

# The Moleskine Of An Agnostic

A short play by Nick Dockerty © 2008

CAST...

**Robert Alsace:** Thirty-something freelance Direct Marketing copywriter.  
One Moleskine notebook.

**ROBERT:**

To whom it my concern. Or: Dear Reader. Or: Dear Listener.

Up until last summer I had come to feel that the pendulum had swung a little too far one way. That; the freelance market; a difficult and protracted root canal procedure and a sudden blackout on a train bound for Glasgow, had left me, my friend, in a somewhat feverish state of mind.

Fear not though, for being who I am it was not long before I decided to undertake a certain degree of self regulation. To know what, and how one should regulate is always difficult. Surely any such undertaking will require great concentration, rigorous research and the drawing up of a document as to the nature of the current state of oneself. So how to go about it, how does one start such matters off? Hmmm. Detox? Therapy? A short course? A Red Bull? Permanent employment? No, all, far too expensive.

What is it to try to document, to capture the self? What is the best way? A diary perhaps? No, far too structured and self conscious. Think! How does one go about documenting and capturing the un-inhibited self? We all know that watching someone without them being aware of you can be a stimulating experience. And that nowadays the mere idea of setting foot in a virgin forest is enough to re-invigorate the follicles upon the baldest of skeletal crowns.

However, surely the self will, on rumbling itself, like the naked bather, only then reach for the nearest towel thus covering and moderating behaviour to such an extent as to render any further scientific observations as much use as a spoiled ballot paper?

No, the more and more I thought of it the more convinced I became, that if I were to do this properly I had to somehow trick the self into believing that the self, itself, had itself gone away on a sabbatical too.

And just how much should I document? What if I should miss something, some tiny morcel that will be of profound importance to me or myself say 20 years down the line when my ears blush scarlet-red at the instance of my Oyster card being denied upon hopping on the bus to work? And perhaps even more importantly: would I need to buy two return flights?

I can remember as a teenager I would always look upon certain paintings and wonder: how does a Turner or a Caravaggio decide upon how much is too much, detail?

In the end the method pretty much chose itself. Out of the blue a friend called and offered me the chance to take modest lodgings in Southern Spain, at a moments notice, at a modest rent, for one month. I snapped, at the chance. And, happy at the thought I was to take only two biros and one moleskine I set off from the runway at Luton Airport – suitcase firmly in the hold of the Boeing 747- in good spirits.

And what did I hope to prove through my research? What would be the end of it? And perhaps it is this. That when the empty court of regret rise as one to give their verdict it is that I might take a moment to look around at all the missing faces, wave my moleskine in the air and shout ‘No, it is not I who am guilty – it is my-self. Look you lot, see for yourselves.’

Oh, and there’s one more thing: Did I indeed have the discipline not to write a structured diary but to write exactly everything that occurred to me with absolutely no embellishments? Can I truly be aware of the exercise while not being aware of the exercise? Indeed, can one live without knowing one is living?

Only you, the reader or listener, can be the judge of that. Welcome to **The**  
**Moleskine Of An Agnostic**. I hope you enjoy it.

And so, to Southern Spain. Where I shall be alone, at last. Well, save my ex-girlfriend who’ll be moving out of the apartment on the day I arrive.

Your faithful guide,  
Robert Alsace

## Prelude

Once upon a time it didn’t matter.  
How many months  
Had passed  
Since  
I blacked out.  
It is always there  
as it was just yesterday or will happen again  
perhaps  
before lunch or  
just after dinner  
or riding a bike by a church.

It’s always way back then,

there and here.  
Yet, here -  
I can’t remember anything of it.

That first and only time. That...

And she goes, she  
like a social billiard ball. I,  
more like a,  
rest,

“But  
minutes here  
last for months more, or less

and the months here last minutes,  
well, more or less and so the minutes

are minutes here but  
more. Do you see now?”

And she goes. (Now!)

To Sicily, anyway. And so here we are again,  
My reflection and I (And the minutes and months and  
the moths)

Who is the lonelier? (Now)

At least my reflection has the mirror, to hold it –  
and  
however fleeting.

Do you see now? it's

**So very peaceful**

Here.

It's been two hundred and twentytwo  
and one month.

