



IN THE SHADOW OF THE AMERICAN DREAM
**SOON ALL THIS WILL BE
PICTURESQUE RUINS**

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I had almost become completely abstracted. At some point I think I woke up; I think it was minutes ago or maybe hours ago in this motel room. I never felt a sensation like this before but the heavy plasticized curtains covering the three windows of my room created what I imagined a flotation tank might feel like, or a dry rug-covered terrarium with the glass painted black and fitted with an airtight lid. When my eyes first opened it took some measure of time to realize I'd stepped away from myself among the veils of sleep and with that motion my eyes had disconnected from the nerves of the brain: that area where sight flows uninterrupted. The only vision from back there was a sub-vision: the magnified abstraction of a shiny black abdomen like a motorcycle gas tank or a mirrored black globe. Straining against the contours of the room and its furniture to reach back into that area and retrieve more of its form from the shadows, I could see or feel it for moments; the soundless click of its eight legs tapping the surfaces of the walls and ceiling of my sleep.

Later, drinking watery coffee in the motel restaurant, the hot sun of the day slanted across the highway illuminating truckers climbing into their rigs. In the watery circling of shapes and textures, I saw pieces of anatomy surfacing from my sleep: the lips or cheekbones or the fingers of some man or woman speaking and there was no sound but I recalled some story about a man lying in a prison cell with no sense of time forward or past, floating in either his or someone else's interior abstractions for maybe days or years or centuries. A small window high up on the wall across from his bed allowed him on tiptoe a view of a tiny piece of landscape, the tip of a rock or the shallow hip of hillside. In this landscape he could never receive evidence of the seasons and the temperature always remained constant. One day he discovered that he could measure the distances of the landscape by lying on his back in the center of the floor and placing the soles of his bare feet against the shafts of sunlight extending diagonally through the bars. With a series of small walking motions he could trace something calendar- and distance-oriented from the lengths of light. It might have been something algebraic but I never had enough of an education to question this and that was the only way it made sense.

Driving a machine through the days and nights of the empty and pressured landscape eroticizes the whole world flitting in through the twin apertures of the eyes. Images in the distance that could fit in the centimeter of space between the upheld thumb and forefinger of my hand carry the compacted energy of the same image close up. Possibly more. Turning the bend in the highway suddenly reveals, a quarter mile away, a highway crew standing in a jumble of broken earth and enormous machines. In that instance I see the browned flesh of a shirtless man in shorts; I see the bare arms and ribs of a man buried in the shadows of a tractor's cab; I see the bent-over back of a man swinging a pickax with all his might; I see the pale white underarm with the accompanying dark spot of wet hair belonging to a guy up in a cherry picker among the telephone wires and I feel the fist of tension rising through my solar plexus beneath my t-shirt and the sensation grows upward, spreading like some strange fever in my chest,

catching only at the throat where small pockets of sound are contained. In a moment the vehicle I'm steering passes by the scene and I'm left populating the dry plains, the buttes and the cloudless sky with the touch and taste of flesh. I fill the gullies with small but heated fictions.

There is really no difference between memory and sight, fantasy and actual vision. Vision is made of subtle fragmented movements of the eye. These fragmented pieces of the world are turned and pressed into memory before they can register in the brain. Fantasized images are actually made up of millions of disjointed observations collected and collated into the forms and textures of thought. So when I see the workers taking a rest break between the hot metal frames of the vehicles, it doesn't matter that they are all actually receding miles behind me on the side of the road. I'm already hooked into the play between vision and memory and recoding the filmic exchange between the two so that I'm without a vehicle and I have my hand flung out in a hitchhiking motion and one of the men has stopped his pickup along the stretch of barren road. Now I am seated next to his body in the front seat. We are traveling and speaking soundlessly and he eventually turns off the highway onto a series of dirt roads that end among the psychedelic patterns of the tree-filled hillsides and there are my hands before me and there is the almost inaudible click of his zipper riding down between the fingers in slow motion. There is the taste of sperm at the edge of a lake cast into shadows by the surrounding mountainsides. There is the hungry unreeling of all this in the unraveling landscape of dry scrub plains through the front windshield and the rearview mirror. And here is the solitary form of my body leaning back in the sunburned interior of my car, foot pressing on the gas pedal sending me forward toward the gray veils of rain drifting across the white a hundred miles away.

Like the ocean's movement where every seventh wave is higher and more furious than the others, small pieces of last night's sleep return in the eddy and flow of the day's turning. The guy in the prison recalls something of his history: he once worked in a canning plant on the edge of the coastal town, in the warehouses that were large darkened metal buildings swept with the cool chill of massive refrigerating units. Under dim ceiling bulbs he spent days and months packing cartons with unlabeled tin cans, each can containing some kind of liquid, forty-eight cans to a carton, thirty-six cartons to a wood palette and then metal strapping bands tightened around each block layer to keep them from tumbling. Each minute of the day was spent making the same gestures of the arms: lift, swing, deposit, lift swing deposit, tape lift drop and push. He gets lost in himself the same way I do at some point I forget I'm in a vehicle, much less driving. After years of this work he begins to dream of the cans sitting packed away in the vast recesses of the warehouse waiting. He slowly developed the sense that each can contained a life, each breathing in forty-eight rhythms to a carton thirty-six cartons to a palette, thousands and thousands of palettes. And the combined sounds of all that consciousness waiting and waiting in the stillness of those dim buildings woke him up some nights tangled among the bedsheets laden with sweat.

I feel that I'm caught in the invisible arms of government in a country slowly dying beyond our grasp. There is something singing of this, something in the currents of wind and breeze floating along the black electric cables lining the roads, something I can't see or touch but moves in the shape of vowels and uttered sounds like the spinning soft bodies of birds playing with the sky. I play games with the road to shake myself up, at times squeezing my eyelids closed so that I drive quarter-mile stretches without sight and it becomes a fight to open my eyes before the side of the road overtakes me. It's as if a second person is sitting within my body at the wheel. The body that holds the wheel understands the danger that mounts by the moment and the second body smiles in the dark interior of the first. When the eyes finally open, they reveal nothing new about the world except a slight shift in landscape proving that increased mortality teaches me nothing. There's no enlarged or glittering new view of the nature of things or existence. No god or angels brushing my eyelids with their wings. Hell is a place on earth. Heaven is a place in your head.

Late at night when most of the traffic on the highways had exited for motel sleep, I turned off the road and drove up a dirt hill toward a truck stop hidden for a moment in the folds of the landscape. In a series of wheel motions, a neon-outlined teepee slid into view out of the darkness. I needed some coffee because the road started becoming confused with the sky. Small rocks turned up by the wheels pinged under the car's belly. Down along the service road the prehistoric silhouettes of sixteen-wheel rigs ground their gears in the blackness to shift back out to the main road. As each cab swung by me there was a video blaze of tiny green and red ornamental cab lights framing the darkened windows containing a momentary fractured bare arm or dim face filled with the stony gaze of road life. In these moments my face travels an elongated neck out my side window and floats up into the shadows of their open windows to place its tongue in between the parted lips of each driver. I could feel their arms reaching through the breeze of our moving vehicles to embrace me from behind.

