

## the key

so your pencils need to be hidden and you can't eat.  
you enter.  
you've been entrusted with a key to the archive and you take this seriously.

You hold the archive in your pocket.

because you have the key you are able to go to the place at any time.  
when you go out for the night you make sure to leave it at home,  
just in case you get gregarious and have the urge  
to take people to the place to which you have the key (breath)  
the novelty  
how funny it would seem.

...

There is just one key, the system is arcane.  
So, the value ascribed to the contents of the room is displaced *onto the key*  
whenever it's away from the *room*.

You have the key and you need to mind it. It needs to stay atop your mind.  
any time you're away from the room, then  
you feel it bristle in coat pockets,  
at a cusp of slipping through the lining,  
at a cusp of mis-place.

...

so your pencils need to be hidden and you can't eat. that's normally the case,  
but here, with your own key to this room that closes, this private room,  
it's not true:

you can have a nosebleed and a glass of water,

you can kiss someone, you can write an ode.

It's only when you yourself are closed, locked, within the room, with the key there too, that you feel security, for both the key and for what it symbolises, and for yourself.

...

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however:

the archive is not just in a closed room somewhere or other,  
it is here in your home.

so your pencils don't need to be hidden and you can eat.

For, it is made up just of light; images built of light,  
not analogue at all,  
but folding the same.

....

One day  
you were looking for more keys,  
within the archive's folds  
amongst all the others,  
all folioed, indexed —when  
you found him.

you settle a while there.

you cannot see the key until you're told where in the photo it is.

It becomes clearer still in the next image:

him again.

At this second him,

you slip in to referring to him as *you*.

Here, he is, no —*you* are, the same person on the same day in the same clothes,  
only now standing,  
your body is the same:  
your brow is the same:  
that neckline that opens on one side like a page, the same.

You do seem different, though.

there are two of you, for one, and I know that that isn't true.

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Books say photos are *mad*,  
They say stuff about *unruly desire*,  
and Wilfred, who took the photo, says something too:  
in his taking of this particular image.  
In the sets of decisions that added up to the coming-up-against of the pad of his  
finger with that shutter release.

and

A person took a photo of another person.

A body stood before a body,  
some things in between.

One person is unnamed,  
the other not.

One person knew something,  
the other didn't.

One we **see**,  
the other not.

Of those states and locations of bodies in relation  
we can be sure: we can reckon the distance between your body and his.

...

I can see the key better, there, (*pointing*) hanging,  
strung beside a little pouch around your neck.

metal flesh wool and flesh again.

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A person took a photo of another person,  
then took that *taken* photo someplace else.

It ended up in England, and the photographer died. His family, to sidestep tax on  
their inheritance, 'gifted' a great deal of his possessions, now 'artefacts', to the  
museum.

Someone somewhere decided on the merit of these images, and so thirty eight  
thousand of these small sidesteps took place,  
all in the same direction.

The museum didn't respond to a question about what value this collection, which  
includes the photos of you, was ascribed,  
nor to any other questions.

...

The Arts Council England describes a benefit of a museum accepting artefacts on behalf of HMRC, in lieu of inheritance tax:

*'Objects which may have otherwise been sold abroad are secured for the nation.'*

This, a kind of playground heroics, a playground nationalism, of getting something just so as someone else doesn't.

The parallax of this interaction,

the *standing-in* of *in lieu*,

speaks a volume.

Might *in-lieu* feel self-conscious? Utmost aware of its inferiority?

Because, (sharp intake) there's a reason why taxes are meant to be paid with money.

The further you go from wealth the more this is Law.

Karl tells me that *use value* and *price* are only realised at point of exchange. That that ascribing of monetary value requires a *leap of faith*, here, probably by someone from the arts council. This leap made ingots of all the photographs together. But, instead of the ingots, in pounds sterling, being exchanged for them, a debt was written off. Known taxable pounds got written off.

...

Back to that *unruly desire*.

Or:

A shift in proximity, a nearing to caring, to deigning to consider softly the *custard*,  
the custardy motive behind a finger that takes shots at something...

*Sex was too untidy for him.*

*"That sort of thing was entirely out of the question."*

He describes a young man as having a face

*like a pool touched by the sun.*

This isn't about you, but it could be.

**You** are metallic:

Is it your skin or the texture of the photo paper, or this flat screen?  
I can't know.

In the dark, lit only by a film, someone paraphrases:

*What do you like about the desert?*  
*It's clean.*

...

Are you, Wilfred, only responsible for your ends? Do you know —  
the finger that triggers the camera to take; the slotting slunk of the shot. how every  
photo is a record of a finger depressed. \_\_\_\_\_ and then released.

In the morning I lie back, thinking about knowledge.  
Its semantic specificity,

How I'm okay with *to know*: I know nothing, I know you,  
But not with the: knowledge as a noun you can gather up about you like a  
skirt and move somewhere else.

Knowledge

won't be moved about:

Isn't  
pallet-able  
forklift-able.

not even.

It refuses to be held.

see:

You have been indexed by this archive.  
And that *x* from *index* is so direct, so sure.

it pins.

and

an *x* marks a spot – it *marks* it!

...

in hotter countries we'd do something like this to our mosquito bites,  
with the hard nail of a thumb.

first one way, digging it in to the swollen red, then the other,  
really getting it.

an x of two curves

A way to offset the itch,  
a warring gesture than only salved in the moment, really.

It feels good to mark things  
it does.

but the mar-ring of a marking is something you can't get away from.  
a way at not marking while you demarcate  
could be to broaden the capture—

a broadening of a line that goes on still, until  
it is the shape of the lived world.

to pin something down

(in two dimensions)

to know its location

(in two dimensions)

defines

makes finite and utterable

but, more, utterly within a flat plane.

and

a plane is not knowledge.

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...

...

...

You with the camera,

You think you're getting at it, hitting, grasping, shooting, it.

Then, you take it home, to a dark room where you try to give it back the light  
and —

—and

it is insincere. You no longer live.

There is no knowledge there.

maybe *knowledge*, instead of being what escaped you, is  
that *act of escape* itself.

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You read someone, who quotes someone, paraphrasing somebody else, as saying:

*Your obligation is to know your object  
and  
to steadily, inexorably darken and deepen it.*

Our object's not even sure of what *it* is,

though.

Nor I.

It could be the glint at almost the centre of the frame,  
the tiny key.

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## References

*The custard* is from a lost pdf of a book.

*Karl* is Karl Marx, via Slavoj Žižek in *The Parallax View*

*The person watching a film in the dark*, is Moyra Davey in *Index Cards*.

*The stuff about Wilfred Thesiger and sex*, from James Maw:

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/aug/31/books.military>

*The final quotation* is from Kathryn Scanlan in *Notes on Craft*:

<https://granta.com/kathryn-scanlan-notes-on-craft/>