

4 TEXTS ABOUT LIGHT

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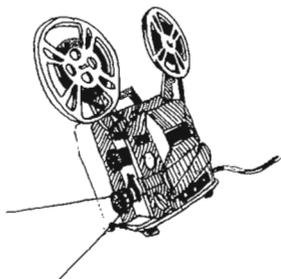
>7.8.9.

>10



Accelerating exponentially...
And then physics comes along, and ruins everything.

My body gives off heat and light, but dimly, flickeringly, in slow motion. If you could see my whole life from beginning to end in a single motionless line, it would glow like neon tubing, snaking through the houses and rooms where I have lived.



I'm standing in front of the new log church, wearing my Sunday clothes. Everyone from around here is in town this morning. A man from the city is here to make a movie of us. We are lined up in rows facing the camera, the shortest stand in front. The air is cool, but the sun feels warm. I can feel its heat on my face. The ground is muddy and thawing. Cart wheels have cut deep ruts into the ground we're standing on. The man asks us to smile and wave at the camera when he gives the signal. When he does, the black leather box starts going 'clickety-clack' like a sewing machine. The noise is so loud that it startles the horses.

1. That sunlight traveled ninety-three million miles (almost nine minutes) just to touch your face.
2. Their greeting reaches us, seated here in the scholarly, air-conditioned darkness, many decades later.

You cannot see yourself in any mirror. You can't see your reflection in anything, not even someone else's eyes. It is not as literal as you might first imagine. There is *something* there in the mirror — an amorphous blob of shapes, hues, tones and colours — but your brain fails to identify it as 'you'. You have grown accustomed to having others perform certain hygiene rituals for you, especially those involving the face. A typical conversation while shaving might go:

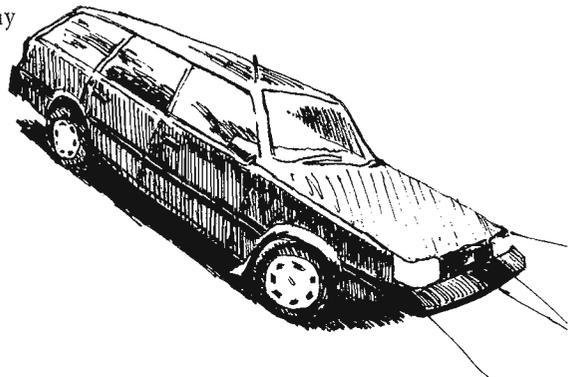
- I can't imagine what it would be like to not be able to see yourself. (pause) Can you see yourself in photos?
- No.
- Videos?
- Nope.
- What about drawings?
- Well, ironically, if it is a bad likeness, I can see myself. Otherwise...
- What about bad photography?
- No. All photos. Never.



Right about now is where the groomer becomes skeptical. *It's obviously psychosomatic. Some kind of childhood trauma involving a mirror.* The steady downward motions of the razor become increasingly brusque as tight-lipped resentment settles in.

In a bed and breakfast on Frenchman's Bay, I stare out the window. It's night-time. Across the bay, I can see a mountain that rises above Bar Harbour, twelve miles distant. "That flash of light you see is from the headlights of on-coming cars as they come down the mountain-side," the proprietress says cheerfully.

Back in our room upstairs, I continue to watch for the frail, flickering lights. "It's funny to think of how our lives can come into contact with other people's only for a split second." I say this to Pierre, but he's already asleep on the bed. Over the next few days, I become overly conscious of this phenomena. I meet many people who I will never see again. The stupid truth of this bland fact makes me feel deeply sad and, at the same time, a bit ridiculous.



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