



## *The New Beginning*

The Sisters, Mr. D., and some prospective partners gathered to discuss the eventualities of the proposed 'back to the earth' venture. General agreement regarding the idea found concurrence. The amount of monetary contribution would vary. What seemed more important was the amount of commitment, or dedication, in the way of time and labor; equally, as Catherine perceived the needs. She sensed some reluctance in affirming the latter case.

Catherine had attempted to pursue openness and objectivity, as the discussion developed, but in her own mind she had already favored working with the farmer previously mentioned. She viewed it as no less a commitment than any other that might ensue; she felt by including the farmer in their calculations, it would be more possible to assess what it is they were likely to encounter.

The farmer had not prejudged Catherine, but did feel she was a 'greenhorn', perhaps underestimating what it would take to make a successful venture. He was willing to give her group a couple of years trial more or less directing their labors, while they became familiar with the land, and the livestock. It was with the understanding that if he felt they were insufficient to the task, he would let them know during the second year. It was his desire to protect his investment, that is, the land; and the livestock should not suffer any neglect. In this instance, he more or less insisted that his machinery be used when it seemed necessary to mow and sow, or adequately prepare the soil for any plantings. He indicated he would make allowances for the weather if it seemed the weather was not too favorable for some aspects of what they had hoped to accomplish. The farmer indicated that his daughter was a very capable agronomist and husbander, insisting, for the initial phases, that Catherine and her troop would work closely with her.

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

He advised experimentation with their proposed methods, along with the use of the machinery.

To Catherine this seemed a reasonable and most workable request. She realized the farmer was most intent upon protecting the very thing for which he had labored so long. It was also an opportunity to test themselves and their commitment.

When it came time to decide what to do as a group, only two of the prospective partners seemed to enthusiastically favor Catherine's proposal. By her account, that would garner enough labor for a beginning, and not require as much in the way of living quarters, which, in the early stage, would need to be temporary. The two willing partners were couples who had some experience with agriculture, whereas Catherine and her sisters were indeed greenhorns. However their monetary contributions were to be much less than Catherine and her sisters, who were being largely capitalized by their parents. Catherine and her sisters seemed willing to work hard as their part of any bargain. Mr. D. might be a machinery person in the interim.

Initially they agreed to begin as soon as possible to become involved, that there was no ideal time to begin with all that must be done at any time of the year. The farmer was willing to share his produce with them, since he expected they would be doing a good part of the labor in the learning the nurturing and the harvesting of it.

It was late spring, after some plantings had already been achieved by the farmer, his family, and a few seasonal laborers.

It was clear from the outset that not all of those who came to the partnership meeting would be willing to proceed with Catherine's plan, envisioning something different, perhaps less developed, some place more remote from the civilized world, and others wanting a different kind of climate. Catherine was not insensitive to these ideas, herself, as were most others, uncertain of what the future would bring in the way of a stable society. She reasoned, in any case, there would not be any guarantees.

The land itself, one edge bordering a year-round stream, was comprised of some 80 acres of relatively level rich tillable soil, currently observing crop rotation practices, which included pasturing as part of the rotation. The land was irrigated from two sumps excavated at the stream's edge, served by electric pumps that used small canals in some cases and movable piping in others. Approximately an additional 20 acres, considered as part of the bargain would become grazing hillside, that grew into another 60 acres of densely forested slopes. The farm was located on the edge of a valley near the foothills, on the west side of the Cascades

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

some considerable distance from any major metropolitan area, but close enough to farming communities.

The farmer's home was situated on a sharp rise at the edge of the forested area in the middle of a remaining twenty acres, some of which was used as an orchard, and as a berry patch, rhubarb, asparagus, and some of which was used as pasture. Perhaps ten acres of that land could be readily converted into the growing of other crops, being mostly like the previously mentioned 80 acres of bottom land.

It was proposed that the temporary quarters of the new occupants should be located upon a shelf within the edge of the forested area, for shade, and for a ready supply of firewood, if the case need be. It was proposed that well-insulated factory built structures would be permitted to serve their needs for the interim. It was decided that five such structures would be needed, one each for each of the two couples, one for Theresa and Lydia, one for Mr. D. and Catherine, and one for another pair of future partners. A well for water to serve these structures would need to be drilled, and a water system, and septic system, installed. Electricity would be made available.

The terms for the first three years were flexible, but required a commitment of purchase for the 160 acres, which at the end of the three years would become the property of the new occupants, or would revert to the farmer who would compensate, as per contract, the investors, should they decide not to continue with the venture, less any damages or losses incurred by their presence. Compensation would be adjudicated amicably, based upon wear and tear, and other considerations. It was hoped that, should they continue, at the end of the two years, the group would remain close in their relations to the daughter, who might like to become a partner in the enterprise.

It was decided that they could all meet as a group on a regular basis at the farmer's home for staying in touch on formal basis, which would include the farmer's family, primarily the daughter with whom they would be working closely.

The farmer had planted his usual crops for his own use and for market. The large greenhouse adjoining the house was being used to start vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, the brassicas, leafy vegetables, onions, eggplants, peas, and even corn. Garlic had been planted outside the previous fall. The cucumbers and squash had just been sown in pots in the greenhouse, later to be transplanted outside. Beans would be sown directly in the ground. The potatoes were already planted. The ground was mostly prepared for the tomatoes which might need to be covered with

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

temporary enclosures to remain covered, if the summer turned wet. The ground was also being prepared for the transplanting of the other greenhouse fledglings.

A large asparagus patch thrived below the house, as well as a rhubarb patch. Strawberries, blueberries, along with raspberries, and blackberries, currants and gooseberries, formed the bulk of the berry patch. A dozen concord grape vines were arranged around the perimeter of the berry patch.

It was decided that the greenhouse area would be made accessible to the partners both to learn the hows and whys, and general advisability of greenhouse use, and to help with the nurturing, and transplanting.

This was indeed an upscale operation, but one that required a lot of time, and a lot of hands.

A more developed road to the housing location needed to be established immediately, so that a well-driller could get his equipment to the site, and to also provide a way to get the factory built structures located. The partners had located themselves as near the farm as possible in rentals until their quarters were in place. It was decided the farmer's home could accommodate the three sisters until their quarters were established. Mr. D. felt he could survive well-enough on a temporary basis in the seasonal laborer's 'bunkhouse'. The two couples had located temporary quarters nearby on a sheep ranch.

The temporary structures were units that had been acquired from a 'trailer park' that had been closed down as part of a real estate transaction, dislocating its residents, some of whom could not afford the expense of relocation, but who needed to realize something from their investment. One man's misfortune somehow became another's fortune; that is, the units were obtained well-below market value, because of the urgency behind conversion of the real estate into its 'highest and best use'; in this case condominiums, which needed to be built expeditiously. Mr. D. had learned of this opportune debacle from a 'human interest' article appearing in a local marginal tabloid. Catherine felt very uncomfortable in negotiating the acquisition of the units. She felt the sellers were at a great disadvantage. Mr. D. shrugged his shoulders at the vagaries of the human condition, waxing philosophical about their opportunity. After all, it was ready cash. Catherine chided him on the callousness of his philosophy. He then offered to put the island property into the pot, which quickly brought Catherine to her senses. She still felt it was a shabby way to begin their enterprise. Mr. D. thought it best not to argue with her, but to agree in principle. Privately he thought it was simply opportune. The five units they had obtained were reasonably well

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

maintained, possessing 'all the comforts of home', all five mostly equipped with all they needed. They replaced things like mattresses and bedding, some of the cookware, and would do some much needed 'redecorating'. The units had been heated by natural gas, something they could convert to propane temporarily. Mr. D. thought there was enough room in each unit to install efficient wood-burning devices, perhaps combination devices which could be used for both heating and cooking. To be decided as the need might arise. Mr. D. was quickly becoming the manager of these details, whether or not of his choosing.

A daily routine was established for all but Mr. D. who had become the tacit coordinator of the 'details'. Mr. D. put his years of yammer to good use in getting the road put in, the well-driller in, and the moving of the factory-builts onto the farm property to await their eventual placement, the conversion from natural gas to propane, a large propane tank for a single distribution point to be plumbed underground amongst the units, along with the water supply, served from a storage tank, the propane tank having been located near the wellhead, along with the electricity which was poled to the well head, the location of the units determined partly by topographical features and by the desire for a certain amount of privacy. The closest units were to be 100 feet apart, along a shelf of land. All of this arranging and installation took approximately one month, whereupon the units were moved to their prospective locations, plumbed, gassed and electrified, at considerable expense. Mr. D. thought the cheap acquisition of the units made it more possible to spend a little more in the installation of their services.

The farmer had revealed that his farm had operated the last ten years mostly with a break-even economy. The break-even included the education of his two sons and the eldest child, the daughter. The daughter studied agronomy at Cornell, and did graduate studies in animal husbandry at Texas A&M. The sons were not inclined toward the farm life, perhaps spending already too much of their youth making the farm pay. The oldest son wanted to study medicine, the other was inclined toward the arts and architecture. As an undergraduate the younger had obtained a position, where he is still employed, with Skidmore Owens and Merrill, designing Habitat-like modular structures. The older son just began his internship at a medical research facility in the state. The farmer's children had spent certain parts of the year helping on the farm while they were still in school. When the daughter decided to return full time to the farm, the sons began to feel a lesser obligation to continue with their part.

Only recently did the farm begin to register a modest income.

