do with a self-imposed judgment of sorts: I am pushed and pulled by an array of urges, yearnings, worries, fears, that I can’t share with anyone, really…This sense of utter difference…makes for a certain moodiness well known among adolescents, who are, after all, constantly trying to figure out exactly how they ought to and might live…I remember…a young man of fifteen who engaged in light banter, only to shut down, shake his head, refuse to talk at all when his own life and troubles became the subject at hand. He had stopped going to school, begun using large amounts of pot; he sat in his room for hours listening to rock music, the door closed. To myself I called him a host of psychiatric names: withdrawn, depressed, possibly psychotic; finally I asked him about his head-shaking behavior: I wondered whom he was thereby addressing. He replied: “No one.” I hesitated, gulped a bit as I took a chance: “Not yourself?” He looked right at me now in a sustained stare, for the first time. “Why do you say that?”…I decided not to answer the question in the manner that I was trained to reply…an account of what I had surmised about him, what I thought was happening inside him…Instead, with some unease…I heard myself saying this: “I’ve been there; I remember being there—remember when I felt I couldn’t say a word to anyone”…I can still remember those words, still remember feeling that I ought not have spoken them: it was a breach in “technique.” The young man kept staring at me, didn’t speak, at least with his mouth. When he took out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes, I realized they had begun to fill’ (1996, pp.143–144 of 218).

When Coles says that ‘I heard myself saying this: I’ve been there; I remember being there’, and that that acknowledgment was ‘a breach in technique’, he is acknowledging that resignation has been something so dark humans have had to forget it, and indeed it has been something they have had a responsibility to forget if they were to effectively delude themselves that there was not another condemning ideal world.

The phrase ‘I’ve been there’ is also used by the Australian poet Henry Lawson in his 1897 poem, The Voice from Over Yonder, which is about the depression that results from trying to think about why human life is at odds with the Godly, cooperative ideals of life: ‘Say it! think it, if you dare! / Have you ever thought or wondered / Why the Man and God were sundered? / Do you think the Maker blundered?’ / And the voice in mocking accents, answered only: “I’ve been there.” The unsaid words in this final phrase are, ‘and I’m not going there again’; the ‘there’ and the ‘over yonder’ of the title being the state of depression.

Resignation poetry

The poet Theodore Roethke was referring to resignation and the unhappiness of having to leave the magic world of our soul when he wrote, ‘So much of adolescence is an ill-defined dying / An intolerable waiting / A longing for another place and time / Another condition.’

The following examples of ‘resignation poetry’—written in the midst of resignation—express the torturous process adolescents go through in accepting the death of their soul’s true world and adopting the false, all-but-dead, deluded, blocked-out, resigned, alienated world. In the adult reader’s resigned state of denial of another true world, it might be tempting to think these poems were somehow influenced by the WTM, however, they were written without any knowledge of the WTM or its literature, in fact before the WTM was established and long before my first books were published. Of course, parents of adolescent children only have to enter their own young teenager’s room (bunker!) and ask if they may read some of their offspring’s personal writings; if they are allowed, they will very likely be shown material of a similar nature. Alternatively, they can offer this essay and my other writings and see for themselves whether they respond as Lisa Tassone did.

The following astonishingly honest poem was sent to the WTM in February 2000 by 27-year-old Fiona Miller after she had just read Beyond and become aware of the WTM.
With the poem Fiona attached the comment, ‘I dug out this poem I wrote in my diary when I was about 13 or 14 years old...It has always sounded very depressing to me whenever I have read it and so I have not shown anyone since leaving school...Maybe this was the “transition point” [a term I had used about resignation in writings I had given Fiona] for me when instead of trying to fight forever I just integrated very nicely!!??’

This is the poem: ‘You will never have a home again / You’ll forget the bonds of family and family will become just family / Smiles will never bloom from your heart again, but be fake and you will speak fake words to fake people from your fake soul / What you do today you will do tomorrow and what you do tomorrow you will do for the rest of your life / From now on pressure, stress, pain and the past can never be forgotten / You have no heart or soul and there are no good memories / Your mind and thoughts rule your body that will hold all things inside it; bottled up, now impossible to be released / You are fake, you will be fake, you will be a supreme actor of happiness but never be happy / Time, joy and freedom will hardly come your way and never last as you well know / Others’ lives and the dreams of things that you can never have or be part of, will keep you alive / You will become like the rest of the world—a divine actor, trying to hide and suppress your fate, pretending it doesn’t exist / There is only one way to escape society and the world you help build, but that is impossible, for no one can ever become a baby again / Instead you spend the rest of life trying to find the meaning of life and confused in its maze.’

Fiona’s comment, that her poem ‘always sounded very depressing to me whenever I have read it’, indicates that prior to reading Beyond she could not remember the cause of the depression. In fact when I spoke with her after receiving this exceptionally honest poem she said she had always thought it was a result of homesickness when she first went away to boarding school. This lack of memory is an example of the phenomenon explained earlier, that humans retained little memory of having resigned after they had done so because resignation was such a dark and traumatic time in their lives and remembering what happened defeated the purpose of the denial that they have committed themselves to.

