

Many today feel that humans are
still evolving—perhaps into—

REFLECTIONS

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WE ARE sojourning on Earth,
Berenice and I, on the littoral
of one of the fresh-water lakes that
have recently reappeared on the
north continents, we
sleep late mornings and loll
through long afternoons; evenings
we dip into a perma-chest of an-
-cient writings unearthed by visitors
like ourselves and left behind. The
chest contains numerous and di--
verse examples of this lost art—
probably they were gathered to--
gether by some dedicated eccentric
who had no better purpose in life.
Some of them are unique indeed
and have to do with the future as
some of the more literate elements
of the then society foresaw it, at
that time the earth was

green, not as green perhaps as
it once had been but green enough
—they had a complex about this
greenness, these writers did, they
knew, or thought they knew, that
some day it would be gone and
this worried them immensely.
They wrote endlessly of how green
the earth was and how blue were

her skies and carped constantly at
their contemporaries for defiling
the one and
polluting the other—they wrote
about space, too. Space and space--
ships, spaceships built of dreams

and metal—they thought, you see,
that travel to the stars would be
accomplished by means similar to
those employed to reach the moon.
Oh, such ships they wrote about,
these little literary men! Elongated

leviathans carrying whole popu

lations to the stars (usually after

Earth gave up the ghost), tons and tons and tons of steel plying the immensities—they

wrote about aliens, too—aliens from "Alpha Centauri III" and "Far Procyon IV" and, unavoidably, they wrote about us. It's fun to read what someone who died millennia before you were born

thought you were going to look like and how he thought you were going to think, although it's annoying also, because these writers lived during an age sickened by sex (among other things), and they could not see human relationships in their proper perspective; hence

their future travelers were little more than spaceborne troglodytes carrying cudgels in the shape of ray guns and dragging four-wheeled carts behind them—carts filled with misdeeds, misconceptions and mistakes. But, for all their apprehensions, Earth is still a lovely place to

be, especially now in spring—and it is still green ... I wonder what these writers would think to see me sitting here with my true love Berenice, reading what they wrote so long ago. They would not be able,

though, to see us as we really are but only as reflections. The human race has changed incalculably since they walked upon the earth and we are vastly different from them. But they were vastly different, too—were they not?—from

the apes who preceded them and

who could not write at all, so our being the way we are should not surprise them overmuch. Nevertheless, it would, and our reading what they wrote would surprise them even more and perhaps embarrass them. I turn to Berenice, I say, "Why did they write about the future

when they could not even understand the present?" She answers, "That is why—because they couldn't understand. If they had tried—perhaps they could have penetrated the suffocating fog of self-importance that lay thickly over their land and have glimpsed

part of the truth." "Perhaps you are right," I agree. "But I doubt that very many of their contemporaries read what they wrote, so their insight wouldn't have done the world much good." "Probably,"

Berenice remarks, "they wouldn't have recognized the truth

even if they had glimpsed it. They lived in an age that History later referred to as the Age of Hypocrisy and in an age of hypocrisy there can be no truths—only majority opinions—and these can be

bought by men rich and clever enough and

even the hardest of seekers after truth are invariably led astray, and these were not the hardest."

Nor were they being honest—that which you cannot find in your

own today you will never find in someone else's tomorrow. "Sol" they called the sun and Earth, "Sol III." How quaint. Sol or sun—its rays are warm upon us now, although this is immaterial to our

comfort, for our bodies are independent of temperature; but Sol/sun's rays are warm upon us just the same as we loll on the shore of

our blue lake, soon, though, Sol/sun will set and the darkness of Earthnight will creep like death across the land, though death to us, of course, is no longer a valid concept, even though it will come to us some day. But it will not come darkly or disdainfully as it

came to our ancestors—the way
the Earthnight will shortly come
when Sol/sun has set—I would
not have wanted to live in those
dim days.