I have a friend who lives  
down the hill, and 27 steps

and another who has just left.

so very peaceful  
now

just the church

bell

and the distance  
and the sea  
and the sky  
and some medication,

or other

and a window in a hostel

left  
closed,

by the previous occupants  
but opened by the breeze

and closed  
opened and

**Co- balt!**

**co- balt!**

**co- balt !!!**

I can only wonder  
Where they came from  
Or are going to... in such haste  
Did they enjoy  
the stay?

Did they capture by chance, on an evening in, the bird-song that keeps the plates hanging  
to the wall?

Did they even walk  
those 27 steps?

To reach all those,  
Caught in meantime.  
And the messages they peddle  
for postcards in cafés -  
And collection slips from the

Postman.

que hora es?

(interrupted at this point I manage to extend my left wrist toward the voice and point to my watch with my right.)

I should go for a walk to the church and then the clock tower  
and then  
but wasn't there a man who claimed  
he could tell  
Just by the swells  
of an unmade bed?

Let's walk to the beach.  
Even if it is just to watch

## **The wind turbines**

flocked  
like three-winged seagulls  
in kilometres

caught  
Between vapors  
Of buildings  
And the blue

Clutterless

Endless blue  
in the clutterless  
odorless  
silence

save

a moped  
sliding past

silent

save

a trombonist, in a bright orange jumpsuit  
cycling

in short low-growls

and then, maybe  
a walk  
to the old town again, maybe a coffee  
and an amble past  
and then into the seductive timbres  
of the cheap book store  
in the main square or take a look what's written

## **In the pressed biro**

And then, suddenly,  
And for the first time, since -  
words, ideas

are

circling, some settling  
like flies

but not on a page

and so something  
begins. I think.

I am that lighthouse now

But first  
let me finish this cigarette.

I am in haste now. The bios are!  
But the sand...

Passing the bar on the beach:

I can't find the harbour  
I can't find the harbour  
I can't find the ha-rbour

## **Pleasure calls**

from Commerce's syrxinx -

The bass,  
overbold  
prolonging

in the air, underfoot

White hills. Neruda. 2/5 euros.

I don't know where to look

At last

And last

I don't make it past the bar.

Rest,

and order.

Then something:

**She left  
Nothing  
But  
A  
Blue  
Canvas.**

At last

And last

A young child, who has been casting a fishing rod

In imaginary pools in the park

Walks over and gestures toward the olives

I smile and drop one into his cupped hands

He leaves his tiny sandals, picks up the rod and continues casting

I take a handful of olives

And stuff them in my pocket -

They'll go well with the pasta later and

then

**a Citroen**

Hurtles into view -

Just missing said kid -

Skids and turns about 34 degrees, judders easily, stops in the half shade  
And reverses, deliberately  
into empty space

A teenager alights – a Putin-type;  
save  
baseball cap and shorts  
His girl, not quite as sure  
Joins  
from the passenger side,  
Takes  
His kisses and then  
They turn  
And walk, (she behind he)  
(He, right arm rigid by his side, his left, swaying)

Toward the group  
(Who have followed  
Their progress, attentively)

The group parts, lets them pass.

The young child has now discarded the fishing rod and is shouting at a man in a white vest on a balcony of a block of flats over my right shoulder.

I think I leave at this point.

Not before the waitress asks me about the tiny sandals. I do my best to explain.

The inauguration begins,  
fishing rod  
resting on my left shoulder, casually.

“ I am a man -  
I think -  
Of about 36.

And I need to be alone

But not too alone.”

Muted applause.

Here follows a long, and quite poetic speech that I should have written down upon awakening so now cannot of course remember. Save the final two lines:

“She can't be lying  
She must be bored too.”

The audience rise as one and

I am woken  
by some dog, far off  
Barking  
Well yelping, at the end of my bed  
A yelp that would not have caused the birds to  
have fled Let alone a wolf  
on a step.

Yet –  
awoken I am.

There is a tortilla, with spinach  
Eating the fridge.

And so,  
tiny fragments of the night before  
form  
noiselessly,  
in play  
as brilliant sunlight falls  
upon

the **pure blue canvas**  
again.

Pure?