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

Aged 64, his wife 63, they felt their working life was beginning to wane. The daughter, aged 28, was a strong and able person, who wanted, in some way, to keep the farm essentially in tact, as a productive entity. The father didn't think it was possible without some outside help. When Catherine had investigated the strange add in the farm property advertisements found in the state's newspaper with the largest circulation, she realized this might be the thing for her. The farmer was seeking working partners, but at the same time was seeking a large cash settlement for the whole kit and caboodle. The partner idea was a concession to his daughter, as was perhaps the large cash settlement, a goodly part he would bestow upon her to acquire something more scaled to her abilities and needs. Catherine arrived at just the right time with her inquiries and her proposition.

The author inquires, 'Have I constructed a plausible fiction, and a plausible beginning?'

The three sisters warmed immediately to the daughter, Isidore, and she to them, all products of the higher educational exposure, all believers. Isidore was nearly as lovely as the three sisters, and would hold her own in any comparative involving her stature, her intelligence, and her physical endowments. She clearly was an accomplished individual, and a strong female presence, reminding one of the movie actress, Chloe Sevigny.

Catherine was most inquisitive regarding the theory behind any and all farming practices, the pros and cons. Isidore didn't seem to favor any prejudices with regard to any particular practice, only that one should experiment, and get to know his particular parcel of land. She did seem to favor all natural processes over artificial ones. Much of this she had learned from her father. She offered that her schooling broadened her outlook on matters other than farming, that the agronomy and husbandry disciplines were luxurious amplifications of her own farm experience. She did envision some writing for technical farming publications, she said mostly to either support or pooh-pooh existing theories that did not hold up in practice. She indicated her primary interest in farming was the concept of permaculture, an experiment she was eager to explore in all its details. She wanted to experiment with the use of animals for plowing, disking, harrowing, mowing, raking



## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

etc. She wanted to reduce the reliance upon any petroleum products. Already her father had done some of this religiously by using all the animal manures and green manures he could, using commercial liquid fertilizers very sparingly with their transplantings.

Isidore indicated the most sensitive area of farming involved the control of weeds and pests, where her father showed little mercy for either. She was not so motivated by the idea of 'organic' as she was the possibility of using natural means to control weeds and pests. Yes!, a certain amount of weeds and pests should be tolerable philosophically, but when it comes to the real objective of human subsistence, perhaps some measures may need to be taken. She offered that intensive hand weeding was essential; that the experimentation with various insect predators was also worth trying. She didn't believe natural balance was possible in practical terms, but in a controlled environment, like a greenhouse, some approaches were more successful.

She did reveal that her father had experimented with plantings in patches, mostly at her urging, that contained a modicum of the less noxious weeds, which could be used to retain moisture, while a cultivated crop could be grown in rows amongst certain weeds whose roots did not utilize all the nutrients in the soil. The yields were lower, but the tradeoffs were reasonable. Hand weeding was still required to remove the most noxious from amongst the less noxious.

She spoke of the use of cardboard and black plastic sheeting as a means of providing an environment that slugs seemed to like, where it made them vulnerable to easy capture. Again this required diligent hand work, on a daily basis. Her father still used BT for the brassicas, on regular basis, and tent caterpillars, when they appeared; he sprayed the fruit trees with lime sulfur, and dormant sprays when he felt it was necessary to control pests, and diseases that tended to reduce yield and mar the fruit.

She did not completely disagree with her father's methods, but wanted to find a natural balance, if one truly existed.

In some ways animal husbandry was a simpler process, but often involved much diligent labor. While the animals could feed themselves, it was important to watch carefully for the introduction of disease into the population as a whole, and into a product, such as milk, or parasites in meat. Modern animal husbandry involved controlling, usually by injection, various diseases, and debilitating illnesses, and various tests to assure a quality of product, even for one's own subsistence-level consumption. Isidore was most adamant in her opinions regarding the pasturing of animals as opposed to any other method of feeding

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

them. A clean living environment for animals was a must, in her opinion, which necessitated a lot of shoveling and removal of wastes, also yearly antiseptic whitewashes of surfaces in the animal environment. It was also important to isolate some poultry species from one another.

It was her opinion, that labor was the backbone of success, even for more modern exploitative farming practices.

In elaborating on this last she indicated she did not believe in the abuse of the land in any way. She believed in the sanctity of the land, that it was not a slave to one's ambitions of making fortunes. She was very much opposed to monoculture; that is, money crops, grown for such purposes.

Isadore also indicated that she was aware of, and willing, perhaps eager, to try some other experimental farming practices. She became aware of some of the more labor intensive practices revealed in the Omnivore's Dilemma, particularly regarding animal husbandry.

The three sisters listened intently as Isidore spoke. They realized they were dealing with someone with whom they could immediately identify. They also realized how important she was to what they had imagined they wanted to attempt. The smack of reality brought them into focus.

Then Isidore talked of the essential crops, and survival diets, as well as good healthy clean living.

As much as possible she had advised against using hybridized seed; instead recommended working at first through seed savers who specialized in species that bred true, whereupon it would be possible to save their own seed in the future. It would require planning, the separation of plants to avoid cross pollination. However she did encourage some greenhouse experimentation with the growing of seed saved from sports that had been selected for some seemingly desirable trait. The same kind of thinking should be applied to the breeding of the animals. She indicated these were old time farming practices stemming from the most primitive cultures.

As Catherine listened her admiration of this young woman grew immensely. She realized she had made the right decision in encouraging the acquisition of this farm. While they might fail for one reason or another, it would not be for lack of proper guidance, or proper attitude.

On balance, the whole endeavor was being structured with some considerable thought. The number of animals would be



## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

based upon the available pasturage, and the ability to grow harvestable grasses, and grains. Some margin would be included for poor yields, and spoilage. Also some substitute crops to be used for supplemental feed in case of emergencies, notwithstanding the ability to trade for such things amongst neighboring farms.

Bartering was considered an option to the idea of marketing their produce, since the subsistence idea was the preeminent consideration; however, the sale of any surpluses seemed more desirable than waste, even the giving away of surpluses seemed more desirable than any waste.

Good farming practices were the imperative. The reluctance to become a business was mostly a philosophical consideration. The need for the medium of exchange might demonstrate their interdependency with the rest of the human community, not an untoward thought for those with some remaining faith in that association. For others, it seemed hypocritical, even a sell-out.

Catherine was of two minds in the matter. Mr. D. showed great indifference to the issue, whereas Theresa and Lydia were, like their older sister, more amenable to the consideration of the idea. The other partners were from the reluctant side. Isidore was the most outspokenly in favor of keeping all options open.

Meanwhile, Theresa, as well as Catherine, needed to withdraw from the Big City. Theresa felt a guilt over such selfish abandonment; Catherine, less so, for more obvious reasons. Although her health had seemingly returned, she felt it was more likely she would retain that health in the great outdoors, than in the stifling atmosphere of the Big City.

But each predicated their decision upon the hypothetical breakdown of civilization as they knew it, realizing the Big City would be the worst place to be when that happened. The needs in that environment would become overwhelming, sinking all who presumed to rescue something from the wreckage.

Abandonment!?

Can one truly live for himself alone? Just to survive? Can one think of himself or herself as an exemplary exponent of another approach to life as sufficient to the humanitarian gambit, the altruistic impulse, the conscionable action?

The young women had been almost religiously schooled in the humanitarian ethic. Troubled deliberations were their lot at this time. They did not welcome Mr. D.'s cynicism in the matter. But Catherine was innately thoroughly convinced of something. Perhaps Mr. D.'s influence had more far reaching consequences than either of them might have imagined; not through the cynicism, but through the sober reflection upon the mysteries of

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

mother nature's convoluted, deceptive, and naively misunderstood, realities. Mr. D. would say, "assume nothing".

But it was now beginning to be clear to them that a more 'natural', down-to-earth, path lay ahead of them. The romantic edge was dulled by the realities as presented to them by the farmer and his daughter. While they might anticipate, and could feel the uncertainties, they were still eager for the engagement.

For William, some of this smacked of blind idealism, even fantasy. While he could recognize the orderliness, and the observation of practicalities in the case of this particular bucolic setup, it was his memories of his drudge as a mere boy in his father's yellow dirt enterprise, where the labor, needed to squeeze something from nothing, was extracted through the backs of mere children, who were isolated from their schoolmates, whose influence led them desultorily down the path to frolics, baseball, and ogling of girls. None of such distraction was allowed in his austere youth. The schoolmates, the local villagers were nothing but the scum of the earth; baseball was one of those inane American pastimes. As for the girls, his father said such things not fit for a child's ears. William thought if he had had a sister for a sibling instead of a brother, his whole world might have been different. His mother would not have tolerated some of the language and insults if they were heaped upon a girl. But father would have found a way to screw her up; and would have doubled William's work load.

The author wanders. Pertinent to the subject are William's memories of the less glamorous aspects of doing-it-in-the-dirt. He could not argue with himself that 'labor is the lot of man's life', that he was not an exception to the rule.

Now, these mere girls are contemplating this thing to satisfy some apparent urgency arising from Catherine's Cassandra-like premonitions, while her two siblings are suffering from sundry disenchantments, or defeated expectations. Instead of gathering their resources, expending them on travel around this circumscribed globe in order to view and wonder at all of nature's marvels, they aim for the dirt straightaway.

Meanwhile Mr. D. might hear echoes of his father's words about his brains being located some place other than in his skull. Yes! because he has entangled his fate with this woman. To say that 'I did have sex with that woman' did not seal his fate. She was more than a place for his brains. She was more. She was fashioned to be more, unmistakably. What, exactly?

We had already conjectured that she did not appear as an opposite as much as an apposite; she was the next logical step of

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

who he was; they were this to each other. Whatever the connection, however assessed or judged by whomever, he was headed for the dirt with her, despite all his forbidding memories of the mentality of it all. He had ogled his girl, he had fallen flat upon his face, tripping over the merest irregularity of the planet upon which she moved. She had raised him with the hughest smile, warmer than the sun, that is, after she laughed heartily, and pitiably, at the spectacle. 'That one could be so moved', she thought to herself; it was convincing enough for her.