Pulling through the darkness and the swirling dust I parked in front of the building. After stepping from my car and moving across the nightsoil toward the plate-glass doors, I noticed a green beat-up chevy parked under the fluorescent drift of building lights, and behind the shadows of the driver's window, as if swimming in the depths of lantern seas, was the amazing and beautiful face of a navajo man in his early fifties. He sat hunched in the driver's seat unmoving, his face tilted as if in wait for someone familiar to exit the silent doors of the building. I stopped for an extended moment lost in his distances. He was trapped within the glassed-in diorama of his metallic-and-chrome vehicle, within the museum of his own natural history as viewed through a white boy's eyes.

It was a tabloid moment in time. Issuing between the static waves on the car radio as I entered a small city in the west was a news story reporting that a teenage Native American boy in a small but resilient automobile had made a wrong-way turn against the rush of oncoming traffic in order to mount a curb and run over a college student

waiting for a bus. The boy's car then turned back onto the road and disappeared in the morning rush-hour confusion.

Driving around the city, it didn't take long to realize that if you didn't have a vehicle, a machine of speed, you owned poverty. It was yet another city dying of a disease whose anatomy was just beyond the inhabitants' grasp. Its origins may have been as a trading post in another time but now it had become a government war town filled with a half million workers employed in the various research centers attempting to perfect a president's dream of laser warfare from the floating veil of outerspace. Local papers were filled with patriotic hard-ons in the face of recent successes in the nearby desert where researchers were able to knock a dummy missile out of the clear blue sky with a laser discharged from a device the size of a refrigerator. Other than the clouds in the sky, an occasional bird or dog and the anonymous nomadic poor, all movement in the city was confined to the automobile. Those who owned cars, when witnessed close up in the tiled halls of shopping centers, had a vague transparency and thickness to their skin. The city during the day was bathed in a hot white sunlight; a steel-pounding heat coursed off the walls of miragelike architecture in the waves of desert wind. There was a distant energy surrounding everything like fear because there was nothing about the architecture that the eye could settle on; the eye was constantly adrift almost as if it were experiencing a small panic. It was an architecture of a population anticipating impermanence or death. It was a vacuum turned inside out, prefab materials of housing resembling the dry husks of insects halfway through their molt. All along the sidewalks were the people reduced to walking; the desperation of whole families sitting in lethargy on the curbsides lost to the sounds of automobiles; the swollen slit-eyed heads of drunks bobbing in the blue air as they staggered along the sidewalks. Owning a vehicle, you could drive by and with the pressure of your foot on the accelerator and with your eyes on the road you could pass it quickly—maybe not fast enough to overlook it completely, but fast enough so that the speed of the auto and the fear centers of the brain created a fractured marriage of light and sound. The images of poverty would lift and float and recede quickly like the gray shades of memory so that these images were in the past before you came upon them. It was the physical equivalent of the evening news.

The motor replaces the horse; the speed and the intent of the vehicle replaces the dead bows and arrows of history: the kid made the next day's newspapers. An early afternoon bicyclist reported a teenager driving a dark-colored camaro who chased him down a one-way street. The cyclist narrowly avoided being run over by abandoning his bike and scrambling on top of a row of parked cars. The bicycle was left mangled and the camaro scraped along the sides of the cars in a fury before making a U-turn and disappearing. Two middle-aged women came forward with a story of having been menaced in the previous week while crossing an intersection not far from the state campus. Other sightings of the kid were reported in the next twenty-four hours. One woman told of being grazed by a dark-colored auto that purposefully accelerated and swung toward her as she got into her own car. A slow private history was beginning to

reveal itself. The hotel I stayed in was an ex-prostitution hotel with a nonfunctioning swimming pool in a former skid-row section of town. It was in the general striking area of the camaro. Every time I walked down the street or got out of my car I thought of a body stripped of flesh turning slowly on the end of a rope, I thought of the wind reeling through the red skulls of flowers, I thought of the face of our current president floating disembodied and ten stories tall over the midnight buildings. I wondered why any of these things, like the kid in his camaro, are a surprise. Why weren't more of us doing this?

There were times in my teens when I was living on the streets and selling my body to anyone interested. I hung around a neighborhood that was so crowded with homeless people that I can't even remember what the architecture of the blocks looked like. Whereas I could at least spread my legs and gain a roof over my head, all those people down in those streets had reached the point where the commodity of their bodies and souls meant nothing more to anyone but themselves. I remember times getting picked up by some gentle and repressed fag living in a high-rise apartment filled with priceless north american indian artifacts and twentieth-century art who was paying me ten bucks to suck on my dick. As I studied his head bobbing against my belly while seated on a leather couch, I marveled at how simple it would be to lift the carved stone fish from the glass coffee table and smack the top of this head in and live on easy street for a while. I thought of the hundreds of times standing in a moving subway car, a cop standing with his back to me, his holster within easy reach and me undoing the gun restraint with my eyes over and over. I thought of the neo-nazis posing as politicians and religious leaders and I thought of my genuine fantasies of murder and wondered why I never crossed the line. It's not that I'm a *good* person or even that I am afraid of containment in jail; it may be more that I can't escape the ropes of my own body, my own flesh, and bottom line in the pyramids of power and confinement one demon gets replaced by another in a moment's notice and no one gesture can erase it *all* that easily.

In the last evening in the motel room, falling to sleep amid the sounds of splintering glass from a fight in another room, I found myself walking in this rural section of the country. It was dirt roads and a thick strangling brush and woods appearing over the tops of brambles that lined the road. There were groves of beautiful firs and leafy oaks and some beech trees. I came into this area where the road turned triangular. The triangle had a stretch of sidewalk with small-town stores. There was a coffee shop, a ma and pa-type restaurant with formica counter and shining stools and a gallon bottle of hard-boiled eggs in vinegar and maybe some containers of beef jerky. I stepped up onto the sidewalk which was built like a slightly raised boardwalk of slatted wood and in the shadows of a wall there's this fourteen- or fifteen-year-old kid with long black hair and a denim jacket with cigarettes in the top pocket. He's standing outside this open screen door of the coffee shop with one leg folded beneath him the sole of his foot flat against the wall of the building and hands in pockets. As I pass the doorway of the shop, I glance inside out of the corner of my eyes and see three or four teenage guys

