

Infinite Perspectives

Two Thousand Years of Three-Dimensional Mapmaking

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with an introduction by Ray Bradbury

Earthrise and its Faces

Ray Bradbury

What a shame our new generations were born in the wrong year. They missed the great revelations. They arrived when the curtains had already risen on the miraculous, and so could not gasp with love at the newfound land of Earth.

I speak, of course, of that night when billions of TV viewers first glimpsed our blue-white world in Earthrise, a remembrance of old time, a promise of futures. It was, to many of us, the great face of Creation thrust near to enchant us to tears. It was love at first sight.

But then the second sights came. Peering closer at the wondrous blue sphere in Space, we said, "Where have I seen *that* face before?" The answer was: never. Until our time, cartographers fumbled their hands over terrains arctic and equatorial and made Braille transcriptions to steer sailors of seas and clouds. The whole of the Earth was a crinkled maze awaiting the rough guess of sea captains, pathfinders, and nomad tillers of soil. From these palsied reckonings, windblown prints sprang, hoping for safe passage but risking death. Airplanes did the first new chartings, jets sharpened the perception, but it was the shuttle that lassoed the globe to tapestry darkrooms with manifested dreams. At 25,000 miles per hour, those bullets unraveled photo lightning flashes that drowned in chemistries, rose as revelations.

And *there* were the faces. A few and then ten dozen mysterious looks. Great continental bodies, vast oceans, and then sharp focusings at this old wrinkled world hid under our spacecraft until *en camera*. At long last see all of earth suspended, they said. Then

find its grimaces, up close as the plains, hills, and mountains show how they came to scowl or break forth plains calm of sand and dunes that, wind-washed, erased old looks for new.

All of yesterday was film caught to yield remembrances we did not know we knew. With these multitudinous faces, desert calms, granite brows, and vast Grand Canyon mouths as foundation, we build a birthing place from which to fire off toward our tomorrows. Space Station Number One: Earth. Space Station Two: the Moon. Three: Mars. Then take off for the whole Universe.

So fire-furnace scan the following pages, reprint these sightings on your retina to be borrowed as memory. Here in these masks of dead matter once alive with volcanic fires, wild fevers beneath its stone skin, find the convulsions of the multibillion years it took to wrinkle and gape the territory. Here lie the mute genetic histories of flesh yet to swarm, crawl, walk on its raining surface, to live in caves and hide in towns until the Moon called and they went.

These cartographies then are a vast and curious stage on which, invisible, we performed our hates, our loves, our sounds and furies signifying *everything!* The charts lie here, dead. We rise here, alive, to see its mortalities and find ourselves special in a careless universe. Yet we care and vow to clean the stage, prepare its steppes, fiords, and ocean ponds for a mankind grateful to *be*, and careful of the way they tread this earth. Now gaze at these territorial maps that save old time to provision the new. To be seen, the charts say, to be known, they add, and to be loved, is their final word.