It's then that i notice a mark on the canvas.  
About an inch from the bottom and two from the right edge.

It's small; but I can still see it from my bed. Has that always been there?

The olives; the **Dream Feed**  
clutter on the floor  
As I alight,  
thumb the sand from my hair

and take a closer look at the canvas.

I breathe. It's a splatter of red wine.  
But I wasn't...

I reach for the moleskine.

I know, now.  
that something  
has happened.

Something that if it ever sees the light of day

Will **cause-cause**

It is at this point that I decide to type up everything, everything in the pressed biro - from the moleskine.

Word for word.

No embellishments  
no flurry, no slow emissions  
no last minute admissions  
No smoking the harmless edits of the soul.  
No prose. No pets.

No objects.  
Save  
those I have noted with care.

But all this, not  
But not  
until my return.

To London. To the **New London**. What glee-suspended!

And the day I reclaim all said objects –  
from their current storage –  
in Bermondsey.

But that, I know, is still some weeks away. And so now, I must, at least, try to piece together what happened yesterday and the

low **Emitting solitudes**

I am losing me,  
now, here  
No longer here  
Nada Adman.

I dip into the nuts, though.  
And I realise now -  
that I'm in Geko bar. Again.

I think of friends, distant, and wonder  
What it is with me,  
what is this constant  
longing?  
What is it for? Why don't I just...

Still

another **Citroen**. Sweeps by  
the road, sweeps  
around to the right  
Or into itself.  
The night has thighs.

You should eat.

Am I saying this  
or is she?

Still, I got a message today  
That another ad-agency, I'd been working for no longer need  
My services.

I can't help but glance at  
The packet of cigarettes

Slightly, neatly, regularly crushed.

Fumar perjudica gravemente su salud y la

No – no-more.

And so my thoughts wander a little...  
Maybe then, time to write  
a novel,  
a novella,

# a novellallela la la la laaa

I see a small kid  
and I wonder about that kid,  
poor kid  
just

wandering.

Confident though – taking an olive from a stranger.

A couple on a moped swoop,  
and take quickly  
round the church.

Heads turn.

Followed by another Citroen,  
a woman,  
dark glasses -

resting in **nose-space**.

no - on a cylinder

a sphere?

a cone?

Still -

she has a number plate  
for a dress:

## 0057 BMJ

Is this it for me?

The peanuts have hit the spot though.

I catch a look,  
- she seems interested.

I look away a bit too quickly  
and write  
something  
anything  
to justify myself:

Well it's all I got these lines, this page, this cigarette and I wonder  
At the glory

Of, of, of  
sun

and alcohol.

Talk to

someone.

Talk to her.

A friend's advice.

I thank him, although he is absent, and we talk loosely

## **Of Knut. And Bild.**

She, is hands arms

Folded tight

Smoking lights

I think of her thighs, white

Under the cherry red and yellow

check

tablecloth.

These thoughts

though enlightening –

perhaps for you.

Have not just turned up -

I'm forcing them.

Forcing them

to stay in my company.

Keep my company.

And their appearance, for me, is something akin to catching a glimpse of your best friend in a bar who had told you in no uncertain terms that she just wasn't up to going out tonight.

Still, they are they. And she is she.

She is attractive.

But how do I begin

To explain that all my thoughts lie within.

And that I still don't feel well enough to talk to a stranger.

In this instance a mobile, my mobile and the–

## icon for messages

Or it is memories yet received  
appears before any discernable signal  
Of a current available network.

Anyway,  
good to answer a couple of old texts.

She's gone now, by the way.

Swim. Back now. Sherry. Cigarettes.

Have decided to put the inflatable in the shower when not in use.

With less clutter in flat in mind, I pronounce:

## Solitude has many shades.

But I don't want to write any  
More tonight. And

as I wearily sweep the ants from the flat  
I am reminded of the constant,  
relentless wind  
on the beach and the sweep of the

## Antandlilo

Go close now.  
To the tumbling ants. To the ants, tumbling.

And imagine a lilo, only left  
for a second

And then  
taken by the wind  
over

Over

and over rooftops, the dancing, feeding passerines and the clothes lines

and

Over over and over

the 27 steps, the bar, the beach. Unlike the ant who always rights itself.