playing a couple of pinball machines, riding the flippers and machines with bucking hip motions and thrusts and they're actually in the process of breaking open the machines to get the money. I flinch a little in that moment, realizing there is danger and I don't know where I am. I'm a stranger in these parts. My body is in motion as I take all this in and the kid leaning outside the door says what the fuck you lookin at? and before I can answer he whips out this long knife. It's about nine inches of thin steel blade and with a flick of his wrist slashes my bare arm open from wrist to elbow. I look down in slight shock and step back waving my hands in front of me saying, "Nothing man ... nothing ... sorry." He seems satisfied and lets me pass on down the sidewalk. I'm holding my arm to keep the wound as closed up as possible and when I reach a section of the sidewalk where there's an alley I step inside to lean shakily against a wall. I notice two other guys about my age all cut up on the arms, legs and bellies. I stumble out of the alley and suddenly this policeman shows up. He's wearing tan pants, shirt and cap and black boots and he's holding a whip about a yard long. The kid spots him coming and starts running down the road in the direction I came from. The officer starts chasing him and I run after the two of them to see what happens to the kid. The kid is in the distance and the officer stops in the middle of the road. The kid turns while running to see where we are just as the officer snaps his arm and the whip elongates into the distance and wraps around the kid's head bringing him to a halt—his hands come up to his face completely wrapped in leather thong. The officer runs the distance and catches up to the kid and hog-ties him like a rodeo calf. By the time I reach them the officer steps back a few feet and pulls out a shotgun taking aim on the kid. I'm thinking, "Oh man ... he ain't gonna shoot him—he wouldn't do that." And as I'm thinking that, the officer pulls the trigger and blows a hole open in the kid's side. The kid's side is gaping open near the waist showing pulsating intestines and stomach. I'm crouching near the kid's head looking into his eyes as the officer comes up and squats down next to me. The kid is no longer a kid; he's some kind of stray dog with bristly black fur and frightened eyes. The officer takes the kid's knife from the ground and with the other hand carefully parts the flesh of the wound until the organ that seems to be the stomach is revealed, its delicate pink grayish bloat quivering like a lung puffing in and out. The officer delicately cuts it open and clear liquid pours out. I look into the dog's eyes and watch the terror and pain change into an opiumlike daze. A sensual pleasure passes beneath their surface, a strange state of grace in the flight behind the eyes speeding up, the fading of life into the pale glaze of death.

Americans can't deal with death unless they own it. If they own it, they will celebrate it, like in the air force base museum of the atomic bomb, where whole families of camera-toting tourists gather after the required i.d. security checks. In the gray-carpeted rooms, they walk the mazes of portable screens and platforms and enlarged photographs of death and incineration as seen from a discreet distance. The distance is far enough so you can't see the bodies, only the architecture. The tour in this museum is led by an ancient matronly type who explains various levels of the bombs inven-

tion with all the glad bearings of a parent who has just given birth to her first child. I couldn't deal with the clouds of perfume and the decaying personalities of the crowd so I wandered off by myself to walk the maze. There were machines that clicked on, set off merely by my presence and I'm walking through a paranoid blur of mechanical men's voices crawling out of hidden speakers and image after image floating and shifting into fragments of large grainy black-and-white blow-ups of sullen men standing half-conscious with pride next to sinister fat canisters looking like overturned pot-bellied stoves. The voices have all the tone and texture of high school film soundtracks explaining the abstract motions of the sperm entering the side of the egg and fertilizing it, or the hunger and desire implicit in the tiny snake swallowing the egg ten times the size of its own head.

Outside the shedlike buildings are the constant shrill vibrating sounds of jets taking off into the afternoon heat. Through a back window that overlooks the concrete edges of the runways I see a playground with defunct miniature jets and spare broken engines from spacecraft of the past decades. It is a playground for the kids and at that moment there is a family gathering among the hulls of bomber planes and world war two relics for a photo op. Standing in the shadow of a late-model bomber cabled to the asphalt surface of the ground a grandmotherly type gathers three kids in close to her body, fitting them in the frame of their parents' camera shutter. It's three generations of a family and everything is so clean and abstract that I'm feeling dizzy. I'm watching all this surrounded by two screens showing speeded up videos of a nuclear reactor being built by men the size of ants. They build and rebuild the reactors in twenty seconds flat. I'm thinking if I owned the place I'd hook the constant smell of rotting flesh into the air-conditioning unit and have all the screens filled with speeded-up films of rotting corpses and the family outside the window is moving to the next plane for the next photo. A man steps out from behind a doorway I hadn't noticed before and offers me his hand in greeting, asking if I'd like a cup of coffee. He looks like the kind of guy who'd one day end up in an alcohol detox center studying snakes and insects. I turn away without a word; I'll never shake the hand of someone I might be fighting against in wartime.

We are born into a preinvented existence within a tribal nation of zombies and in that illusion of a one-tribe nation there are real tribes. Some of the tribes are in the business of sucker-punching peoples psyches in the form of maintaining the day-to-day job of government—they sell the masses a pile of green-tainted meat; i.e., a corrupted and false history as well as a corrupted and false future, and although that meat stinks of rot and pus and blood, this particular tribe extols these foul emissions as if they were virtues made of glorious sensitivities: “Raise Ole Glory while we do it to them again ...”

Then there are other tribes which work hand in hand with the government, offering slices of meat in the form of doubletalk; or *hope*—hope as a chain of submission. Then there are the tribes that suckle at the breast of telecommunications every evening af-

ter work and are fatally lulled into society's deep sleep. Day after day they experience waking nightmares but they've either bought the con of language from the tribe that offers hope, or they're too fucking exhausted or fearful to break through the illusion and examine the structures of their world.

There are other tribes that experience the X ray of Civilization every time they leave the house or turn on the tv or radio or pick up a newspaper or when they suddenly realize their legs have automatically come to a halt before a changing traffic light. A civil war and a national trial for the "leaders" of this country, as well as certain individuals in organized religions, is the soundtrack that plays and replays in the heads of members of that tribe. Some members of the tribe understand the meaning of language. They also understand what *freedom* truly is and if the other tribes want to hand them the illusion of *hope* in the form of the *leash*—in the form of *language*—like all stray dogs with intelligence from experience, they know how to turn the leash into a rope to exit the jail windows or how to turn the leash into a noose to hang the jailers. But when the volume of that war reaches epic dimensions, and when the person hearing it fails to connect with another member of the same tribe who can acknowledge the sound, that person can one day find themselves at the top of a water tower in suburbia armed with a high-powered rifle firing indiscriminately at the ants crawling around below. That person can one day find himself running amok in the streets with a handgun; that person can one day find himself lobbing a grenade at the forty-car motorcade of the president; or that person can end up on a street corner, homeless hungry and wild-eyed, punching himself in the face or sticking wires through the flesh of his arms or chest.

I left one town and headed for another on the available interstate that led through sections of burst red earth and cables and tractors and pickup trucks and workers in dusty clothes running back and forth. It was a couple of hours before dusk and as I turned onto a lesser used road, the landscape grew more quiet and the car radio had navajo language chattering through waves of static. There were no other cars but mine and the one I was in didn't like mountains so I had to drive with the heater full blast to cool the engine down. Big goofy cactus grew in the shapes of people only green on the roadsides among burned patches of sagebrush and the occasional shock of rows of some kind of produce in long irrigated stretches.