She would argue her case eloquently. She was following certain inbred instincts. It seemed natural to think certain things. Because the species had become lemming-like, one following the other, motivated more by panic, than conviction, toward some ill-gotten, self-destroying, planet-destroying, hurtle over the edge, was not call enough for her; she had leapt out of the way of the pull and push of madness; gathering her sisters, and Mr. D., Shiva, many-armed, godlike, pulling them to this imaginary safer haven.

Herman had asked, rightly so, 'Is civilization a thing distinct, or merely an advanced state of barbarism?' Are we more or less certain of this, our civilization? Its akin to the ophthalmologist, as he examines your eyes through the manipulations of his external lens machine; 'Is the image more clear, or less clear?'



No, there would not be a Renaissance; there would be a return to basics. Regrets played no part in Catherine's way of thinking. 'Paradise' became a dreamy projection, with faded fuzzy edges. However, she was eager to do this thing. It felt right. Poor succor for those who sought an explanation.

Is it appropriate to use one's license to leap ahead ten years, to reveal the wear and tear on, no longer young, bodies bent to the earth? Or is something else to be written there, upon their countenances, that reflect the rhythms of the planet, that reveal still supple bodies in the peak of health, projecting an aura of satisfaction and accomplishment. Will there be a Mr. D., with his cane, still a presence, though daffy with age. Will he have long ceased to marvel at the success or non-success of their drudge? Will the two younger sisters have found their mates, sharing in the joys and travail of their dirt-bound endeavors? How will all the principals have related and survived together?

If the author was to so leap ahead, it would be to escape his own drudge of describing the dullness and repetitious nature of

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

farm life. But one cannot escape the inevitable, the 'fatefully inevitable'. Yes!, one may remain mute and reverential before it. Would that please the reader?

No? The suggestion of success, or non-success, Mr. D., with cane, Theresa and Lydia with complimentary partners, perhaps even Catherine with someone new; and the general accommodation of individuality amongst the principals; does that warrant a continuation forthwith? No. It is truly the inevitable, the one event following the other, that leads the author on, as he whiles in his garret, waiting, musing, waiting, musing, waiting, while the reader languishes for want of such pap.

No, again. The author knows with a great deal of certainty that the reader is more independent than his intimation would suggest. They do not hang on his every word. Being a reader himself, he realizes the stuff had better be pretty damned good to retain his attention.

Fate always intervenes in these matters, sometimes with a dull thud. It had been said, 'Fall down you may, get up you must'.



Hence, we proceed with the dull enterprise of farm life. If it was to be said that life is therefore dull; why is it we bother to lead it all? The inherent imperatives remain a mystery to us.

It is only an awkward kind of morality that causes us to contemplate regrets. It is only a desire to escape the inevitable that we imagine Paradise. Had we once entered that elusive portal when it was said 'we have been born'. Was the time not right, or, was it again the shortness of our attention span, for even such things as such a discovery, that failed to preserve this, our highest achievement?

As Ortega Y Gasset has writ "*..... what is most valuable in man is his eternal and almost divine discontent, which is a kind of love without a beloved, and like an ache we feel in members of our body that we do not have. Man is the only being that misses what he has never had. And the whole of what we miss, without ever having had it, is never what we call happiness. ... man (is) the only being who is unhappy, for*

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

*the very reason he needs to be happy. That is because he needs to be what he is not."*

Once the great bard found his niche to rest comfortably in the environs he had created, he suffered with contentment, ceasing to spellbind us with his words; for there were none forthcoming.

Perhaps this opus should end with such a quotation. Let each of you dwell upon the impossibility and implausibility of your own happiness or unhappiness.

But, No, once again; the author will hope to lure you on, beyond your concerns for such a dubious state of well-being, now recognized as impossibly illusory. The thought of busting your ass in the dirt is hardly the seduction you seek, but it is the fare for this plate, served with as great a flourish as possible.

The author does not wish to convey that the task of returning to the ground upon which we walk, as though being chained to some thing, as a compulsory servitude. If we all engaged in this activity, all, by all I mean just that, so that we did not feel as though we were slaves for others; that is, we did not labor to fill the coffers of those who looked down upon us.

All should come down from the heights to do this thing. All should join in servitude to the mother of mothers. All should gain the perspective granted by such servitude. All must become equal.

As you might cynically guess, such refinements are for a future we can barely envision. There will be many who fall by the wayside as did Dave in harness, as he was pulling away, pulling away, pulling away; and as did Boxer, as the slave of the Pigs. As did many a tenant farmer, black man, serf, slave, blue collar, Chicano; menials and myrmidons all; or modern farmer caught up in the machinations of Cargill, Monsanto, or Arthur Daniels Midland; and the collusion between these corporate entities, banks, and government. How the wind blows!

Will the girls and their associates be able to bypass all this entanglement (the screech of the wind)? Will they be left alone to do battle only with weeds and pests, and foul weather; and allowed



## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

to reap the just benefits for their own travail? Will they become untouchable as genuine practitioners of the art of living within the means set forth in the First Afflatus? No one will be allowed to violate them? We shall see. We shall see.

Peak your interest?

Take pity on this grandiose ostentatious author as he presumes to pursue this laborious task of relating that which has yet not been related, with only his aging imagination to guide him. (Secretly, a little bit of research goes a long way, however boring. The something about research, that one feels is so tedious, can be found in its approximations to truth; the truth of things becomes tedious; is that not so?)

When one reads that he must not deal with pests in the way commercial growers do because he is adding to the load of corruptions and pollutions already prevalent in the environment, it seems he is being warned of something he cannot ignore. An approximation to the truth? The commercial grower tends to be short-sighted with his approximations when he offers, 'Don't think of it as less later, but think of it as more now.' Rationalist/Apologists will offer another approximation, 'In fifty years, no one will know the difference'. Both statements are true, are they not?

So why not do as this kind of dictum suggests?

'Organic' is good for you, that's why. Ground up organs?

The author presumes to laugh, to revel in his cynical outlook; his preeminent predisposition. Ground up organs would most likely serve more innocuously than nitrates and methaldehyde, even though they wouldn't do much for your cultivation efforts.

The author doesn't really know, although he can offer an opinion; or is it another approximation?

'Balance' is a word we offer to expiate our sinful thoughts. To the author, 'balance' suggests attention to detail. For everything we do, or are about to do, there will be consequences; this is a daring assumption that borders on real truth. 'Balance' also suggests finding equally weighted or properly fulcrumed uneven weights perched on opposite ends of a see-saw. Or standing upon ones tippy-toes, without losing one's center of gravity, or maintaining one's equilibrium when standing on his head, as gravity fills the cranium full of the red stuff.

When we attempt to 'balance' things, he might resort to 'night soil' instead of nitrates, but he must pay attention to detail, by thoroughly washing in 'clean' water, his produce before he

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

consumes it, or offers it for consumption. Others merely adapt to the conditions set forth in the Night Soil epistle.

The pest thing is another matter. Take slugs, for example. The best cure for slugs is 'natural' predators, snakes, birds, frogs, beetles, transplanted nematodes. The gardener is unlikely to be a natural predator, but he could become a slug eliminator through diligent 'nightly' excursions of hand removal of such ravenous, slimy onerous beasts. Insects require any method that will control and/or eliminate them. Rodents and birds require persistent trapping and removal. Weeds require the intervention of hands.

The Great Mother sets the pace. She has fortuitously allowed this two-legged appurtenance to occupy a niche that consumes, wastes and destroys everything in its wake. The ultimate design; the ultimate predator; the counterbalance to creation; the destroyer. She will eventually tire of it all as does the feline with its plaything. Then whatever seemed to matter or not matter will go along with all the rest, the very ones, that wretched presence, homo sap., has eradicated in his blind lust for riches and dominance.

No glorious judgment day; just payment in full. For the silent as well as the righteous. Those who stand in the wings watching it all happen, conducting their lives on the sly, as though some unseen force was protecting them, because they believe they are engaged in the 'feel good' thing, will be swept away without remorse, like all the others. Your author believes this to be true more than ever.

Suggestive notions, not unlike Renaissance and Regrets, will be hung around the neck of the very beast that uttered them, all others none the wiser. Imagine it then, if any thing remains after this beast has run its course, none other will miss his departure. He has occupied, and destroyed. His tongue is guttural to aught, though he speaks words of wisdom that all creatures ought hear and obey, which he himself will abjure.

Your author feels it better to write these dismal words than to delude himself with others.

Does this heavy thing weigh over the darlings found in this script? Yes!, No differently than does the sturm and drang of an otherwise indifferent mother harm the innocent everywhere; none will be spared, and if so seem spared, merely saved for another day.

Do these very words construe each of us a victim of a whimsical force? Best be thought so, even though we cannot know any intent coming from that quarter.

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

The author cannot but marvel at the glassy-eyed stupidity of this terrible occupier.

You might not imagine the amount of satisfaction the author derives from setting down these bitter words; bitter because of how they affect us, when we hear them, and understand them; because they also sound the first approximation to the truth. It is not the truth he seeks; but it is only such truth that arises, nonetheless.

Your author does not relish this state of affairs.

He would want the 'design' to be otherwise, so that every creature that comes into being could be jubilant and celebrant with the amazing property of matter, Life.

Not so, not so. From the very first hour, but a struggle. Those who do not struggle are not the favored ones; only the ones who live not. Those who die young are spared our awful conceits.

Then does it follow, we must struggle and suffer, in order to wear the mantle of having lived? It would seem so. As of old: Fall down you may, get up you must. Again, as of olde: We do not live, we wear ourselves out against one another.

