

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Captured on Camera

by Richard Wilding

People rarely look the way you expect them to, even when you've seen pictures. It's why – call me old-fashioned – I prefer the more reliable testimony of a painted portrait. I was never at all good at drawing and that sort of thing – just have zero talent for it. It takes quite a skill, I think, to be able to draw and paint and it's a skill I'd like to acquire one day. I think maybe I'll sign up to a life drawing class one of these days. When I have the time for it. That's always appealed to me and no, it's not because I get to stare at naked women all day long and ogle at their bits. That's not me, not at all.

A photo simply can't take in the whole person. It takes how you are in that moment – the unoriginality of which thought rendering it no less true. Take my Uber photograph, for example, the one I had taken for six quid (I ask you!) at the photobooth in Morrisons for my Uber identity credentials. What can you tell of me from that? Very little is the answer. You'd get completely the wrong impression of me. I sat there, in the booth, having done my weekly shop and having stolen, as I always do, a little ginger root and tried my best to relax and think happy thoughts but what instead happened was I remembered the time that she and I had gone into that same photo booth and taken shots of ourselves pulling silly faces and whatnot and the thought must have somehow crept into my eyes because the result was an expression which implied I spent my life walking around supermarkets with a gurning and faintly unsettling scowl. I look like I'm mad, which I'm not, so.

You'd tell it was me, physically, from the photo but like an alternative reality me like in one of those parallel universes where the parallel me does most of what I do but with subtle differences all of which take place behind the veil, as it were, so no-one would know who the

real me – this me, was. Is. I mean, the whole talk of parallel universes is just another story like the ones you find in the Bible – should that be a capital B, or lower case?

There is no hidden me. Just me. From the photo, you see the short-cropped grey hair and the face which honestly isn't as chubby in real life as the photo makes out and my slightly snub nose and the second chin and yes, the photo on the Uber website wouldn't look a million miles from the driver who arrives at the curb. Quite honestly, with the way my eyes look in that photo I'm not sure I'd get in the car with me! Whereas, in real life, I've got a gentle smile and what I consider to be good all-round social manners. Good with kids, that sort of thing.