Last night I felt unbelievably sad and sometimes it happens that way: a sensation comes out across the landscape into the cities and further into the window of the car as I'm coasting the labyrinths of the canyon streets. It feels for a moment like nothing more than wind; it's something I don't see coming and suddenly it's upon me and my eyes are blurring with tears and fragmented spills of neon and ghostly bodies of pedestrians and smokestacks and traffic lights and I'm gasping from a sense of loss and desire. I can't think of anything I am truly afraid of and I'm trying to give something unspeakable words; some of us live in big cities so we can be alone, so we can avoid

ourselves, and yet by living within massive populations we can have help or love within reach if necessary.

I am fearful of something more than fear: it's something in the landscape surrounding the cities and smaller towns between here and the coast, something *out there* that feels so empty and it is not made of earth or muscle or fur; it's like a pocket of death but with no form other than the light one might cast upon its trail of fragments. For a moment I think it's just the unfamiliarity of the landscape's agenda, what it contains in the future of its emptiness. I mean, out there I am in and surrounded by a void, a "natural" counterpart to the industrial void of the cities. Out there I can feel buried under the dome of the sky and feel claustrophobic in the heat which is like a plastic cushion pressing unseen against all the surfaces of my exposed body and in all that dizzying stillness I feel like my soul and my flesh will suddenly and abruptly be consumed within the civilizational landscape or else expelled off the face of the earth. What troubles me is that I might not mind.

When I was a teenager I had a recurring fantasy that began after my first motorcycle ride. This was shortly after waking up one morning and realizing that government and god were interchangeable and that most of the people in the landscape of my birth insisted on having one or both determine the form of their lives. I recognized the fact that the landscape was slowly being chewed up and that childhood dreams of autonomy in the form of hermetic exile were quickly becoming less possible. (I was also in the threads of a childlike crush on a guy I'd met in a times square movie house who'd taken me home for twenty-four hours of sex. He was a college student who looked like he'd grown up in some part of the country like kentucky and in the angles of his chest and abdomen and face, I'd gotten him mixed up with the characters in the movie we were watching when we first noticed each other in the dark seats of the balcony. It was a movie about sexy moonshiners who walked around half naked and eventually died in a shootout with the federal authorities. After carrying on a secret affair with this guy for a number of weeks, he broke it off with the explanation that I was too young and when I got old enough I would understand the range of possibilities for different lovers and that at that abstract moment of time I would leave him.) I lay in a hotel room one night after selling my body to a customer who had gone back home to his wife and kids, and I wished I'd had a motorcycle and that I was in a faraway landscape, maybe someplace out west. I saw myself riding this machine faster and faster and faster toward the edge of a cliff until I hit the right speed that would take me off the cliff in an arcing motion. At that instant when my body and the machine cleared the edge of the cliff and hit the point in the sky where I was neither rising nor falling—somewhere in there: once my body and the motorcycle hit a point in the light and wind and loss of gravity, in that exact moment, I would suddenly disappear, and the motorcycle would continue the downward arc of gravity and explode into flames somewhere among the rocks at the bottom of the cliff. And it is in that sense of void—that marriage of body-machine and space—where one should most desire a continuance of life, that I most wish to disappear. I realized that the image of the point of marriage between body-vehicle and space was similar to the beginning of orgasm. I may be living a life that is

the equivalent of a ride on an upside-down road but it is only to shake all the ropes off, even the ropes of mortality. Even in the face of something like gravity, one can jump at least three or four feet in the air and even though gravity will drag us back to the earth again, it is in the moment we are three or four feet in the air that we experience true freedom.

So what is that feeling of emptiness?

Maybe it's that the barren landscape becomes a pocket of death because of its emptiness. Maybe the enormity of the cloudless sky is a void reflecting the mirrorlike thought of myself. That to be confronted by space is to fill it like a vessel with whatever designs one carries—but it goes farther than these eyes having nothing to distract them as vision does its snake-thing and wiggles through space. There is something in all that emptiness—it's the shape of a particular death that got erected by tiny humans on the spare face of an enormous planet long before I ever arrived, and the continuance of it probably long after I have gone.

The Indian kid and his camaro got picked up by the cops in a suburban section of town and the interviewed neighbors could recall nothing more alarming about the kid than that he had an obsession with keeping his car cleaned and polished. One neighbor said that the kid loved to peel out from the gravel driveway sending cascades of stones into the air. I read all this in the local paper in the curtained hotel room just before leaving town. Outside the window of the balcony room, three Metal guys were building a new patio for the defunct pool. The pool was slowly filling with red dust carried across the roads by intermittent breezes. At some point I stood up from the table and pulled back the curtain a hair and watched the half-naked bodies of the guys climbing in and out of their truck for tools or to turn the volume of the music up. I watched them leaning for extended moments in various positions creating sexy tableaux like museum paintings, like bleached out Vermeers and Rembrandts in all that hot sunlight and shadow. I felt like a detective with only the window glass and the curtains camouflaging my desire. For a moment I was afraid the intensity of my sexual fantasies would become strangely audible; the energy of the images would become so loud that all three guys would turn simultaneously like witnesses to a nearby car crash.

Out the side window of the car I see the thick whirling vortex of a red dust devil on the plains. I abruptly pull the car over and grab my super-8 camera to film it and it disappears. I stare at the place where I saw it, waiting for it to reappear but it doesn't so I drive on. My balls are sliding in lonesomeness. The windows are down because of the heater and the motion of the vehicle brings a false breeze onto my face and bare chest and through my scalp. For one brief moment in time no one in the world knows where

I am. Not family, friends, nor members of government and that causes me to drift, gives me room to experience charges of frustrating sexuality. Turning the radio knob I come across a seductive country song. I close my eyes for periods of time as I drive on up into the mountainside, listening to the sound of the singer's voice. In fact, I turn up the volume so I can hear the reverberation of sound in the man's throat—that way I can better imagine him whispering sweet things in my ear as he fucks me, holding firm to my hips with his calloused hands. I was lost in the heat of his torso and the taste of his tongue unreeling behind my closed eyelids when I felt a bump and a pop as I knocked over a cactus on the roadside. I twisted the steering wheel in a hypnotic daze of calamity and thumped back onto the asphalt roadway leaving a scattering of surprised buzzards shifting into the air like umbrellas. The sun was slipping toward the edge of the world when I pulled over at a highway rest stop on the crest of the mountain. No one else was around so I kicked about in the red dust for a while among the various species of cactus and tumbleweeds. I took a piss behind the adobe outhouse pointing my dick in different directions so the urine formed a dark outline of a face in the dry earth. I felt sad and exhilarated simultaneously. I walked around watching the light fade over the curve of the earth, creating crazy-kat silhouettes of the cactus and scrub. Occasionally the twin beacons of light from a distant car or truck coming from the direction I was heading would float across the folds of earth and the silence would be broken by the hum of the motor. One flippy bat came out early, a baby one, wobbling through the gathering breezes under a roadside lamp, getting knocked around by the currents as it tried to catch the insects attracted by the light. Over by the drinking fountains a bunch of honey bees trying to drink water from the steel rim of the flooded basins fell in and were drowning. I spent a while picking them out one by one with a soda straw and laying them on the concrete walkway where they stumbled around in stupid circles. At the sound of each approaching car my dick grew more hard but each car continued without stopping. I wanted to run out into the dusk and throw myself headfirst onto the earth and then roll sideways for miles until the sun came back. I remembered a friend of mine dying from AIDS, and while he was visiting his family on the coast for the last time, he was seated in the grass during a picnic to which dozens of family members were invited. He looked up from his fried chicken and said, "I just want to die with a big dick in my mouth."