The second point arises from Fiona’s description of the resigned, false state as being ‘divine’. This is exceptionally perceptive because while it is such a fake, soul-denying state, resignation was nevertheless the only responsible option available and as such was, in the greater sense, something so beautifully courageous that it was in fact divine. The greater truth is humans had to be incredibly brave to suffer becoming false in order that the human species, and thus the human journey to enlightenment, could continue. The suffering was endured in the hope that one day, in some future generation, we would discover the greater dignifying, and thus liberating, understanding of humans’ divisive condition—a hope which has finally been fulfilled.

This great paradox of life under the duress of the human condition, where humans had to be prepared to ‘lose themselves’ (suffer becoming resigned) in order that one day our species might ‘find itself’ (find understanding of the human condition) is marvellously expressed in Joe Darian’s 1965 song, The Impossible Dream, from the play The Man of La Mancha. In the words of the song, humans had ‘to be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause’, suffer a life of fraudulent denial in order that humanity might one day find the dignifying understanding of their divisive nature and by so doing achieve the seemingly ‘impossible dream’ of liberating themselves from the deeply depressing conclusion that their divisive nature means they are bad, evil, worthless beings.

Darian’s song is marvellously descriptive of the agonising paradoxes of life under the duress of the human condition. It is one of humanity’s great pieces of expression and now that we can understand the human condition, the lyrics can be clearly appreciated: ‘To dream the impossible dream, to fight the unbeatable foe / To bear the unbearable sorrow, to run where the brave dare not go / To right the unrightable wrong, to love pure and chaste from afar / To
try when your arms are too weary, to reach the unreachable star
/ This is my quest, to follow that star
/ No matter how hopeless, no matter how far / To fight for the right without question or pause / To be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause / And I know if I will only be true, to this glorious quest
/ That my heart will lie peaceful and calm, when I’m laid to my rest / And the world will be better for this, that one man scorned and covered with scars / Still strove with his last ounce of courage, to reach the unreachable star.’

Incidentally, the honesty of Fiona Miller’s poem is very similar to R.D. Laing’s honest description of the post-resigned adult human state: ‘The relevance of Freud to our time is largely his insight and, to a very considerable extent, his demonstration that the ordinary person is a shrivelled, desiccated fragment of what a person can be. As adults, we have forgotten most of our childhood, not only its contents but its flavour; as men of the world, we hardly know of the existence of the inner world’ (The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise, 1967, p.22 of 156).

The second resignation poem was written by a WTM Founding Member in 1983 when he was 12 years old, many years before he became aware of the WTM: ‘Growing Up: There is a little hillside / Where I used to sit and think / I thought of being a fireman / And of thoughts, I thought important / Then they were beyond me / Way above my head / But now they are forgotten / Trivial and dead.’

‘Life’ leading up to resignation

While full resignation occurred at about the age of 15, from the moment of birth onwards mini-resignations repeatedly took place as block-outs/ denials/ evasions were progressively implemented to cope with the hurt experienced from the many traumatic encounters with the non-ideal, ‘imperfect’ world associated with the human condition. In House of Cards, a 1993 film based on a screenplay by Michael Lessic, one of the characters makes this intuitive comment about how sensitive and vulnerable innocent children have been to the horror of the alienated state of adults: ‘I used to watch Michael [a character in the film] about two hours after he was born and I thought that at that moment he knew all of the secrets of the universe and every second that was passing he was forgetting them’. As mentioned, humans are born instinctively aware of the truth of cooperative or integrative meaning, and of a world compliant with it, but then the reality of the non-ideal world strikes and they have to begin repressing those truths to cope with that new reality.

As has been explained, most of the adjustments to the reality of the imperfection of life under the duress of the human condition took place in our first few, ‘formative’ years when we had very little ability to cope and when our mind was most ‘impressionable’. Struggling with the imperfections of life at a very young age, young children were aware of the dilemma of the human condition. While resigned adults learnt to deny the existence of this dilemma, the truth is that an unresigned mind needs only a small sample of life to see the truth of it.

To illustrate, the following two conversations took place between a WTM Founding Member who works as a nanny and her young charge, a boy of almost four years. First conversation: ‘Child: I’m Captain Hook and I’m going to kill you with my sword. Nanny: Why? Child: Because you’re a good girl. Nanny: No, I’m Peter Pan and I will get the lost boys and Tinkerbell to save me from you. Child: No, you’re not Peter Pan. You’re Wendy and you’re a good girl. Nanny: Why do you want to kill a good girl? Child: Because I don’t like good girls. Nanny: Why don’t you like them? Child: Because they are good. Nanny: But why don’t you like good girls. Child: I like bad girls. Good girls make me feel bad.’ Second conversation: ‘Child: Do you have a heart? Nanny: Yes, I have a really big heart, really big so I can love lots. Child: Bet it’s not as big as mine!’