Aye!, transplant these words into your garden. What aught will grow and emerge from them? What we see! What we see! A flowering gone for naught. Some deviously cross-pollinating beast has devised this sport. Consciously? Inadvertently? Joylessly?

Glower if you will. Cast these happenings into your own words. If you say it not right, you will be challenged to do otherwise, as am I to paint with a different color. Whatever color, do not sully the truth.

Yes! there are times when a benign stasis seems to hover in the air. Usually upon a hazy, steamy, sunny morning, when little seems to stir, when he might be lured into forgetting his origins and his uncertain destiny, when what is apparent at other times seems not so in such generously salubrious moments. He hears the oyster catcher's flighty tweetering; the scoters sounding out their concerted efforts to adapt to their moment; the conspicuous absence of the ordinarily ubiquitous raucous Glaucous's incessant complaint, or futile attempt to dominate the landscape, as in Finding Nemo, 'Mine, Mine, Mine!'. But soon enough the latter speaks to elicit a reminder all is less seeming than not.

The author allows his eyes to rest upon the 'bird feeder' for a few moments as the feathered ones 'kick ass' (chase the unfit ones away from the filthy lucre ([not unlike his brethren])).

The author does not begrudge them, but welcomes them; wishing them in perpetuity, so inoffensive to his own perceived



## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

predicament. He understands the luxuriousness of his position to awake to such moments not driven by hunger, lust, jealousy, rage, pride, greed, awful conceits. Age has tempered all these, and others. What he wants is repose, though it is not a realistic expectation of this Universe. The desire for repose is a natural enough outcome of a life of struggle, and defeated expectations; repose just another in a long unending line of such unrealistic expectations.

Your author pens (pecks) these words as he feels a desperate need to extricate himself from the tediously petty embroilments with his fellow man, that pretend fellowship and egalitarianism, while at the same time act furtively to bargain away, and avoid their limitations, and labor to constrain and otherwise displace and control others, a condition from which he feels little immunity.

These words spew forth from the old geezur in his lonely garret; protestation that maligns the truth he seeks to set forth.

If he was to say there is no greater truth, would he thus have said it better than to hope for a truth that does not, and cannot, exist?

The theme, *A Renaissance in Paradise*, harbors such a hope; but its coequal, *A Place of Few Regrets*, suggests an undercurrent of the failure of the first.

If a person should fall down to rise with such revelation, what fate awaits him? Your author returns time and time again to this familiar place. He claims his emancipation from the petty embroilments.

## *The Vicissitudes*

Meanwhile, Catherine has been invited to Stanford to take part in a symposium regarding Prospects For A World State. She has expressed her intention to participate having prepared assiduously for delivering a discourse on the subject.

Twixt the weeds, forsooth!

When I was first approached by the University to participate in this symposium, I had thought the whole prospect another futile endeavor. Another Ill-Wind, so to speak.

Then I thought it was not a good thing to run away from one's innate responsibilities; that is, one must keep trying. After all, it is only mankind with whom one is dealing; what can be so difficult about that? This is a talk session. We all speak the same language; that is, we do not speak of close encounters with another, unknown, do we? We are all one kind here. We share common interests, more common interests than not.

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

The introduction of my person to this audience is replete with matters that would bring honor to anyone; I thankfully recognize the significance of such esteem. I accept such recognition as only marginal support for that upon which I choose to discourse. The words that ensue must speak for themselves, apart from any previous accomplishments, laurels, awards, or other peripheral assignments.

I wish to thank the University for inviting me to participate in the discussion of such matters as concern us all.

I would hope not to sidestep any issues I consider germane to these concerns.

In my opinion, we have passed the point of no return many times over. When I say this I am aware of the little impact that knowledge of our historical record has had upon our doings; I speak now regarding the totality, the cumulative aspect of the human experience, during his occupancy of this singular planet.



A lot of what I might have to say might be reduced to the desire to answer a few simple questions? What is the relevance and meaning of an individual life? Is one human life; is any one life something we should revere and value above all other

things? Are we here just to feed our faces, and satisfy the urgings of our viscera? Or are we here for something more? If we are to become this visceral thing, can we claim to be differentiated from the amoeba as something more evolved? Why all this evolution? I cannot help be mindful of that overriding question put to us by Herman Melville: *"Is Civilization A Thing Distinct Or Merely An Advanced Stage Of Barbarism?"*.

What purpose is being served by seven billion visceral things crawling about on the planet? Does it really matter whether we adorn ourselves to the nines, with jewels and furs, parading ourselves before, what, an audience of visceral beings; why not display ourselves before the amoeba? Why not dress for the part; letting it all hang out? Putting on the airs of something refined, when in reality we are little more than secretions and parts that overindulge themselves.

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

I am attempting to present a picture of a life form that might be incapable of becoming anything more than it is. Even though it might be said we have evolved this far up or down, for good or ill, I am making no assumptions that we have become more than we are.

I do not make any claims for myself that prove me better than anyone else. I may make the claim that I am aware of some things that prompt me to do one thing or another. I may have acquired this awareness through my parents, through conversations with my peers, and through the educational experience; and/or through the study of the historical record. What am I to do with the awareness? What am I prompted to do? Again, through my parents, my peers, and through the educational experience, and the study of the lives of others found throughout the historical record, I cannot but feel almost compelled to do something more than what I might otherwise be expected to do.

Yes! I am expected to do something, to be something. I am expected not to bring dishonor upon my family, I am expected to achieve, that is, do my very best to apply myself with my skills and my learnings to some task that will enable me to provide a livelihood for myself; and not incidentally, to make a contribution to the common human weal, and not leave the planet worse off for my occupancy.

Also I am expected to pledge allegiance.

Do I question this state of affairs? I do now, more than I did when I was younger. I am not the only person on this planet. I have two sisters, as well as my parents. I was raised in a protected environment, which some might classify as an elitist environment. I have been infused with a set of values that are part and parcel of that environment. My educational experience has been rich with examples of the successes and failures of man's institutions, his forms of government, his conquests, his destructiveness; and Yes his sublime music, his artist expression, his grand buildings; his feats of engineering. Am I thus convinced of a life form from which I might expect other things?

My exposure to our own political institutions and their origins, coupled with the study of other political institutions and their origins, also their conflicts, their belligerence toward one another, leaves one with unsettled feelings; especially when one cannot understand the logic behind their confrontational differences, when it is quite clear that their common interests are more paramount than their differences.

If I speak in this manner to those who presume to govern me, the caveat being that I have agreed to be governed by consent, I set

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

myself apart from the acquiescent, yea-saying individual. Not that I have become a nay-sayer, when I ask those who govern me to keep me informed of what they are doing, and why. If I feel my government has usurped any of my rights, whether assigned or not by that government, I cannot but question that government.

If the government considers me a valued citizen, not different than any other, but valued all the same, it will promptly, honestly and fairly, respond to my query. It will do all it can to put me at ease with regard to my concerns.

But that has not been the case. The government, per se, has assigned prerogatives unto itself that have not achieved common consent; it is not answerable to anyone for these, what I call, fiat, fait accompli, usurpations; National Security issues. They send me form letters full of equivocation, temporizing, double-talk, and implied threats, invoking the Patriot Act, if they respond at all.

Part of this government thing involves the citizen's 'cross my heart and hope to die, pledge allegiance, swear to uphold', 'love it or leave it', with, or without, the consent of the governed.

Yes!, more so now, than when I was younger. I have been told it is because of the external threats to our way of life. So they tell me it is necessary to curtail my rights, my way of life, because of the external threats. Is that true? Why? They have told me it is their business to know everything I am doing, and thinking; who my friends are.

When I ask, How come? Why? Instead of answering me, they write my name in a black book, as a threat, a conspirator, a traitor. When my government responds to me in that manner, I can only view that government as a throwback, way back, to more primitive times; and as an unmistakable threat to my life.

We have a long-standing debate regarding the power of the State vs. the Individual, given eloquent and fateful expression in Sophocles' Antigone.

Socrates was given the choice of banishment, or hemlock.

The son of Mary and Joseph was considered a threat to Rome; recant; or suffer the consequences.

The heretics, those disloyal subjects of the inheritors of Jesus, were tortured and burned, the recalcitrant become harried outcasts, or murdered in cold blood. The Conscientious Objector, the Pacifist, was mocked and tested for conviction, if not executed like all the others.

What was it like before then; in the formative days? What is it like now, that we have arrived on some imaginary plateau where we are able to take stock, to look back with some objectivity?

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

Would an individual have more survival opportunities in a World State than he would in World full of States?

Intuitively we know; even those with minimal intelligence know the answer to that question. I say this with a certain amount of hopeful naivety. I am aware of the 'evil' that would still exist in Man, his compulsion to be on top. Being on top fosters its own deadly set of rules, regardless of the form of government.

I want you to be mindful that I consider the Patriot Act a case of purposeful neglect and purposeful annihilation of our Constitution, concocted and rubber-stamped en masse by our Congress; also an opportune enactment that enables the small minded to control others.

What is the relevance and meaning of an individual life?

Does what happens to one life become the measure of all? That is to ask, can any one life become dispensable, written off? Do those who dissent, even question, become common criminals; worse, enemies of the State?

I have indicated that when I was younger things were different. Perhaps they were not different, only just hidden. What I believed of my government came to me digested by others. My own personal experience was limited. What I might have heard or read concerning the outside threats to our way of life may have been couched in terms only meant to persuade me of something that was not true. One clouds all issues with the waving of the flag. When I see my congressman waving the flag in a Boy Scout photo-op, I doubt seriously that I could rely on him to faithfully and diligently represent me in the halls of government. He would sacrifice me for the 'greater good', that is, his pay check, his retirement benefits, his connections, and his position of power.