Over over and over the waves

Always just out of reach and toward the sun

that the sun-speckled ocean rolls itself up and sleeps in.

In as far as I know -

said inflatable  
made it to the shores of Africa  
Unless it came to rest  
Against the body of the un-said  
oil tanker.  
Such is the sea traffic, here  
Such is the ant, here  
Brought to rest at the  
foot of a horseshoe  
That's been on the step  
Long before since I arrived  
Maybe I should leave  
Well and alone  
Untouched, like the theatre in the old town -  
Someone told me about  
Untouched –  
since the civil war -  
Or was it the death,  
of Franco?  
Wait

Who had told me that?  
And so –

just before the **Dream Feed**  
I chance to remember fragments of  
a conversation.  
(I'd had a few glasses by this point.)

“We work together, well we did work together... she, no sorry, I,

had to leave, my doctor said...

So it's going to be difficult.

I might have to leave.

Hah!

you've made the classic blunder my young friend!

All affairs of the heart, and those of economics should be rigorously partitioned, and the boundaries, patrolled if necessary.

I might have to leave.”

I can only rise  
a wry smile. Who was he? What was his name? Wasn't he a diplomat?

Despite my suspicion I found his conversation not disagreeable.

Wait

Coster  
Coster Oaded.  
or maybe  
Oded  
Oded Coaster or  
Oaded Coster

Sure. It always, always comes back to the I.

And  
I'm sick  
of

it.

Time for the **Dream Feed.**

Now.

## **Interlude**

in a brute of a one euro coffee,  
on main street  
Past the surf shops and  
Approaching the walled and  
Through.  
The old gate  
enters the Old Town  
To the right is  
The apartment. One of three.  
Loaned by a friend  
of a friend.

## **To the left: Bones.**

And the rattle  
underfoot. And – and of

Aeolus  
Yes, it is he  
And he is living

and walking among us.  
According to today's El Inharmonia  
and my snatched translation -  
And so Aeolus is,  
Blowing salt-packets of soil at tourists who –  
such active resonators -  
Now  
Help him.            Look for  
the Limbs that clothed him  
Clothed him and blew over him and  
Took him and played his  
Ribs like rum-soaked bars  
until white -  
that palm filled night.

One tourist –  
among a thousand now gathered, all -  
in ambiguous states of health,

One tourist –  
surfaces and  
from the layers of melanin -  
Produces a skull – ha!  
Just think - in the little cobbled street!

## **Mallets stop.**

And with open mouths –  
And floppy hats  
Soon droop  
and melt into one  
Long-slow-ill-limned cocktail  
That is the Marimba. Or  
simply:  
A Synthesis by the sea.

Or this here, lesser known  
prose-poem.

Whichever.

I think it's time to move on from here.  
I need to leave.

End of.

A waiter brings me a fork,  
A TV  
And his condolences  
I sift through the remainder  
Of the snapper

“you, my friend  
Are anywhere.”

I think it's time to move on from here.  
I need to leave.

## **The light by the church and the plastic baby**

Geko bar.  
I think I had left for an interlude.  
Although, again  
I am not sure  
And I am  
Oh interrupted

Coast eroded!  
Or coastal erosion. Either way:  
Now that was it!  
He was a recently widowed-  
retired diplomat  
folded in two by the years and,  
the current energy required,  
to carry his diplomatic bag  
which now only contains a  
1001 page manuscript,  
his lunch,  
an old 78,  
and keys (of course)  
to the gothic building that sits on top of some long-abandoned coastal fortifications.

To think now, only now, that  
he is concerned at the invasion of the sea  
And possible consequences upon the old building  
Of which he had a name,  
but I have since misplaced  
or simply forgotten.

But it was significant for what?  
He didn't or couldn't say.

We go over old ground  
No not distance but because  
It's all we have. Or it's  
all I presume we have.

“We work together, well we did work together... she, no sorry, I,

had to leave, my doctor said...

So it's going to be difficult.

I might have to leave.”

And then  
A woman clutching  
a plastic baby. Resting it  
on her ample thigh  
Catches both our eyes

“I wonder where the plastic father is?!”

