



## **An Attempt at Answering Questions**

On a simple note of philosophy, an easy explanation for things can be an innocent and cowardly declaration about the lack of one's knowledge of something that can easily be dug out. It never fails to startle me how such a stance of 'I don't knowness' can be considered a valid answer that can be followed and taught. The uncertainty of God and what comes after death, this abstaining that can take a form and space and define itself as something will forever unnerve me.

There are many things that I am uncertain of, but what comes after death is not one of them. I do not know many things that are not physical and cannot be quantified into scientific or even theological conclusions, yet I do not believe that that oblivion is an answer to its mystery.

Why is writing a lonely act? I do not know, I would like to know but I have not yet properly formed my questions around it. What I know is that it's hard to reach concrete finalities for most of its evidence is liquid smooth and often gets loose around the fingers when you almost catch it. My evidence of the lonesome life of a writer is my grandfather, a man whose words have always fascinated me. I often watch him in silence when I am around him, I witness him writing in the mornings and the afternoons, no one in the family asks the kids to be quiet when he's writing and no one asks about what is he writing. Most of the time he looks incredibly and religiously occupied with his thoughts, his papers, and his bic pen in demise. He looks lonely; his hands often go over his head when rereading a piece he wrote or on his cheek whilst writing with the other.

I don't know why writing is a lonely act, and I have not yet properly questioned it but I am starting to build some opinions around the matter so that the answer to that question won't occupy a vacant space with no explanation in my head whatsoever.

He rolls his cigarettes with his old hands and gracefully commands the thin paper to embrace the tobacco inside with a flick of his tongue, and then he ignites its loose crooked end and inhales its

fumes to keep his lungs company. He repeats this ritual countless times during the day while he stares at what he wrote, while he rewrites some more, while he scowls in innocent pleasure at what he's written. She is not his companion I believe, his cigarette, though she might be some kind of a solace in this painful process of writing, a muse even, or an example.

When I was fifteen he taught me how to roll a cigarette, that's when I first ever smoked in my life, he said I could smoke because I have a bit of writer's blood in me, and we also drank black coffee in the last two surviving small Lebanese coffee cups in their summerhouse. My grandfather asked me then to pick a book of his and made me read some lines of poetry dedicated to his beloved the cigarette and I attempt to translate:

“a cigarette for the eye to see,  
her slenderness becoming like mine,  
how much worry have I consumed with her  
And how much of yearning that stirs the guts  
has she extinguished, when she shines or when I kiss her  
They say ‘‘quit’, don't smoke,

she is soaked with sickening poison

Oh how strange, would I be content abandoning a lover?

after all the embraces and kisses shared?

No, someone like me would never betray an oath,

but remains faithful for as long as life would last

Now let me kiss her sweet pure mouth secretly,

her desire has been mingled with my flesh and soul”

He stands by himself on this battlefield, the table, its edges: the ends of the war land, the pen: his sword, the enemy: absent, he searches for him but he is not to be found. One cannot be called a hero when the antagonist is absent and the writer is displeased and angry with himself but he doesn't know why. He doesn't know why yet he finds a solution, he scratches his paper with his pen in frustration and somewhat relief. The writer doesn't know why, but he's found a solution that he would like you not to question.

I continue my observation and the answers that I'm collecting are starting to appeal to my liking. I think, and I admit my answer might be rightfully wronged for what it stems from is a half-formed question, but it's better than not knowing: writing is a lonely act because so is death. A solitary act such as writing requires courage and autonomy,

substituted from the whole and away from the eyes of others. Death similarly requires valiance and individual sacrifice. And so to answer the agnostic's question: what comes after death is becoming a writer.