

the army stays away: no conscription. The tax collector stays away: no taxes. The police stay away: no jails.

We are free. Custom has done this. Guns have done this. I am proud of my culture, my trade, my colleagues,
my street.

No place is Paradise (pardon, God: the idea is blasphemy!): but, as for myself, I would not live anyplace else.

PERSPECTIVE

i.

This is a drawing of a man drawing a nude woman. She lies on a table with her legs towards him. Seated at the other end of the table, the man views her through a large grid, like a barred convent window. He sights her over a thin obelisk and draws what he sees on a gridded paper, square by square. He is concentrated, precise. She is self-contained, seemingly unaware of his presence. Her genitals are covered with drapery. The cloth has hard metallic folds that compliment her soft, mollusk body.

ii.

The Coast Guard boat blows its horn again and again. The wake breaking across its bow indicates movement toward the beach. Yet seen at this distance, head-on, it appears not to move at all. The people on the beach don't notice the boat. They move through the water and across the beach, oblivious. The boat blows its horn over and over again. Because of the extreme foreshortened view, the boat seems neither to approach nor retreat but to remain in a place beyond sensing. The boat sounds its horn insistently.

iii.

Very young children cannot appreciate the effects of perspective. Some children never develop this faculty. Such a child watched his father board a plane. As the plane took to the air, the child grew progressively more anxious, finally panicked. To the child's understanding, his father was actually becoming smaller and smaller, at last vanishing entirely. Even the most familiar of perspective effects, i.e.: the "growth" of telephone poles as they are approached, gives their world an odd

cast. The mythologies they devise to account for these perceptions are oft remarked in the literature.

— Robert Nagler

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PARANOIA

I am up on the ridge with strong glasses watching this guy. He walks around the land real slow, talking to himself. I can tell this because his mouth moves and he himself is not eating.

Sometimes he walks up to trees and stares at them, if you can imagine that.

In the meadow yesterday he spent time dancing, you might say.

First, he stomps down grasses with his feet, then he parts the stuff to stare at the ground, and then he lies back in the bed he's made, sucks on a stem and sleeps for half an hour.

He gets distracted by the birds, mostly, but also by noises of all sorts and types. Cocks his head at clouds, wind, airplanes passing, just about everything. Listening for what. Maybe me. Maybe

he hears me breathing. Couldn't possibly, but this is a weird guy. Every now and then he shades his eyes and searches the horizon. Sometimes he wears a wide brimmed hat so I can't tell where he's looking. Maybe

he's looking for me. Out of a clear sky he'll sit down suddenly, on a rock, on the bare ground, wherever, and look around. Who knows? Why am I watching this guy, anyway? If it were me, I'd sure have a funny feeling someone behind a tree somewhere, up on a ridge had an eye out on me, was keeping track, telling.

Like the other day, he suddenly got down and crawled deep into the buckbrush where I lost sight of him. Stayed there all morning. I wondered why would a grown man want to get down in that stuff and get himself all scratched up like that. I've been in buckbrush and believe me, only light gets in there without scratches and not much light at that.