Asks  
Coaster Oded, laughing.  
My toes  
Curl.

He wants to take me to see  
The twin signs:  
To the right the Atlantic  
To the left the Mediterranean.  
But I have already seen them.

“Life has a habit of working out...”

The silent couple next to me, voices as strangers to them as I

Now  
Coster  
has gone

# Swallowed by the river

Or the people at the foot of the church  
And I am left in such  
Peace

And then Neruda comes and sits next to me.  
(yes! And just as simply as I have written it)

And, before I can shout **“it’s Neruda!”** he is whispering in my ear.

“I have seen your moleskine.

No, no you can’t have.

I know your writing...

You can’t do – no-one...

Yes I can or that should be

we can -

Sure.

Listen, just as you can read and

perhaps know of all our work,

we know all of yours, however, well, unknown or undeveloped or unpublished or plain  
shit it is. It’s how it works.

No, you can’t know my – so how does it work?

We are alerted by the page-keepers, if someone has borrowed a symbol, a line of even the  
sentence structure of the third line in the third stanza. As soon as the writer takes the pen  
from the page the page-keepers alert us to the fact.

Why?

Well for people like me. Being dead’s, at **the best of times**, is a bit like  
being alive but naked  
and frozen, unable to move as someone, with a powerful flashlight, prods and probes  
your body, your nasal hairs, your mind, your testicles your

So you mean you do this to protect your work from

Look it’s not really about protecting our work; it’s more about, well, usually, once  
alerted, we all fall around pissing ourselves. But, occasionally, when it’s good or, well,  
we kind of help them out a bit

So why are you here?

You’ve tried to translate a poem of mine I wrote when I was 23.      Some woman eh?

Yeah I got that.

I lost her soon after I wrote that piece.

She left you?

No she was killed

Killed? How?

Look - you got the translation wrong but I was kind of touched by your efforts and your predicament – besides

now I am here -

I know now how you write

I can see it in your eyes. It's in your face.

He giggles a little. The dead Neruda giggles a little.

Look, try and

Remember the first time...

You watched a woman. Really watched. But try, try to ignore what I wrote look for

yourself... ”

Ok I see.

I see:

A woman's mouth

up close

“ Go close now. ”

And I am him. Or is it me?

At that age.

The bottom lip

Sun kissed lip

Plump moist cusps

That stretch for miles

such pure white cliffs

A whole tongue-continent

Yet discovered

And never known

Fully

bu bu but - it needs work

Pablo!

Neruda has left.  
Just as I was about to ask him –  
Everything - so many things!

And maybe tell him  
That I am not here to write  
or even to think, anymore  
Was he really here?  
And the street lamps appear  
In the near gloom  
Simply unnoticed  
(too busy watching the girl with the  
tongue in her cheek)

And I'm aware that I am being watched by most of the customers in the bar.

I hastily open the moleskine and write:  
(just write anything!)

**: Twin biros!** and

I've never been a, surfer  
But  
I've  
known  
things,  
a little language  
here and there

but for the sea  
there is no dictionary  
it's all I can do  
just to approach it  
and open it  
its moods, its swells  
its arguments, improper nouns  
its quirks, its gowns  
its improper frocks

as  
I should leave now.  
But there's something about this place

# Notes on structure

Yes. I had a thought that if I am to write it  
I might just structure it -  
Based on the very interesting case  
Of the capture of El Solitario, a story that has broken  
Since my arrival here.

From officially Spain's most wanted, most dangerous; a criminal mastermind; a selfish  
poet among giving thieves; a redbrick among house bricks; a line between verses  
To a murderous fake-beard wearing buffoon, smiling on youtube swearing

“Hello everyone, I am El Solitario.”

Still he bought El Pais-listened to Johnny Cash and frequently  
Lent tools and curses  
To neighbours -  
Who shot his dog and  
Burnt his car -  
Just to watch it curl Up –  
no doubt.

But then thought better of it.

But then

Someone once described my writing as akin to **playing marimba  
with twin biros.**

I laugh -

“Hello everyone, I am El Solitario.”

As I hammer the cheap pens  
On the bars.  
This is madness.  
Slow- Fucking- madness.

Yet still I persist. I go on.  
What sheer bloodimindedness!  
What courage, I!