The documents that seemingly protect us remain sealed under glass; the Declaration and the Constitution. Although the government is doing its utmost to change those documents, to amend them to give the government the right to invade our homes, to pry into our lives in order to discover if we are or are not potential threats to the State, terrorists, that is, to enable a Gestapo, or Secret Police, Big Brother, (Homeland Security) to monitor our every thought, our every move, to apprehend and sequester us, incommunicado, through some manufactured probable cause; these are different, although we have for a long time had the FBI, the CIA, and sundry clandestine agencies, outfits like Equifax, involved in devious unknown surreptitious activities; with the power to look into our lives.

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

Instead of examining its own *modus operandi* in order to learn what it is that outsiders dislike about us, dislike enough to want to infiltrate in order to destroy us, they exert controls over their own citizenry, encourage the citizenry to spy upon its neighbor. What revertant model do we follow in order to establish this state of affairs? Who has become the terrorist?

Black Days!

Within a Nation, an individual may exist only as a number, not as a resource, but as something to be tracked, every individual a potential threat to the Power Structure within the State; whether or not a real threat, as an isolated unit, to the State.

I harbor two basic precepts regarding my person. The first, that no one may have dominion over the other; and the second, that any system of government that does not account the least must be deemed a failure.

Again, what is the relevance and meaning of an individual life?

A subject whom the State regards with the highest esteem, as a life? For whom the State will provide protection? To whom the State will grant complete freedom from want or care, whether he or she is the lowliest or the highest? And complete freedom from tyranny, from the tyranny of the State?

I use State and Nation interchangeably. In its best sense, the State expresses a kind of social unity or cohesion (common consent) more or less accepted by all individuals. It is to be understood that I speak only of an Ideal State. Reality often confounds the ideal, and does not resemble the ideal in the least way.

An assemblage of persons, of individuals, under the wing of the Golden Rule. That is the Ideal.

Freedom to become; that is an ideal.

The individual paramount in a system of equities.

Most of the exigencies of the State are involved in the politics of living on the same planet with other States. The politics, more often than not, lead to confrontations, alliances, that require manpower and armaments serving as either defensive weapons, or as persuasive threats to other nations, greener pastures, as it were.

To me, most of this kind of persistent involvement is incomprehensible, in light of all the lip-service, recognition, we give, and have repeatedly given, during the centuries of our occupancy, to all humanitarian considerations.

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

The State of the individual in these circumstances has been, and is, dire; he has either fallen through the cracks, or has been shoved through them.

Again, what is the relevance and meaning of an individual life?

Let us assume for the moment we operate within a State that functions with the consent of the 'governed'. The other side of consent is dissent. If the individual feels he is being slighted by the State, or he feels that the State errs in its entanglements with other States, he should be allowed to freely express his opinion with regard to his concern; his should be sought, and provided forum. He need not be identified, labeled, and tracked as a potential threat to the State.

What would happen if States or Nations, per se, all became one State?

All that would exist between the individual and the State would be matters that were understood to fall under the aegis of the Golden Rule; in the Ideal State, of course. Most of the concerns for undermining the authority, or betraying the State, would not exist. Let us distinguish those, who, in any State, are merely conscientious concerned citizens, from those who are something else. I am here speaking to you today as a conscientious concerned citizen. Innately I am a citizen of the World, and of the Ideal State.

In my mind The Golden Rule State would exist explicitly as an arbiter of what the term implies.

Is it necessary to enforce the Golden Rule? I have a close friend who often refers cynically to the Golden Rule as something invoked at one's convenience, and revoked at one's inconvenience. Throughout human history it seems whatever the rule, enforcement is the active agent of that rule. That is, it is assumed that some kind of order must be in place (enforced) to account for all the vagaries of individualism. All individuals are not alike, although we often speak of 'equality'. Equal treatment under the law. It is implied that 'law', per se, is the agent of order. It is thus assured that all will be treated alike whether or not they are alike.

On the face of it, one World State might hypothetically remove the necessity for many different kinds of armaments that were intended as death-dealing weapons for large numbers of members of another State, either defensively, or aggressively preemptive, or otherwise sought. It would also reduce substantially the number of

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

lives involved in warlike preoccupations; standing armies, the design and construction of diabolical death-dealing weapons, and perhaps truly avoid the paranoia and tendency toward surveillance and subjugation associated with States dealing with States. It would reduce, by a thousand fold, the waste incurred by such activity; the waste of human life; the squandering of resources, the contamination of the environment.

Hypothetically Ideal? Yes! Of course.

It is to be understood, we do not get from here to there without some kind of concept, some kind of plan; and perhaps most significantly, some kind of will.

If we are to yield to our better sense, how should we best apply that better sense?

Let us assume we have achieved a World State? This does not mean or imply that we have materially changed the circumstances of the individual.

It may become an ideal of such a State to assure that the material circumstances of each individual become altered to accommodate and benefit the individual as much as possible. This would be done to alleviate the potential for unrest, but mostly as, for the sake of argument, a humanitarian act conducted by a humanitarian State.

It is understood it would not be the objective of the State to force assimilation, or to make everybody alike. The only conformity required of the individual would pertain to the common consent to be governed by both explicit and implicit rules incorporated into the Golden Rule. The observance of the basic rule would obviate the need for Commandments, but might require a document stating the expectations required of each individual, for we cannot make assumptions as to what each individual would perceive as his share in the bargain; his obligation, that is, as a member of the larger community (remembering of course, that individuals differ in their makeup and their skills.)

While it is understood that each individual is not born with all he must know in order to conform to a basic rule, it is the preserved historical record that will instruct him (or her) in what such conformity entails, for the lack of what might already be obvious, contained in the logic inherent to the Basic Rule, i.e., the Golden Rule.

This is a simple version of the structure of a single State that does not need to account the machinations of another State.

The duties of a State toward the individual might arguably be demonstrated again by the preserved historical record. Simply put,



## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

again, without constraint: sustenance, shelter, provision for a healthy environment, and assured health care, each equally provided and distributed, as much as practicably possible; as well as equal treatment under the law.

Individual differences will be manifest, and must be tolerated, and viewed as a welcome diversity. Obviously, arbitrary actions taken by individuals must not jeopardize the safety and welfare of other individuals.

Underneath every accounting of human interaction, it will be necessary to acknowledge the force of nature, much of which we will become cognizant, from studying the historical record, and observing the behavior of other species.

It may be impossible to avoid or avert some human tendencies that lead toward bad things. We must, thus, be alert to those tendencies in order to reduce their possible impact in each instance.

Pie in the sky?

One ought not think so, after many years of studying the human condition. In most cases it is apparent what must be done to remove the obstacles that would alleviate human suffering; not only human suffering, but reduce the predation and pollution of the habitat for all of the living.

Can we really tolerate any more suffering, predation and pollution? The chief cause of each is the selfish nature, and selfish acts of individuals or States, in positions of power, who, and which, aggrandize unto themselves without concern for the other. These very ones must be denied such power, and everything must be done to make them aware of the violation of the basic rule, and the consequences for such violation. They must be made to recognize and suffer with their equality.

Much has been conjectured on the loss of incentive in 'socialistic' set pieces. That is, if limitations are placed upon every free enterprise activity, because its motivation might be construed as self-serving, then why bother with such activity? It is not the activity, but the incentive, that is distorted in this argument. The incentive is basically misplaced, assuming it to be gain for its own sake. The incentive to participate in a 'sharing' State should take precedence over any other incentive. Yes!, this may go against 'Nature'. It might be said that much does go against nature. Every act of accounting the other, may be said to go against nature, because the individual is obliged to forego the self for the whole. The role of the self becomes diminished. Tough? Yes!, but sweet too, because we all

benefit. That is to say the diminished individual is enhanced in other ways.

We have been at this game of civilization far too long not to get the message.

Abandonment of Nationalism must be achieved for humanity to progress any further. The 'United Nations' does not live up to its promise. It is riddled with influence peddling, it is ignored or rejected by those who feel they are larger than its aegis (who needs the UN?). It is top heavy with 'permanent members' in the Security Council, of mutually antagonistic Nations, or Nations vying for influence ('control' is another word to be used here). It fails the larger body of humanity miserably. It does not interfere in gross acts against humanity within individual States; it allows them to happen, simply as an expression of 'conflict of interest'. Worse, it allows the larger bullying States to get away with weak excuses for invading its neighbors, or worse yet, to invade other more distant Nations. 'Material Breach', 'Preemptive (something or other)', 'Gobbledegook'

Don't tell me it is better than nothing, that something is better than nothing. If Nationalism was eliminated, there would be no need for the Geneva Conventions, International Tribunals or Courts; and no need for the abysmally ineffectual UN.

In a World State there would be only one potential Dictator, not a host of Dictators operating without any controls, a host of Dictators who will never be brought to justice for their crimes in any tribunal. Even within these tribunals there exists influence peddling, persuasions afoot by the powerful to trade aid for votes, or withdraw aid for votes, as it were, making it more possible to operate, with impunity, and without reprimand.

Once again, don't tell me this is better than nothing, or something is better than nothing. Don't give me the cynical 'Whatever works!'

The Human Condition is only marginally improved under the aegis of Civilization. Perhaps that is because everyone knows the shield is made of goatskin. They laugh.

Nuclear Arsenals provide shield enough for the scandalous to operate with impunity. Fear dictates the terms of human interaction. But one day, Fear will not be enough to hold back the wanton, most likely, Mad, Dictator, of some unaccountable Nation.

It is clear Nationalism must be dismantled. World Government, served by the implicit argument inherent to the Golden Rule, must supplant all other forms of Government.

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

Will I make a case for Government, per se, any Government at all? One hears echoing in the background Henry David Thoreau's admonition that the least government is best.

Yes!, some glaring and overwhelming imperative is clearly called into this debate. How best to achieve, what we innately abhor?