Sitting on the warm hood of the car as the temperature fell, a sixteen-wheel rig pulled through the distance and entered the parking strip. With a compressed hiss of brakes, the cab door swung open and a young guy swung out. He was shirtless and covered in marks of sweat and dirt. As he rounded the side of the truck he nodded: "What's up?" and proceeded to walk around the entire truck kicking each tire a couple of times while I held my breath. Then he climbed back into the cab, shifted gears and drove out of the lot, taillights blinking. Darkness had completely descended onto the landscape and I stood up and stretched my arms above my head and I wondered what it would be like if it were a perfect world. Only god knows. And he is dead.

I'm in a building, a high-rise building resembling the interior of an enormous ship, middle-aged sailors all around, guys that have been working on the oceans for up to twenty-five or thirty years. At times it's a building I'm standing in, at other times it becomes a ship with long rolling motions, then it becomes a building again.

I'm walking down a hallway and come to a room where this young man is standing and beginning to remove his clothes. Next to him is an open door where clouds of steam are billowing out as if a shower is running. On the floor is a newspaper with a story about the navy trying to give a dishonorable discharge to a guy because he was a homosexual. There is a photograph accompanying the story and I realize the face in the picture is the same as the the guy undressing. I look up from the paper just as he drops his pants to the floor and steps out of view into the the clouds of steam.

Something shifts in this sleep and I am standing in a room that has only three walls; as I turn around I realize I am in the ruins of a building, standing on a balcony. The building has different levels to it. As I walk through doorways and hallways I see that some sections are only a story tall, others are five or six stories tall and all of them belong to a dilapidated hotel. Judging by what remains of the molding on the walls and ceilings, and the chandeliers hanging from the center of each room, it was once a place for the rich maybe a century ago. Large sections of walls are missing and there is nothing but jumbles of steel rods twisted and caked with broken slabs of concrete. Off in the distance behind a line of waving palm trees, the sky is developing a dark stormy patch of gray and coal black. The funnel of a tornado is forming and I stare at it for a while before moving into the next room. There is a stranger standing in the corner of the room; he looks like a guy who would work with machines; he has dark hair, strong forearms and he's wiping his hands with a dishcloth. Behind him through the tangled rupture of broken walls, the backdrop of sky is woven through with flashes of rose and turquoise. The colors are swimming into the shape of funnels making up a couple of tornados that grow larger as I watch. The guy wiping his hands doesn't notice them or else seems unconcerned. "I think we'd better find shelter," I say as the funnels grow closer and closer. Turning from the guy, I move quickly through a series of rooms and wonder if the hotel has been through an earthquake or fire or bombings and strafing as in war. Twisted silhouettes of girders and shells of rooms with large sections of ceilings, roofs, walls and floors missing, each of them revealing different views of the tornados and framed horizon. The whole sky is revolving furiously and beautifully as I wake up, my eyes opening on the cool light of morning slipping between the hotel curtains.

The sun in the part of arizona I was traveling through was so strong it made my eyes half close and all the earth seemed like one enormous field, dry as bone. The sun was bleaching the color out of every surface and shape so my brain had to wrestle to give things form. Anything, bush, cattle, vehicle or human, immediately turned to silhouette against the bright sky. With the combination of heat and light, the air had a frail white quality. The whole sky seemed closer to the road in these parts and I could barely

stand the magnesium glimmer of light burning up my lower body. My arms stretched to the steering wheel, I was skimming over the pale gray asphalt and the speedometer was measuring between eighty and ninety miles per hour. The road was so flat in stretches, or there was so little in the landscape to distract the eye, that it was impossible, without looking at the dashboard, to tell when I was speeding. It was a landscape for drifting, where time expands and contracts and vision is replaced by memories; small filmlike bursts of bodies and situations, some months ago, some years ago.

I was headed toward Meteor Crater. It's a blemish on the earth's skin where twenty-one thousand years ago a half-billion-ton chunk of iron blew through outer space and slammed into the planet leaving a hole three miles in circumference. The collision has been calculated as having had the force of a multimegaton bomb, and now, twenty-two thousand years later, some enterprising jerks charge you seven bucks to look at the hole.

Four miles from the service road to Meteor Crater, I pulled into the lane of a highway rest stop and coasted up a slight incline to the parking spaces. Dazed tourists in pastel clothes wandered briefly from their cars to the small building housing the toilets. Some stayed inside their cars, windows rolled up tight, air-conditioning blasting the interior. They looked like critters with hair-dos in aquariums and as I passed the line of cars they turned to look with a small panic in their eyes. It was incredibly hot and the air felt like it would burst into flames. Next to the walkway leading to the toilets was a sign: *\$1,000 fine for defacing the rocks*, referring to a large group of sandstone boulders maybe eight feet high and fifteen yards long and wide. Maybe they were boulders that flew out of the hole three miles away when the meteor hit because they looked foreign to the landscape, as if lifted straight out of a flintstones special. Nearby was a second sign: *poisonous snakes and insects inhabit this area*. On the walkway by the twin-roofed entrances to the toilets, a Native American family was seated before two blankets filled with cheap turquoise trinkets and hunger. The turquoise was actually blue plastic with mineral veins printed on it. A couple of tiny speakers above the doors to the *men's* and *women's* rooms spit out a steady stream of weather information that hovered in the air in a series of metallic echoes. A pretaped program offering tips on how to avoid dehydration in the concrete streets of large urban centers drifted through the men's room as the door swung shut behind me. An old white-haired man rubbed his hands under the electric dryer. I chose the second stall and opened my belt, dropped my pants and sat down on the toilet seat. To my right, about waist level on the dividing partition were two large holes peeled through the metal. An eye was peering through one of them. I leaned forward slightly and through the second hole I could see a disembodied hand pulling on a large uncircumcised dick. I bounced my own dick in the palm of my hand so the eye could see it. I waited a few minutes till the sounds of the rest room door opening and closing subsided, then stood up and pulled my pants back up and motioned toward the hole, giving the guy a signal to meet me outside.