Our interest is not confined solely
to those writers in the collection
who wrote about tomorrow—
we are also reading those who

wrote about the times in which
they lived. Some of them wrote
very well—they reflected their society
and if this be a criterion of
good writing the Age of Hypocrisy
was not lacking in this respect, nor

were the ages which preceded it.
There was one writer in particular
who reflected his time exceedingly
well—he was like a mirror held up
to the world and the glass was
tinted in some magic fashion so
that the world was reflected with
poignant overtones that linger on

long after you have read what he

wrote—it is writers like him we
read when we would know about
the past, the
future we already know about

because we live in it—but it is
intriguing nevertheless to read what
those other writers thought it
would be like, thought space travel

would be like. The
days pass swiftly here and
Berence and I have so much living
to do. I say living, although it is
not really that, not in the sense
it once was understood—that
kind of living was a fretwork
of contrasts, of play and work,
of pleasure and

pain, of feast and famine, all
overshadowed by the imminence
of death. No, that is not the
sort of living I refer to as I sit
here in the

Earthdusk, letting my mind roam

free, our kind of living would
have been incomprehensible to
the human race before it attained
maturity. I say

"maturity" when what I really
should say is "present stage of de--
velopment—" for I, like all hu

mans before me, am afflicted with
the smug conviction that the age in
which I live is the culmination of
all the ages that preceded it (this

is the truth Berenice referred to so
short a time ago). I suspect that
those malefactors of ancient
days who were beheaded for their
crimes believed even as the axe
descended upon their naked necks
that theirs was the best of all pos-
sible worlds. I

wouldn't be surprised--indeed,

I know this to be the case from
reading what they wrote—that
the poor souls living in the Age
of Hypocrisy (for all they may
have said to the contrary) be

lieved ardently even while they
sank ever deeper into the mire
of deceits, lies and self-decep-
tions they had created for them-
selves that all that had gone be

fore them had paved the way for
them—truly,

man is a prisoner of his times,
incapable not only of seeing what
his prison looks like from with-
-out but of discerning what it is
really like within.

Now the night that is like dis-
dainful death is upon us, and
Berenice and I withdraw beneath
the canopy of boughs we have
fashioned for nostalgia's sake and
light a small fire at our feet, not
to keep us warm but to keep the
past at bay. Beyond its little
flames the darkness gathers in—
beyond the darkness burn the
stars—soon we shall be back
among them, Berenice and I,

where we belong, we

can remain upon, a planet only
for a little length of time, which
makes us wonder why those writ

ers of so long ago arbitrarily con--

cluded that life that originated
in the sea would consummate its
evolution on the land—that land
was a final, rather than a second-
-dary, step—even when they put
us in space they made us carry
part of the land with us in those

ponderous phallic ships that they
invented. I
tend, though, to be hypocritical
in my evaluation of my ancestors,
though no more so, probably, than

they were in their evaluation of
theirs. Theirs climbed into trees,
they climbed down from them, we
climbed into

heaven, *Homo sapiens* was not
destined to live forever like an
ape, nor *Homo astralis* like a
man, no

one dwells upon the Earth now.
It is no more than a resort which
we indifferently maintain—a

park to which some of us return
at sporadic intervals to reflect
upon what we are and what we
were, it is a big green picnic table
hanging in space, one of many
others like it, some of which are
inhabited by apes. Berenice and
I are sitting at the big Earth Ta-
-ble now, others have sat here be--
fore us, others will sit after—the
fire flickers, I add more wood,

the stars recede. I would like to
be a mirror so that I, too, might
reflect my times—we are far

more than star-travelers. We are
a part of the stars and yet the

mirror would show only empti--
ness, the emptiness of space, for
alas, I am no Scott Fitzgerald. I
can only touch a truth here and
there and then only in my
thoughts and I am not sure, per

haps the biggest truth of all
eludes me still. Certainly it can--
not be as simple as that we are

the ultimate purpose of life. I
think I see it sometimes, though,
hiding in the lines of my true

love's face as she sleeps beside

me in the night, iridescing in the

distant sheen of her hair. But in

the morning it will be gone, and

in a little while we will be gone, too, and the truth will have vanished in the night.