Even in a World State, restraint must be placed upon our wilder emanations. Those who would rule us must not be allowed to dominate us, must not be enabled to coerce us to conform to a common model. But they must be enabled to prevent us from dominating one another. They must account us as valuable members regardless of our station; again it is observed, 'those who stand and wait also serve'.

The task, as I view it now, is monumental. There are those who earnestly believe, that 'Where there is a will, there is a way.' Perhaps this is true, but we must confront all the wills that work contrary to our main objective, because they cannot yield what they have to the common cause. It is not in them to do so. Some will assert, 'we are all in this together'. Are we?

Must we thus be empowered to take away something not readily given? Must we resort to such primitive means?

Cannot we truly spread the 'Enlightenment'? Everyone must be receptive to the message. They must earnestly want to resolve the dilemma of an unsatisfactory human condition, based on true Humanitarian grounds.

Are not those Humanitarian Grounds plain enough? Further, are we prepared at all to accept our part of the 'humanitarian' burden?

Let us take a step aside to contemplate Nature, or what might be construed as the natural way to behave.

We learn something about Nature through observing the behavior of other species. We might even observe certain inevitable forces at work that, when applied to our own lives, leave us with a hopeless feeling, because it seems certain things cannot be overcome.

We can observe two things simultaneously; a herd instinct, and the herd being comprised of individuals. Amongst the beasts, each individual carries within it, the seed of the future generation, which is brought forth blindly, as we perceive it, that is, without any specific deliberative intelligence being involved. We extrapolate, infer, that the same blind force lives within each one of us.

But we are attempting to distinguish, even separate ourselves from the beast, by recognizing 'intelligence'; that is, in this case. cognitive choices.

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

Nature invests in each individual some compulsion to further a blind, unknown, perhaps even purposeless, continuance. Nature has invested and distributed this condition amongst a host of evolved species; including *homo sapiens*.

One might conjecture at length upon the purpose of existence. We might never make a determination. But we must live with the design, we must understand the forces, regardless. Man imagines himself capable of doing this.

We must understand the underlying motivation behind the human ego, human conceit, even the force active within such a one as the rapist, the murderer (with an impulse to remove rivals), the thief, as a 'survivalist' impelled to act on his own behalf as a harbinger, and protector of the continuance; all acts construed to bear upon the continuance, however blind, unknown, and without purpose.

We cannot have a civilization without understanding 'nature', the nature of life, the forces that impel life forms to do what they do, and most of all, the complexities and contradictions found in human nature.

I want to pause here for a moment to speak of deceptive things.

When you leave this building you will enter the supine stasis of a University Campus. You might enter the city of Palo Alto which will also reveal some kind of familiar stasis, of people going about their business, without any apparent need to harass their fellow man. If you look hard enough you might discover some altercation or other, perhaps more readily revealed in the poorer section of the city, where poverty and disease raise their ugly heads; but not exclusively there. In the middle of the city you might see the flashing lights of a police car engaged in stopping a vehicle that was being driven DUIL, or a citizen who had 'run a red light'; or some individual who was apprehended upon suspicion of one thing or another. We are not too disturbed; if we are of one bent, we might scowl at the police; if we are of another bent, we might feel reassured of a kind of order to things, to our 'civilization'.

Are things thus as they should be? Or would be, if there was a World State? How much improved would our lot be in a World State?

Perhaps, in some ways we are untouched by what happens in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Georgia, or Tibet, Timor, Myanmar, or Zimbabwe, or The Sudan, Libya; or Northern Ireland, Kashmir, and The Gaza, or the Banana Republics, or Latin American, or other Worldwide Dictatorships. That is not to say how close we might be to being ruled by a power-usurping President. Forgive my outburst, but, 'What in Hell are we (as a species) trying to prove?'

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

As I was introduced, some facts concerning my life were revealed. That I earned a PhD in the Creative Writing and The Humanities from this Institution. I have shown part of my bent in this life, also part of my commitment, of my chosen path.

Pursuant to that bent I have continued to write a series of essays dealing with the human condition, and human institutions. Also I have found myself wanting to put 'my money where my mouth was'.

I chose to enter a large city dealing with many problems created by poverty, lack of nutrition, poor health care, by the 'oppression of the streets'. I did not do this alone. At one point my whole family was involved peripherally, or directly, in an endeavor to alleviate the human suffering indigenous to these conditions. One sister made a good deal of what happened, happen. Dedicated, a tireless worker, a solicitor of funding, my sister Theresa made a lot of it happen. She has continued with that commitment until only recently, when we have once again, three sisters, in the company of others, embarked upon another course of action.

I have been to Africa, perhaps only long enough to realize another dimension to the human condition.

It is now four years since I have graduated from Stanford. Two and half of those years were spent in the inner of a big city. Only three months were spent in Africa. Almost a year has been spent in recovering from a serious illness contracted in Africa. That year spent recovering was a time not only for rest and recuperation, but for concentrated intensive evaluation of the human condition in all its dimensions, accomplished partly through hours of debate in the company of a very close friend. While I was aware peripherally of the predations upon the planet, the diminishment of resources, the pollutions of the environment, these became a focus for my thoughts. They truly complicated, and now dominate, the human condition. A growing feeling of impossibility and inevitability began to invade my thoughts. While I have not wholly abandoned the commitment to dealing with the human condition, I have begun to think in terms of my own survival, but also to want to lead a life that makes sense to me. Hence in the last year my thoughts have gravitated to 'subsistence living'. Realizing the selfishness of this quest, I cannot speak upon it until I have actually lived the life, that is, until I have 'walked the walk'. As I regard it now, I realize it is a lifetime commitment, not some whimsical showy thing to be abandoned at my convenience.

The immediate question is, can anyone truly do the subsistence thing in isolation, can one survive to merely survive, and what does it mean to do this thing?

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

I haven't any answers to these questions. I can say I am trying to salvage something, from what I have observed about life, that makes sense to me. I know already what is being required of me. Long hours, tiring labor, calloused hands; at present, for unaccounted reward. I am trying to regard what I do as a serious lifetime commitment. Again I cannot do it alone. There are a dozen of us trying to work the land with a given philosophy. My two sisters and I, the college trained agrarian daughter of the farmer from whom we are obtaining an established farmstead, the farmer and his wife, and three other couples sharing our commitment, perhaps to be thought of as a communal thing.

I may not be able to speak publicly about this endeavor until I have spent the remainder of my life so engaged. I wonder if I will be able to contribute any of what I learn to the general weal, to the great knowledge mankind has already acquired throughout his long tenure on this planet. I cannot tell you of any reward in advance, in anticipation, as it were. After nearly a year I feel I have barely 'got my feet wet, or my hands dirty'. I am becoming familiar with myself, with my attitude toward physical labor, with the necessity of doing things in a timely manner. Often what one does seems repetitious. During the summer, one rises early to do his chores before the heat of the day becomes onerous, returning in the cool of the evening to the chores. One senses a great tranquility as the quiet acquiescence of the land provides a cornucopia of sustenance to all we would undertake to ask of it. But underneath everything exists the knell of nature, of fate, as it were, the heat, the cold, frost, the threat of drought, the pests, diseases, the low yields, and ones attitude in dealing with 'nature'. The rewards are too simple to account. The expected yield of a crop. The filling of the larder. The loft full of hay. The woodsheds full. The newborn calf. The increase, or replacement of poultry. The seeds saved. And the land prepared for the next growing season. It is now winter, a time for taking stock, planning for the next year, and Yes! a time for some rest and reflection. A time for renewal of one self.

The rewards seem consonant with the expectation. Are they sufficient for me? For the time, a balance has been achieved, mostly established through not having too many expectations. Part of the rewards are gained through a fellowship, a shared experience with ones own family, that is, a continuation of a love that I have known since birth, but also with new faces, with new people who are dedicated, with those, the farmer's family, who are not only dedicated, but are one with the land; sharing this symbiosis with all of us, with grace and humor. At this point in time, everything is in a 'feel good' stage.

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

As we go about our day, we often contemplate the ages of man, the agrarian man. How we have truly benefited from that long march through time, surviving on the land; a true expression of a unity with process and with historical achievement; Yes!, we have benefited immensely.

I want this to be the true way, the one way I may truly become the apotheosis of my own thinking and beliefs. It may require that I become an anonymous drudge, but perhaps no more of an illusionist drudge, attempting to convince mankind of something to which his ears are not attuned, as Henry David Thoreau may have so aptly put it, the 'sound of a different drummer'

I am writing my own script; I must become its chief protagonist.

I will not lack in allies. There are many who would do as we do, if only they could, if only they could find the means. Instead they live in the urban setting, struggling to put food on the table, and to pay their due to landlords, taxmen, hucksters, conmen, and those parasites who ply the streets, as well as the halls of government.

So what will we do with our really good fortune? We must not fritter it away, we must not go into this thing with the idea, if we don't like it, we can chuck it. It is not an experiment, it must become a way of life. It is the way of life!

If we could do the other, with words, it would be truly wonderful, that is, achieve this World State that abided the Golden Rule. If only. Why abandon this pursuit? Is it not far more important a quest than one's mere survival? Do not those with the most awareness of the great disparities have the obligation to pursue them for the sake of the entire species? A bit grandiose, do you not think?

As a group of us might try to prevail with the land, an even much larger group of us will not prevail against the conceits of his fellow man.

Our Lord, Don Quixote, is not an anomalous creature; he is symbolic of many of our desires to right the wrongs of the world. He was made to look the buffoon for his failed attempts. Are we thus to become buffoons as we continue to fail?

'Forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

After all the centuries of human suffering, there is no excuse; there can be no forgiveness. Those who cause suffering must be made to suffer.