I was making like the first man on the moon walking the deep creviced surfaces of the flintstones landscape. I was hoping to spot a rattler or a scorpion—after almost a decade of wandering through the southern and western states I'd never come across a rattler in the wild. Too many rattlesnake roundup jubilees and development moves have been killing them off. From the top of the boulders I also had a clear view of the bathrooms and the pathway. More cars were arriving than departing and families were going back and forth from their cars to the rest rooms. Finally the guy from the first stall stepped into the hot glare of sunlight shielding his eyes with an enormous hand. He was what some would consider a freak: a circus giant in american bloodlines and genealogies, the lumbering object of surprise and fear. Had he been of average size and carrying a machete or gun, no one would have given him a second glance. But to have a massive body and height and the two large hands broad as palm leaves caused kids and even adults to unconsciously move backward or sideways a couple of extra steps as if his height took up horizontal space along the path. His body was well proportioned to his height, slightly muscular like he'd been a farm laborer in his youth, but now he looked like a salesman: cheap cotton short-sleeved shirt and beige car-dealer pants. I found him very sexy because I love difference. An unbearably handsome face bores me unless something beneath its surface is crooked or askew: even a broken nose or one eye slightly higher than the other, or something psychological, something unfamiliar and maybe even suspect.

He looked up toward the boulders from under the roof of his hands, then crossed the pebble garden to begin climbing up. In case there were cops, I pretended not to see him and wandered out of view. State police get lots of overtime pay lurking around interstate rest stops hoping to catch some hungry queer kissing another in the loneliness of the tiled bathrooms. Some cops make it a point to step back from urinals and flash their hard dicks at a suspected queer and then arrest him when he makes a move to show he's interested. In new jersey, an undercover cop used his eighteen-year-old son who would stand at the urinals five hours at a stretch and display a hard-on to anyone entering the bathroom. In north Carolina I read a newspaper story in which the columnist was worried about how the sleaze types, attracted to the highway rest stops because queers supposedly made such easy robbery targets, might accidentally beat up and mug a family man. Funny thing was I'd seen and met family men on their knees in rest stops around the nation. The best part of the article was a map of the state that noted which rest stops had the most homosexual activity—that helped keep me from feeling lonely that day.

We met at the far end of the landscape and both acted shy, but within minutes were in our separate cars heading onto the interstate to look for a side road that would give us cover away from the eyes of the world, a place away from the trooper patrol cars where we could get to know each other. There is no such place in that part of arizona. I was tailing him when he finally pulled onto the service road leading over a small bridge and crossing the interstate in the direction of Meteor Crater. Our cars drifted down

a service road in a swirl of dust and pebbles, past a low-set gas station offering free pieces of petrified wood to customers. About a quarter mile farther down the road, a mile from the crater parking lot, he pulled over onto the shoulder and stopped the engine. I pulled up behind him and walked to the passenger side of his car, opened the door and slid into the hot front seat. He was staring straight ahead out the windshield at a plume of dust that grew larger and larger because it contained a car filled with vacationers. His hands were gently smoothing over the folds in his trousers around the general area of his crotch.

The service road leading to the crater is made of a brown asphalt material, roped on both sides with dry red earth and plains of scrub brush and an occasional loping boulder pocked with holes made by the friction of wind-driven sand. In the distance, in any given direction, all you can see is the general curve of the earth and maybe the beginnings of mountains far away in purple tones looking like goofy cartoon hats or sideways faces. The sky is a bowl; it is like the inside curve of the eye if it were mirrored and it's filled with a dusty white blue that catches like imaginary chalk in the throat and it contains the hot disk of sun and a hot wind that buffets the sides of the car and enters over the top of the window glass. After the tourist car passed, and he could make sure of its disappearance in the rearview mirror, his face turned toward me and began the slow swim through space toward mine. His rich dark eyes set into the general outline of his face slowly obscured my view of his hand undoing the zipper of his trousers and reaching into the resulting envelope of cloth, "You ain't a cop are you?" The heat inside the car was so saunalike that I was pouring sweat down my face, under my arms and over my chest where it cooled in the slight breeze. His face was an inch from mine when he saw the answer—no—in my eyes and his tongue slipped between parted lips and entered my mouth.

Someone once said that the ancients believed that light came from within the eyes and that you cast this light upon things in the world wherever you turned. I remember wondering if the world disappeared or was cast into darkness when you closed your eyes, or, even further, if you died, did the world die also. This guy was so intensely sexy I almost couldn't look him in the eye. His body had such presence or something, I don't know what it was; perhaps his height, his large hands, the way he might look sitting in a chair with his clothes having disappeared and his legs pulled apart with me in front of him standing, his head viewed from above, or kneeling, his knees viewed from a close angle. Or maybe it's the shadows of his crotch where it meets the plastic cushion of the chair my face a camera, moving into a slow close-up of his dick, the head of it peeking from the fold of foreskin, a sexy soft-lined pink eye in a hard organ and the sense of it warm in my palms and maybe I just want to feel the sense of it sinking upward in my wet mouth; maybe it's the feeling of my moist palms running over the front of his chest through the folds of his open shirt, soon to have him more naked, his dark head tilted back and small pockets of pleasure sound escaping from the back of his throat. Maybe I just anticipate seeing that light in his eyes, that glitter of life glaz-

ing over in the heat. Or maybe it's the way his arms lift up over his head in the limited space so I can better lick the heat of his body.

If light does come from within does that make us walking movie projectors? Are we casting form onto a dark screen? When I move my eyes very slowly from left to right while sitting still, I can feel and hear a faint clicking sensation suggesting that vision is made up of millions of tiny stills as in transparencies. Since everything is generally in movement around us, then vision is made up of millions of "photographed" and recalled pieces of information. In the seventeenth century a jesuit friar by the name of Scheiner engaged in an experiment where he peels away opaque layers at the back of the eye and revealed a faint image, a transparency of what the eye had imprinted upon it at the moment of its owner's death. Another scientist took the excised eyes of guillotined prisoners and studied them under a microscope to see if there were any legible images imprinted on them. This scientist wanted to see if an image was recorded despite the black hood placed over the guillotine victims' heads at the moment of decapitation. He reported finding one image that was fairly consistent in the eyes he examined: something like a small cloud with two tiny arms waving out from the sides.

Sometimes when I'm caught in the flow of rush-hour traffic in the tangled arteries of interstate ramps and elevated roadways that surrounded an enormous and unfamiliar city, I come to believe that I no longer exist and similarly all the forms and shapes of metal and glass that contain what appear to be human beings are also a fragment of imagination: something like a vision cast into time and space from something outside of myself. I move to a place in the back of my head and merely witness it all. I am amazed by the undefined spectacle of this vision as I pass through, waiting for the code or the anchor that reels me in, brings me through its contours and sets me down like gravity.

