i suffer  
a certain  
    nervous anticipation  
v th jibes n taunts  
that will  
inevitably  
come my way  
from those who always choose  
slavish adherence  
t team spirit  
above th quiet endeavour  
v th lonesome mind

nd i maintain  
an abiding concern  
that th opposition's fairhaired vice  
will displace  
his abiding resentment  
at playing second fiddle  
n vent his spleen  
nd his Anglo-Saxon bile  
against any  
    wheyfaced aesthetes  
    n fellow travellers  
he suspects  
v reading Coleridge  
or listening in dark nd smoke-filled rooms  
t experimentl  
    freeform jazz

n indeed i view  
with some trepidation  
th way that swarthy buck  
sidles up  
in th pavilion  
                  t Jenny Estelle  
                  just as i offer her  
                                  a glass v claret  
nd attempt t engage her  
in heartfelt discourse  
as t th deeper meanings  
                                  inherent in Schubert's Wintereisse  
causing me t miss  
my single opportunity  
                                  while he  
                                  waylays her by th punchbowl  
inducing in me  
such terminal depression  
that i surely will  
                                  insert my head  
                                  in th nearest oven  
or else look  
                                  lingeringly  
                                  at th aspirin bottle

these are  
since you ask  
some v th reasons  
why i decline participation  
in th summer game

n have

no problem with rain

## truth lies

*(written after an identification of Type 2 diabetes, the realisation that I had been in a state of denial for some time regarding my condition, and subsequent surmisings as to the act of lying to ourselves and others possibly being a default trait as far as human beings are concerned)*

come summer  
you will learn  
why it is  
you have been  
albeit unknowingly  
far too sweet  
f yerrown damn good

that said  
this we will find  
hardly surprising  
in light v th predictabl  
benefits v hindsight  
given th foregoing

(foregoing that is  
in th meaning v precedence  
rather than  
that which implies  
a sense v denial)

nd th perpetual recurrence  
over th years  
v degrees v imbalance  
parallel with concealment  
nd th inevitabl accompanying  
question v appearances

spring having proven  
beyond th luxurious illusion  
a season v diagnosis  
didactic prescription

fine red wine  
now t be  
supt not quaff'd  
th pleasurable flesh  
there f th savouring  
rather than  
a subject v gluttony  
nd heroic excessendemic extravagance

leading to  
th portals v delusion ;

nd behind those doors v deception:  
mystification  
obfuscation

th flights nd stairways  
t disillusion  
gnosis  
revelation:

artistri being  
take it or leave it  
one step from artifice  
a celebration v th illusory;  
th domain v th spirit  
bordering on  
th realm v th sprite  
piskie  
brownie

call me Trismegistus  
waterfixa  
abbeylubber

call me boggart  
brag  
bucca  
dobie  
fetch  
ignis fatuus  
pinket  
perriwink

call me messenger  
magus  
merriman  
jackolantern  
maker v rubedo

th magnum opus

I  
listen: listen and hark  
harken the silence  
                  sostenuto  
and with it  
a spherical music      drifting across  
                          ethers and eons  
from a place where once we stood  
here by the grainy door  
longside the chizzled window  
opposite the performance place  
where the singer sang  
twixt the jaunt and the juggler  
and the scoff and the fireater  
                          (or rather  
                              as it transpired  
                                  the blow)

that place where  
excluded trombonists  
and included fiddlers  
did what it took  
and took what it was  
and confessional poets  
exuded therapy and expressed nothing  
or at least  
          it should be said  
                          very little  
                              beyond themselves

nd over there                      th ebony pumps  
    with th copper inlay

rest mute  
behind that porcelain              pink with glaze  
indecipherabl beneath its ornamentation  
nd th downward glance  
v th willowy muse  
in th shallo pre-Raphaelite painting

yes indeed  
here we stood  
by this pond  
on this mound  
envelopd in th green mist  
on th stranger's hill                      high above th city lights  
stippld by th droplets  
briefly imagind sounds  
from way out there on th heathland

                    n someone said  
                    a long time after th event  
                    we were happy here  
                    or maybe not  
                            not all th time anyway  
                            not all v th time



nd yes yes  
reflection recalls  
melodi was made here  
under th summer willow  
here nd in th darker streets  
with their scent v heaven nd th hints v hades  
n in th coverd market  
cavorted here  
made merry here  
high heaven n merry hell here

here where th dusk rose n th morningtide fell  
across th shimmer v night nd th shaddo v th day

nd here we danced	dallied n danced
at th earth's arising	
n th world's end	yes made merry
	merry mayhem
	music n mayhem here
	thriving nd writhing here
	writhing n thriving

seizing th clout  
casting th moment  
grasping th mettl here

n let it be said  
          said here  
that there it is  
here where it was  
there where it is  
          there nd here  
          here n there

hither  
thither                  whether  
                          wherever

given time  
upon th discerning  
this being summer  
you will discover  
like th budded iris  
th perfumes v      delian paradisials  
                      nd sultry coltranes  
shimmering upon  
th evening air  
harbingers v      faeri nights  
                      nd elvan days          assumptions  
  maskerades

then                      come midnight  
                              an unpredicted unveiling:  
                              unveiling and unravelling

th removal  
v delightful pretence      nay  
                                      bray  
                                      delving down  
at a last resort                down deep  
getting to  
th bottom v th thing

nd on th landing  
you will hear                whispers  
                                      whipperwills  
these secrecies:

nd with them  
th concomitant untruths      (that is  
    lies not falsehoods)

there being  
a certain veracity  
inherent in  
th fantom gateways  
nd acts v huggamugga  
          camouflage  
culminating  
in th disclosure  
that after some       deliberation  
th truth lies       in th contradictions

sensing  
after all th echoes nd th resonances

it is th living v it  
          th living                   living v it