Life for each of us is but a once. Think upon it. Think upon it. Again, what is the meaning of an individual life?

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

As I propose to travel this road into the future, I cannot predict its outcome. Will I relax my vigil regarding the human condition? Will other more immediate things command my attention, things like frost, drought, disease, pests, the timeliness of every act.

Already my limited exposure reveals much. Yes!, a dedicated series of acts to assure an end result, each must be executed in a timely, thoughtful, and caring manner. One does not merely place a seed in the ground with an admonition: GROW! That is to say, one does not rest once he places the seed in the ground, any more than the one who shouts on the ramparts will gain the objective through exclamations alone.

I will not rest after I have spoken here. If anything, I am made more aware of some great need, and some impending doom, as I recall and regurgitate that which has sustained me in my other pursuits. Most likely, I will not abandon a part I must play.

It is not a part I must play alone. All must be actively engaged in shoring up and salvaging this fledgling civilization that is really only just beginning. We are still struggling to emerge from our primitive state, we must persist in that endeavor, if we expect to become what we think we are. There are no other satisfactory alternatives. The status quo is deadly. Don't be deceived by the stasis that confronts you as you leave this auditorium; It too is deadly; deadly in the sense that it encourages a false sense of..... what? (Come on Durchanek!!!!)

Thus I leave you with both ponderables and imponderables, and with the admonition to action. Matters will not take care of themselves; there must be action. It is those others who are acting that are shaping the awful world in which we are living. You too must act, persevere. Yes! you will be thrown back, driven from the ramparts; but you must return; your conviction is greater than those whom you must assail. Their greed, and desire for power and control is not more powerful than your resolve.

You owe it to yourself.

I want to say something more concerning my current preoccupation; that of 'subsistence living'. This is not a frivolous activity on my part, our parts. Some might argue it is a 'cop out'. Back to the land, back to nature; a cop out? It has never been a frivolous cop out for man. He could never truly leave the field in order to go to war. Often he was overrun and pillaged by the invading or warring hords, but he did not cease his ceaseless activity, he planted again and again, perhaps to be overrun again, and again.



## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

I feel, as a species, we have lost our way. I can not bring myself to say we never had a way; how can you lose something you never had?

After centuries, perhaps millennia, of struggle, we finally arrived at the doorstep of the Age of Reason or the Age of Enlightenment. All the while this high-minded search for truth was happening, the agrarian man was feeding the engines of man's machinations.

The 'old ways' would no longer serve the best interests of humanity. Inhuman rulers, monarchs; rigid, dogmatic churches; subservience to both, these were on the wane, mostly because of their inhumanity to man.

The rigor mortis of religion was made to stand the test of reason; the impuissance aristocracy was assaulted, and cast aside.

The 'new way' conceived new institutions, new forms of government, new concepts of the world based on observation and logical deduction. Still the agrarian man persevered.

Man began to recognize the relevance of an individual life, the importance, the meaning of an individual life. Man also began to think in egalitarian terms, feeling that no one individual was better than another, that all men deserved an equal share in the life of the planet.

When the 'Industrial Revolution' began it was full of the hope and the promise that all men would be relieved of the drudge of life.

Then we faltered. Whereas emanating from the enlightenment and the subsequent egalitarian precepts, along with the revolutions to give them face, we had not abandoned our selfish tendencies. We were still what we were underneath. All the humanitarian hoopla became lost in the age old tendencies. Whereas we had overthrown aristocracies, had emancipated slaves, had declared that all men are created equal, we began to enslave them in other ways, rule and control them in other ways. Still the agrarian persevered.

The new oligarchs, eventually becoming Corporations, arising with 'Industry', a consumerist society, mass producing goods to sell to the 'people', involved enslaving workers for long hours for low pay, with great exposure to injury. Land was being gobbled up by those who wanted to control the food production, to control the markets in the production and distribution of food, latterly identified as Agribusiness, a bane to the centuries of the agrarian life, seeking patents for our very life line.

These things were not being done in observance of some humanitarian gambit, not at all; only lip service to, while the wealth rolled into the hands of the few. Governments were being formed through the influence of this wealth, governments becoming more

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

and more friendly to wealth, legislating depletion allowances, soil banks, subsidies, tax deferrals, or no taxes at all, grandfathering pollutions, and deadly disposal of wastes, while the balance of humanity carried the load. The agrarian man was being eclipsed by the controllers, and being replaced by machines and method, by monoculture, by the law of patents; the land becoming the slave to riches.

This 'new way' evolved into the consumerist world in which we now live, where all the resources of the planet, both material and human, are being converted into a 'standard of living' that finds our lives being burdened with immense piles of shoddy, useless obsolescent junk, stuff that we did not need ever, stuff that has required all our wherewithal, our earnings, our lives thrown into this hopper of this nothingness of material consumption. What have we to show for this *modus operandi*? We have nothing to show for it. One immense midden! Our lives are not better off. For those without means, even this paltry life is denied them. If the commodity (food stuffs) do not bring the 'right' price, the stuffs themselves are destroyed.

Its not just a few regions or places on the planet that are infected with this disease; all nations are infected or are becoming infected. All are trying to gain the peak of the heap, all based on this empty gambit.

Along with these changes to the 'old way' came a promise, not explicit, by any means, that all would benefit equally. As time has shown, the benefits accrue to those who are in a position to manipulate and control them. Others simply perish in the waiting line. Those who have, who have taken, view that as their just dessert; their righteous rightful due. Sharing any of what they have was never part of any equation. What we have then is great disparities that demonstrate the shallowness of the premise of the original illusory promise.

Also 'they' construct huge fortresses designed to protect their piles.

Tell me why I should not want to return to something more basic, something more fundamental, for myself.

I came from this institution with a hint of wisdom and much hope in the value of the word. Here, I stand before you, perorating with the word, as though I believed it would reach out to you, as though it would prompt you to go back to your representative in government, demanding of that entity, an accounting of its failures; and what they are doing to remedy the human condition, in an attempt to

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

fulfill the promise. Also to make their (our) government accountable.

In our democracy, one does not fulfill promises, one yammers about fulfilling promises, then goes home at night to a couple of martinis, and into escapist entertainment.

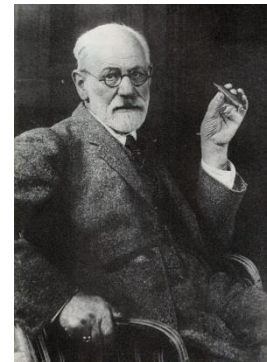
The representative in government has rarely, if ever, gone hungry. He or she have had few worries, if any. As a government employee, everything is taken care of for the rest of their lives. The foxes have provided an infinite supply of chickens.

In some ways I cannot but end on this seemingly sour note. But, not unlike you, when I leave this building I will be impressed by the apparent quiescence of the Campus, and the community of Palo Alto, deceived into somehow accepting this status quo, mostly because I would not know where to begin to change this thing that creates such a dubiously satisfying illusion, that even might be said to represent what it is we might want to see in every community. Can we export Palo Alto to the rest of the world? Is that what the world wants, and what the world needs? Are WE truly satisfied by what exists outside this room? If not, do we know the source of our dissatisfaction?



I return to one of my mentors; Ortega Y Gasset who has written something that continues to haunt the hallways of my thought. *"... What is most valuable in man is his eternal and almost divine discontent, which is a kind of love without a beloved, and like the ache we feel in members of our body that we do not have. Man is the only being that misses what he has never had. And the whole of what we miss, without ever having had it, is never what we call happiness. ....man (is) the only being who is unhappy, for the very reason he needs to be happy. That is because he needs to be what he is not."*

I will leave you with another concise writing from one other of those I consider amongst my chief mentors. In *Civilization And Its Discontents* Sigmund Freud wrote: *'We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally from our relations to*



## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

*other men. The suffering which comes from this last source is perhaps more painful to us than any other. We tend to regard it as a kind of gratuitous addition, although it cannot be any less fatefully inevitable than the suffering which comes from elsewhere.'*

In this last I cannot but repeatedly reflect upon two words '*fatefully inevitable*'.

I cannot improve upon what these men have written; however, I have truly welcomed this opportunity to discourse upon matters of concern to all of us. As it has become part of my preoccupation and sustenance, I would hope also that it becomes food for thought in others. The future is unknown. Perhaps it will always be an unknown. This should not dismay us. By its very nature, it should act to persuade us to be prepared for every eventuality. It is conceivable that mankind will fulfill a hope of Sigmund's, as he contemplated in *The Future Of An Illusion*, by allowing and using his reason to show the way.

I realize man is an earthbound visceral creature. He is also beset by an inertia, caused by an inborn laziness, and the debilitating influence of gravity. He has much to overcome in order assure the demanding and great undertaking of his own civilization.

I do not set out to belittle my fellow man, but there are times when he leaves me few alternatives.

I cannot help be mindful of that overriding question put to us by another of our ablest thinkers, Herman Melville, in *Moby Dick*: To reiterate: "*Is Civilization A Thing Distinct, Or Merely An Advanced Stage Of Barbarism?*".

Man makes much of fate and the fates, as though his life and behavior is at the whim of others. He finds refuge in blaming Evil forces for his destructive wanderings. He awaits deliverance at the portals of heaven and hell; anything to augur for eternal life, though the life he leads on this planet is hardly a worthy or exemplary performance. He hopes to make up the difference with prayer and false humility as though the 'Gods' were as blind and stupid as he. These latter supplications are not intended to make it possible to continue with the great undertaking of 'civilization', but merely to prolong forever his indulgence in his erstwhile pleasures.

Hard words from a basically soft woman?