He was whispering behind my closed eyelids. Time had lost its strobic beat and all structures of movement and sensation and taste and sight and sound became fragmented, shifting around like particles in lakewater. I love getting lost like this. I'm trying to recall where his hands were, or how they felt under my shirt, or grasping the back of my neck while his tongue licked across my jaw, over my throat. I'm trying to recall the drift of it, trying to recall where we were. I remember sitting in his car, mine parked a few yards behind his in the side weeds. We were in the front seat of his salesman station wagon with the windows open and my door slightly ajar, the two of us jerking off and the rearview mirror adjusted so I could see the span of road behind us while he kept his eyes peeled, scanning the road in front of us, both of us looking for any signs of cop or trooper cars that might glide up silently and unannounced. But in the rear-view mirror I saw nothing but empty space and earth and sky except for the lower part of one electrical stanchion—it might've been a radar tower—two grazing cows beside it and nothing else but the curve of the earth and out in front of the car through the frame of windshield: nothingness and here we are, here I am, some fugitive soul having passed through the void of the cities, skimmed across the emptiness

of landforms and roadways through holes in the mountains westward to this one point in the dead road where vehicles have stopped to rest in the boiling heat and the entire landscape is silent except for the dull flat whine of insects and the dry brush. The oval stones and straw-colored vegetation and cracked red earth and everything feels dried and red except for the pale hanging color of the sky emitting a tone that matches or continues the tone of the human body in absolute stillness. And to be surrounded by this sense of displacement, as this guy's tongue pulls across my closed eyelids and down the bridge of my nose, or to be underneath all that stillness with this guy's dick in my mouth, lends a sense of fracturing. It's as if one of my eyes were hovering a few feet above the car and slowly revolving to take in the landscape and the small car with two humans inside slowly licking each other's bodies into a state of free-floating space and semiconsciousness and an eventual, small, momentary death.

Periodically a car would come. It would start as a bright spark in the distance, a glint of hot metal joining the earth and sky, and soon the unraveling shape of clouds of dust would rise beneath rear wheels, and after a long and soundless moment of this speck vibrating against the horizon, its shape would slowly become discernible and fluctuate into largeness and take on the shape of a tourist's camper or a small sedan and it would eventually gain color and the dark windshield would materialize around a face or two that were first just blank smudges and then would gain features as hot air and sound drifted by. In the moment of their approach, we would stop, rearrange our anatomies, zip up our pants and assume the body language and gaze of tourists losing themselves in the sky for an afternoon. Our hands always the hands of fear and apprehension—mixed with pleasure and frustration—until the car revealed its occupants and intentions. The momentary disengagement from the accelerations where the mind travels in sex, the multiple hands floating back and forth on the textures of trousers waiting for the vehicle to disappear so they can resume their rituals and rhythms of unfastening buckles and zippers, and our faces turn away from the hot shield of sky and burrow into the folds of each other's clothes and bodies.

A solitary tiny bird drops out of the air onto an oval-shaped blue stone and pees noiselessly onto its hot surface. The hallucinatory sensation I recall from the depths of fever is the idea that this guy and I are part of the same vascular system; he and I are two eyeballs sitting in the dark recesses of a metallic skull viewing the world through the windshield the way one's eyes would if they could proportion and transmit information independent of each other as well as recall separate private histories. The automobile is a vehicle of motion just like the human body, its motor, the brain, claiming or recalling distance and motion and passage.

My eyes are microscopes. My eyes are magnifying lenses. My face is plowing through the heat and sensations of this guy's flesh, through the waves of sweat, and in my head is the buzzing sensation of either insect or atmosphere. I see the hallucinogenic way his pores are magnified and each hair is discernible from the other and the uncircumcised dick is bouncing up against my lips as it's released from the trousers. The sensation of its thickness pulls against the surface of my tongue and rubs the walls of

my throat, burying itself past the gag-reflex and then the slow slide of its withdrawal as a disembodied hand descends against the back of my neck, just barely grazing the hairline of the scalp and in the periphery of vision there's the steel-blue glaze of the steering wheel and the threads weaving themselves into the fabric of his trousers and the sound of his body bending and the cool sensation of my shirt being pulled up over my back and the shock of his tongue trailing saliva up my backbone and under my shoulder blades and I am losing the ability to breathe and feeling a dizziness descend, feeling the drift and breeze created by the whirling dervish, using the centrifugal motion of spinning and spinning and spinning to achieve that weightlessness where polar gravity no longer exists. The sounds of his breath and the echo of body movements I am no longer able to separate. The pressure of the anxiety slips closer in the shape of another vehicle or of the cops arriving, nearing the moment where the soul and the weight of flesh disappears in the fracture of orgasm: the sensation of the soul as a stone skipping across the surface of an abandoned lake, hitting blank spots of consciousness, all the whirl of daily life and civilization spiraling like a noisy funnel into my left ear, everything disintegrating, a hyperventilating break through the barriers of time and space and identity. And all of it mixing with the stream of semen drifting over the line of my jaw and collecting in a pool in a pocket created by the back of my neck where it meets his upper thigh and abdomen. I'm tipping over the edge in slow motion. In the moment of my orgasm, as I'm losing myself, I become vaguely aware of his hands cradling my skull and his face appearing out of the hot sky leaning in, or else he's pulling my face up close to his and I'm breaking the mental and physical barrier, I'm listening to my soul speak in sign language or barely perceptible whisperings and I'm lost in the idea that at the exact moment of the kill, the owl's eyes are always closed, and I feel his tongue burning down my throat and the car is in a seizure and he's smacking me in the face to rouse me from this sleep, leaning in close again like something on the screen of a drive-in movie, his lips forming the whispered sounds, "Where were you?" and had a cop car pulled up in that moment and had I possession of a gun, I'd have not thought twice about opening fire.

These are strange and dangerous times. Some of us are born with the cross hairs of a rifle scope printed on our backs or skulls. Sometimes it's a matter of thought, sometimes activity, and most times it's color. I don't receive the proper kind of paycheck to take out a seventy-year lease on my life. If I submit my gray cells to certain men and women in this country for a total overhaul and redesign I might have something called peace in my life. But what one sees if they look closely into the pupils of my eyes are a series of activities that are merely things that have occurred to me in the years of my childhood and teens. Others may be genetic, others a conditioning and response, but overall I trust myself in a way no other could. If those cops showed up in that moment I described above, I thoroughly believe that they have no right and that their laws don't reflect me. It is easy for some in this country to be vicious and murderous when they have the support of rich white men and women in power. Those people consistently abstract human life and treat minorities as nothing more than clay pigeons at a

skeet-shooting range. They toss up a fake moral screen, nail it to the wall of a tv and newscaster's set and unfurl it like a movie screen. These fake moral backdrops are conceived at will and displayed like artifacts of the human sensibility as built by a caring god through millions of years.