Over the top you go,  
for the King!  
“Don't forget your biros, boys!”  
(Or your beards.)

For there are they  
For whom a moleskine only begins when it ends.

Yet. There are others  
Who don't have the courage

To pick up the biro again and  
reduce his body's work  
to trim noisettes in red-nipple sauce.

But instead, sighs  
and aspires to see it, everything  
All of it.

All the dancing pan-handles and slow  
captures of doggerels of shit.  
through to it's grisled, dullend.

Still.

The self-taught writer, knows  
Like the suicide, and the sous chef  
he can bow out at any point.

And curl up into the ice-box, and lead something  
approaching,  
A normal life

Unaware  
the he'll be captured at some point.  
Anyway.

Still.

The church is there.  
and I am soothed...

as I remember  
the aim was not to think –  
in order to begin again.

Maybe get laid. Certainly not to write.  
So fuckoff twin biros!

Well,

if I just had to write

just to let the words  
come  
Come like the waves.

**Just let the words come like the waves.** And

the simple pleasure of  
Watching a dog.  
As it sits, then lies,

**Licking its chops.**

The wind bristles.  
It's whole body; a neatly groomed lung with tongue  
Breathing heavily, bobbing gently  
on the slobbled stone.

She, face covered, briefly  
By hands, beautiful hands  
Her god's hands  
Cupped together so that they  
Touch her nose.

A rare plane over head. My friend comes:  
With news of a change in direction  
Of the wind

Today  
the wind has come  
From the sunrise - Levante  
And ran, and danced and chased  
the sun-set (Never quite reaching it),  
then turns and so then,  
it follows that Yesterday  
it will come from the sunset - Poniente  
And run and dance and chase  
the sun-rise  
Never quite reaching it  
And then turns and then

She leaves, my friend. And I am to watch again

**The church, lit**

not only by lamps  
But by powerful lights

coins  
nestled, no, wrought -  
in the cobblestones  
Together they form a light shadow  
No, more a shadow of light  
On the church wall  
A kind of perfectly formed  
Light valley  
Where strange monsters  
Dance and scuttle and like the moths  
In the lamp  
they are the shape of dragons  
The size of dogs  
The old church, whose bell has kept me company  
Albeit from some distance  
Is lit by lights in the cobbles  
That form perfect valleys  
Great Sealless valleys. Of light and shadow  
For the beatles, flies and moths to dance  
And scuttle and the chance  
To see themselves projected for they are -  
the shape of dragons

## **The size of dogs -**

for a few precious moments -  
and somehow bigger than they are.

Or maybe it's upon the body of the woman  
that the beatles, flies and moths dance and  
scuttle, and play.... No!

it's the lights of a Hyundai  
Full beam. And so the light theatre  
Disappears, for a moment or two.

A woman jigs and pirouettes  
And dances  
in her lovers plans -  
just as a child on stabilizers - caught  
in an undertow heading  
toward the road. More cars settle  
in their seats, expectant now  
And is pulled back, surely  
By his mother  
And the light-valley-curtain reopens  
Like a dress and scuttles

the flies, thoughtless

And sits next to me.

I remove my thoughts,  
hat and sunglasses and to my surprise  
we are talk  
As I order some more wine.  
And the talk is of theatre and it is the old theatre that she wants  
To show it  
to me  
Now  
That I mention it  
To her.  
Or did she mention it  
To me?  
We leave and I vow to settle up the bill tomorrow.

They know me by now. **And**

The sound of church bells, muffled –  
as if the bells themselves are soft from the damp and the dust. And

**the old theatre,** small and  
dimly lit; two figures carefully pick  
their way from the door  
slowly closing to the right  
two figures in front of the stage  
given perspective by 3 or 4 rows of the tops of thick,  
looking rounded finger seats  
picking their way, and then a giggle here  
picking their way, and then a giggle here  
over boxes and shapes,  
stopping now and again  
as the taller of the two points to something lying on the floor.

We can just about make the full bosom of the stage,  
and the tangle of one or two shadowy forms upon it -  
of which we must presume nothing.

