

The Storks of Alcalá

Terry Gifford

In the street café before the conference
I treated myself to exquisite notes in
my new Moleskine notebook, smallest size,
with my favourite Berol Fine felt-tip pen
about the storks of Alcalá performing
above the square flying banners boasting
'Five hundred years of welcoming students'.

'Above the bells,' I wrote, 'like small green
castanets in their towers, the huge nests add
something older to the Medieval architecture,
something of wood woven over thousands of years.

Down their long beaks the storks now look upon
the new colours of cars, and the university dons
in gold-edged gowns of the fifteenth century.

Kiting with a low loop into the street
a stork with orange legs flies ... ' into
a wine blot and out 'so many centuries before'.

Later, in the gilded hall of the university,

rampant with heraldry of lions, and storks,
the gowns process to their high seats. The Director
asks the Mayor, who asks his wife, for a pen.