But the very same man who orders the death of journalists off the coast of costa rica as they are uncovering a story dealing with our government's importation of cocaine and our government's use of drug profits to fund the contras is the very same man who will stand on a studio set, airfield, white house garden or convention podium and talk in the fake moral code about the humane and glorious designs he has planned for the social fabric of america if elected president. And the same man who stands before you at the altar of the church with seven television cameras pointed at his face and talks about the sanctity of the fetus is the same man who kisses the hands of dictators in central america— dictators responsible for the pillaging of an entire country dissolving in poverty, as well as the murder of hundreds of thousands of people he *perceives* as disagreeing with his power structure. The rich have interchangeable heads and their interpretations of law and religion are just as manufactured, false, interchangeable and disposable as the fake moral screen. They have an entire media system to dispense their manipulations of those scrambling for food shelter and some illusion of security. Our borders are opening and closing to refugees of the countries our government pillages, based solely on whether or not those governments toe our party line. The u.s. uses its economic blockades to starve entire populations and accelerate peoples' deaths from malnutrition or collapsed medical care systems. The bureaucratic distancing technique in Washington d.c. creates poverty and mass death in another region of the hemisphere and allows officials here to proclaim that the attacked country's political system is what has made it fail. Because I am born into a created system of corruption does not mean I have to turn the other way when the fake moral screens are unfurled. I am just as capable of creating my own moral contexts. In fact, using our government's techniques, I can reinvent and redefine a screen for my own needs. Since my existence is essentially outlawed before I even come into knowledge of what my desires are or what my sensibility is, then I can only step back from the arms of government and organized religion and use similar techniques to walk from *here* to *there*. If the cops roll up in their vehicle with their shotguns cradled and bolted between the front seats, and the design of their genes and gray cells makes it possible for them to put the guns on our bodies, then I can in that moment unfurl a screen that creates a horizon and landscape that is uninfected by the letters and words of "law" and pull out my weapon and defend myself from intrusive and disruptive actions. Of course, those in power count on the fact that we are stuck inside these gravity vehicles called bodies. The pressure that gravity sustains on our bodies keeps us crawling around in this preinvented existence with the neighbors split-rail fencing preventing us from crawling out. The pressure for escape has led us from our tadpole ancestors through time till now to develop an appetite for speed. Speed of consumption, speed of physical movement, speed of transmitting and receiving information. Since speed is a luxury for those who have power and money, many of us have traded physical speed for fantasy like this mental projection: surround ourselves with enough material goods and

maybe we won't see the stinking mess outside the windows, if we are lucky enough to have windows. It is no accident that every guidebook in every conceivable language contains the translated phrase: *do you have a room with a better view?*

This morning I woke up in another part of my brain. Take the idea, for a moment, that one usually wakes up in a similar area of the brain every day of one's life. When I opened my eyes, I woke with a feeling of confusion and a sense that something indiscernible had shifted during the sleeping hours and now I was somewhere else, not in another place physically, but something similar. The "I" of *my self* had crawled through the thickness of memory and consciousness to some other place in the structure of the brain and emerged within a new gray coil. When my eyes opened, I felt I was viewing the once familiar room through a four-foot-thick piece of slightly yellowed glass. It was like being under the surface of a pond and opening one's eyes and straining to see a measure of distance to the kicking legs of one's swimming partner, only there was no one else with which to measure the dislocation. I fought the urge to lay down and return to sleep in order to regain my proper place, to shift back into a developing place where for thirty-odd years I'd been waking up. I've been moving around through the day trying to readjust within a mild sense of panic. I kept getting lost in the notion that the drift of my past and the sway of familiarity might be just a centimeter away. But in the brain, a mere centimeter can mean hundreds of miles of cranial distance. It can mean years and years, or even a whole lifetime of familiarity being dismantled by a shift within a limited physical space.

Two fragments of dreaming I can recall from this sleep: I was suffocating, walking through doorways or in the street just having exited from a building. There were people walking around and I felt the presence of someone I knew just over my shoulder. I felt a panic from being unable to breathe, but I couldn't speak to anyone. Finally I managed to holler and it caused my breathing to resume and the dream shifted.... I was in a bathroom standing in front of a mirror hanging over a sink. I saw my eyes in close-up magnification. I saw dull brownish yellow marks on the whites of my eyes like they were bruised or rotting from the inside out.

I feel a vague nausea stroking and tapping the lining of my stomach. The hand holding the burning cigarette travels sideways like a storm cloud drifting over the open desert. How far can I reach? I'm in a car traveling the folds of the southwest region of the country and the road is steadying out and becoming flat and giving off an energy like a vortex leading into the horizon line. I'm getting closer to the coast and realize how much I hate arriving at a destination. Transition is always a relief. Destination means death to me. If I could figure out a way to remain forever in transition, in the discon-

nected and unfamiliar, I could remain in a state of perpetual freedom. It's the preferable sensation of arriving at a movie fifteen minutes late and departing twenty minutes later and retrieving an echo of *real life* as opposed to a tar pit sensation. Destination is an entry point for the practitioners of the fake moral screens.

Forty miles outside of town, drifting through a section of countryside controlled by the marine corps air station, I'm beginning to experience the slow withdrawal from population. My body is going through slender jitters inside all the space outside the enclosed windows of the car and I feel something concrete slipping off a ledge back there behind my eyes. I was up until this moment a member of the industrialized tribe—the illusory tribe that catapults this nation, this society, into something thick and hallucinogenic. The hand with the cigarette is slowly making its way back across the hip of the horizon. Its slow-motion drift creates a dark spot below it like a cloud shadow on the landscape that travels at the same speed. The hand with the cigarette is drifting for hours back to my waiting lips. What is it in these wrists that grab the steering wheel? What blood flows through these arms and hands? What color and sensibility in that blood? What textures and images are coded and locked into those genes, those cells, those bones that drag the world toward my eyes? What do these eyes have to do with surveillance cameras? What do the veins running through my wrists have in common with electric wiring? I'm the robotic kid with Caucasian kid programming trying to short-circuit the sensory disks. I'm the robotic kid looking through digital eyes past the windshield into the preinvented world. I'm the robotic kid gone haywire in the sudden mounds and coils of crazy-kat landscapes. I'm the robotic kid lost for a fraction of evolutionary time in the outskirts of tribal boundaries; I've slipped through the keyhole of an enormous psychic erector set of a child civilization. I'm the robotic kid lost from the blind eye of government and wandering the edges of a computerized landscape; all civilization is turning like one huge gear in my forehead. I'm seeing my hands and feet grow thousands of miles long and millions of years old and I'm experiencing the exertion it takes to move these programmed limbs. I'm the robotic kid, the human motor-works, and surveying the scene before me I wonder:

What can these feet level?

What can these feet pound and flatten?

What can these hands raise?