The light improves: as the taller of the two removes  
An obstruction, A lute. Not playing –  
exactly. A section of a spine of a fish, a huge fish  
mounted, and on metal pins. A hat stand.  
Quite a magnificent bell. Three typewriters.  
Boxes, moving, all sizes all shapes. Glass, crunching underfoot

To a giggle and a

Wait, don't move.

Go close, so close. Infact, inside.

The head of our protagonist:

“

Amazing old typewriters

And look

”

Oh.

The sound of church bells, stark –

as if the bells themselves have been carefully removed -  
of the damp and the dust. Perhaps in a slow drizzle.

And the **complete dark.**

“

Shit! Where  
have you gone?

Oh,

whose blind justice is this? And where are you Christina?

Has your body run narcotic, fully clothed as only listless syringes can belly flop, in to,  
the sea?

Shit! Where have you gone? Christina. Talk to me! Talk to me!

Oh,

such pretty, pretty-aches

of full-bloom-alienation,

where are the green flowerless-fields of my youthful detachment?

And, and yet, wait. I wonder:

what such moxie-pipetted delights now lie yonder?

A whole magnificent river from mouth to source - in a saffron-coloured telephone, with  
no receiver?

Row upon row of prose-nipples sealed, in boxes?

Notes, like emesis basins, peeling off from the rim of lone trombone and circling in the  
dust and the air?

Hat - stands, at the climax?

Smooth airless gone.

Oh! such is my justice, blind. My typewriter Girl – my typewriter Girl!

Eyes like ribbon, spools  
That burn jelly moulds  
In the retina,  
As only cherry-mould-lips that show  
no pain in gratification  
no joy in humiliation, can.

and thighs white, pure white platen, paper –  
my fingers. Sordid chops

And... ”

**the old theatre,** small and  
dimly lit; two figures, the taller of the two:

“ Sorry –  
just had to find the light switch. Are you ok?

Erm yeah I think so – sorry I got a bit freaked

the dark. You know

You were saying you were translating some poems by Neruda?

Yeah, I was trying

You sure your ok you look like well, pale? Or

Er, am ok. I think, look... ”

And then I am gone from this place and  
the olives; the **Dream Feed**  
clutter on the floor  
As I awake,  
thumb the sand from my hair  
and take a closer look at

at, where am I? Something has happened  
and a door opens.

“We sail for Abkhazia on Thursday.

Huh what? Why there?

A recruitment drive. Amazing what the promise of a new identity, can, can lead to. Such loyalty, to the cause... coffee?

What cause is that?

Not a cause more... a force... one that can reduce a biochemistry lab in Rostov-on-Don to a TV and a pair of shoes. Come on think. You're the writer.

But what is the cause? What are you trying to achieve?

I've seen your moleskine. You seem to want to be excluded from bourgeois society and yet neither a revolutionary. Here's your chance to get involved

You can't have done - when?

You showed it to me, last night. You're not without talent.

Look all I want you to do, my young talented scribe is to help me write the history of my little organisation, you know key people, great deeds, events, philosophy that sort of thing. Exactly as I tell you it to you. Ha ha you told me you had worked in the digital realm - think of it like a wikipedia piece except once it is written and signed off by me they'll be no further revisions – just payment to you of 10,000 Euros and complete remission from any - I presume you have a dictaphone?

Sure -

Does that mean you'll do it?

Er no it means I have a Dictaphone. Look I've still no idea yet what your little organisation is...

Remember what I said last night? Sometimes the spirit has to carry the rational self from the carriage he's sleeping in. **Come with me to Abkhazia** and I'll tell you on the way.”

And so my thoughts wander a little...

10,000 – is some **Dream Feed** albeit in euros. How many

novels,  
novellas,  
novellallellas

would that buy?  
I might make it this time, and maybe even  
Payoff a few creditors.

And I remember that kid,  
poor kid  
just

wandering.

Confident though – taking an olive from a stranger.

I want to say yes.

**Yes.**

Simple.

I am going to say yes.

**Yes.**

Simple.

As that.

And then, just as I am about to say

**Yes.**

Putin-type, breathless,  
Interrupts - torch, bloodied.  
Oader quickly takes  
His arm  
And they disappear for a moment or two, into a small ante room  
I suspect –  
not for tea and cakes.

Maybe I should leave

Well and alone

Untouched, forget about taking sides and all this theatre in the old town. Untouched –  
since the civil war -

Or was it the death,  
of Franco?

I make it as far as the staircase.

Oader grabs my arm.

“You’ve made the classic blunder my young friend!

All affairs of the heart, and those of economics should be rigorously partitioned, and the boundaries, patrolled if necessary.”

I’m sorry this is not something I can do, really it’s not bag. Look can I go now?

# Thonk!

My thoughts removed, what relief

– suspended.

Legs like straws

buckle.

Someone is tickling my toes

Someone is tickling my toes  
Ha ha  
Stop it  
Someone is tickling my toes  
Ha ha  
Stop it

I am in a pillow or is it a sock  
In the earths, crust  
soft  
small insects are

so very peaceful  
now

so very

I'm not in a pillow or even a sock.  
I'm not in a pillow or even a sock.  
I'm alive, and I am a man -  
I think -  
Of about 36.

And I need to be alone

But not this alone.

And then I know.

I'm not in a pillow or even a sock. They're not insects either. I'm lying on a pillow of birds – small, tyrant-flycatchers I think, like the ones that entertain me at sunset as they fly around the buildings trying to snap up the moths and dodge the lilos. I know this because the dark is interrupted occasionally, rhythmically by a dim light that comes through somewhere behind my throbbing head. Whatever, the birds seem to be calmly squabbling moving below me. Perhaps they are sleeping. But then I notice now too, the stench, and am reminded of the chicken farm I once worked for some pocket money when I was 13, - before I knew any better - and I wretch a deep dry wretching but then as soon as I try to move, try and sit up the pillow of birds gives a little and I sink further down and then one is taking a liking to my eyelid and I quickly put my hands up over my face. Then another pokes, pecks his bill in my left ear. I shudder and try to swat it away like a fly. Bad fucking move. They are disturbed now, or maybe just awakening and I am sinking and then from From somewhere above me Something opens and I strain to see what And There drops, more birds, and more and more it's all I can do to cover my face

and soon **I am unable to fall for the sheer**

**weight of birds** unable to sit up for the sheer weight of birds Now This is

Slow- Fucking- madness.

Then I notice the smell of vomit, and my body distant now shaking shivering

And realise the vomit is mine. I take my hands from my face

And

I am gone from this place.

And someone is tickling my toes again

And there's something lodged firmly in my mouth slowly nuzzling, pecking at my tongue and that's it I'm throwing spitting squawking kicking punching great soft walls of quills and squawking bird-pillows thrashing my arms around and around and I am sinking further but now my legs feel freer and I am almost running and suddenly all the birds in front of me are yawping frantically and are being sucked forward by some force some gravity defying plug hole and am falling with them onto them onto cobblestones

And

And I am a lung-dog on the cobbles  
feverishly gulping down bowls of air.

And I can see Coster standing over me. Shouting and as I try to stand he kicks my legs from me

And I am lung-dog on the cobbles.

And I can see Coster standing over me. Shouting and as I try to stand he kicks my legs from me

And then he pulls me to my feet.

You see the spirit now?

Yes, I think I do.

**My right, my good hand**, has been in my pocket since the beginning of this piece, since you started reading in fact or maybe just this discussion or the bird enclosure. And with this good hand I have been fingering the twin biros, rolling them round and round between thumb and forefinger. And now

I find use for them.

And with some skill I quickly pull them out put one in my left hand and then slam them both with all my fucking might into Coster oaded's scrawny fly-catching neck.

Hah.

He falls backwards, groaning listlessly.

I need to leave. I glance back only once, and Coaster Oded  
Or whoever he was  
Is just a broken shadow of an inverted mandolin.

To this day I know not whether he lives -  
I leave him for the passerines.

And once again I am gone from this place.

And many months pass.  
And how many months have passed. Well, once upon a time it didn't matter

You might have guessed.  
I am back. Now.  
In the New London. On Uplands Road, talking about closure notices and how

**Georgy Porgy, Cut corners**. And the plumbing. And  
7 weeks and 15 skips later and the new Foxtons on and

We are home. Did we ever leave? And this,

Finished.