Unlike my mentors, I feel less inclined than they to offer a philosophical understanding, a palliative understanding, of man's plight. He is not a sympathetic figure in the landscape, despite what Ortega speculates. Sigmund comes closer to the mark with his

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

'fatefully inevitable' assessment. As much as I want to accept this pronouncement of where the greater truth lies, I am reluctant to let man off the hook. If man would yield his conceits, if he would keep his mouth shut, I might be more inclined to be more understanding, but as it is, I want him to choke on his words, and suffer for his actions.

However, not to lose sight of my true, close-to-the-bone, humanitarian objective, I want a civilization that does not allow the domination of one man (or woman) by another, and a civilization that will account the least amongst us, however, this wishful thought flies in the face of Herman's crucial question.

Glaring at us from the four walls, the heavens and the earth, is that most remarkable of concepts, and realizations, if you will, the Golden Rule. If we cannot digest this one great revelation, abiding it, I believe we are doomed to HELL on this earth.

Consummatum est.

A lazy author is tempted to end things here, as an answer to '*Where Will It All End?*', leaving it to the reader to imagine anything he likes about the boring travail of farming, and the equally boring travail of writing, as well as where his life might end.

It is to be assumed that Catherine will not save mankind from the man eating monster. What might be assumed about her dedication to her new way of life? Does the author really need to eclipse the passing of one of the chief protagonists, Mr. D., and what might more appropriately ensue for the other? The author doubts such mechanics would not serve the greater intent of his efforts, lest it be said that Mr. D.'s passing might be construed as relief, and one of the Few Regrets, for the reader.

If the reader has persevered this long into this rambling epistle, perhaps he is more interested in other things than the relationship of the protagonists. That he or she is most interested in the arguments put forth regarding man's direction, and the 'human condition', to be found on this one and only planet. Such would be considered an amazing achievement by the author.

The author has the stage for the moment. He does not intend to depart until he examines more closely the destruction of the Constitution of The United States of America by those sworn to uphold it.

In response to the author:

An angry Lydia Tellerman writes in the Harvard law review.

We know full well where to begin this examination.

## *What Matters Matters*

# **The Constitution**

**We the People** of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for a common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

**Article [V]** The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either case, shall be valid in all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof, as one or the other Mode of Ratification may be proposed by the Congress; Provided that no Amendment which may be made prior to the Year One thousand eight hundred and eight shall in any Manner affect the first and fourth Clauses in the Ninth Section of the First Article, and That no State, without its Consent, shall be deprived of its equal Suffrage in the Senate.

**Articles** in addition to, and Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America, proposed by Congress, and ratified by the Legislatures of the several States, pursuant to the fifth Article of the original Constitution.

**[Article I]** Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for redress of grievances.

**[Article IV]** The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation,

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

[Article V] No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on presentment of indictment of a Grand jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when actual service time in War or public danger, nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to witness against himself, nor deprived of life, liberty, or property, without the process of law, nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

[Article VI] In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defense.

[Article VIII] Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishment inflicted.

[Article XIV] Section I. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without the due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

**There ought to be limits to freedom.**

What is missing from the equation? Is not much of what is written self-evident?

I'll lay it out there for you.

We have alienated a whole group of people, through our biased support of Israel, in her altercations with the citizenry located within her borders, and altercations with her neighbors.

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

The alienated group have sought to bring harm to our nation in retribution, as they perceive we have taken sides against them.

We have indeed taken sides; and we have reaped the wrath of those slighted.

We have had ample opportunity to use our influence to provide a level playing field for all participants in the Middle East. We have not done so.

Do we deserve to be punished for our actions? Perhaps so.

I do not advocate what has happened on the infamous 9/11 as a way to try to even the score.

But it is what has happened. Instead of examining the underlying factors contributing to 9/11, we have sought revenge upon the suspected individuals responsible for the acts conducted on 9/11. We have also used the 9/11 happening as an excuse for, and opportunity for, other things wholly unrelated to the event itself.

Some have conjectured that we have deliberately allowed this to happen, even in the face of the certainty that it was about to happen, likening it to a vital provocation paralleling Pearl Harbor. Some have gone so far as to conjecture that a prevailing theory of 'shock doctrine' has been precipitated in order to create a climate (opportunity, a la Milton Friedman) for the passage of a freedom limiting set of laws akin to the eventuality of the Patriot Act. (There isn't any limitation placed upon opportunity.)

The revenge we have sought has had farther-reaching consequences, well beyond Homeland Security and the Patriot Act.

We have preemptively, unilaterally (for the most part; the 'coalition of the willing' one of the more outstanding jokes of the whole imbroglio) attacked a sovereign nation, after it was deduced that an aerial photograph showed a truck carrying WMD's that were construed as threat to our nation. We unilaterally exercised our interpretation of a 'material breach' to attack a sovereign nation, later to claim we were interested in spreading democracy and 'our way of life', and/or whatever else sounded good on the political home front. Also we had identified several sovereign nations as sponsors of a human condition known as terrorism, two of these being attacked, essentially unilaterally. We empowered ourselves to fight 'terrorism' wherever we found it. We enacted laws that contravened our Constitution, especially the one's quoted above; most notably, but not exclusively, Amended Article IV, in order to take on perceived terrorists wherever we found them (or wherever we imagined they were). Any and all Muslims were targeted as possible terrorists. The adage reads: All Muslims are not terrorists,



## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

but all terrorists are Muslims. Additionally, now, all citizens of the United States of America were suspected terrorists until proven innocent.

Rather than amend our international policies, that is, of favoring a usurpatious Israel to the exclusion of her neighbors, often supporting her crusades against her neighbors, we go after the neighbors with 'hammer and tongs', and patently deny the claims and existence of Israel's foresworn enemies.

Its all so transparent. As long as we persist in favoritism, we will be targeted, regardless of the Patriot Act.

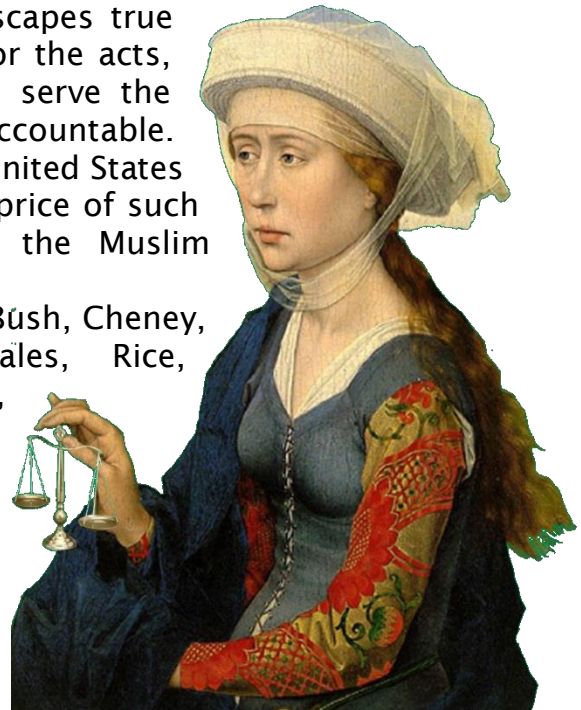
Not incidentally, if one follows the 'shock doctrine' scenario, the invasion of a Sovereign nation coincides with our diminishing supply of oil, providing an opportunity to sequester that resource found in 'temporary' abundance therein.

This is also transparent.

What our government has done and is doing in each instance is to be assessed as a crime against humanity. No equivocation. The death and destruction wrought by these actions of the United States of America is not excusable in any terms. In the Judgment at Nuremberg we made it perfectly clear that those who acquiesced and supported the usurpation of power from the consent of the governed are responsible for their acts.

Yet, each of those responsible escapes true accountability, that is, punishment for the acts, because the world lacks the will to serve the indictments and make the guilty accountable. Meanwhile, the other citizens of the United States of America will be forced to pay the price of such heinous crimes, bound forever to the Muslim perdition.

The most notorious of the guilty: Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rove, Ashcroft, Gonzales, Rice, Wolfowitz, Ridge, Libby, Hughes, Armitage, Hadley, and its coterie of sycophants (Perle, Baker, and Gingrich, amongst them), and Yes!, even the Supreme Court (shall we excuse Powell after his second epiphany?). This reads a little like the Watergate imbroglio, only the collateral damage inflicted by the Bush Administration horrendously, callously, and grossly, inhumanly different. In broader terms it might indeed read like the



## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

Nuremburg Trials, or the Courts that went after Pinochet. All of the above named need to be brought to justice by 'we the people' in order to establish our credibility as a fair and just nation.

The 'Patriot Act', per se, is intended to deal with terrorism both foreign and domestic, the causes are irrelevant. 'Terrorism' is construed to be a multidimensional occurrence that involves conspiracy, treason, and what all, requiring every means of 'vigilance', surveillance, and persuasion, even abridging the Constitution, to obtain information leading to apprehension of the guilty, and to thwart any attempts at further 'terrorist' events.

Every living soul is guilty, until proven innocent. 'Guilt by Association' is a tenet of the Patriot Act.

In a reverse interpretation of this modus we are all guilty by association with the Bush Administration because we have taken no action against it; rather have we acquiesced, and our Congress has given tacit approval of both the provocation (supporting one nation over the other) and the steps taken to remedy the backlash from granting such support.

We will be forced to do penance by outsiders, and suffer with governmental terrorism within.

We certainly do not qualify to be the 'leader of the free world'.

I would like to believe that some favorable outcome might emerge from, not only from the terrible things we do and have done, but from the incessant horror show conducted in almost every corner of the globe.

The species is obviously too redundant, and excessive in number, if all it is here to do is prove to be the antithesis of the life that has been engendered within it. There is too much evidence of the persistence of the beast, and such a scarcity of the humanitarian ethos, to which we continuously pay lip service.

This last may seem an unfair assessment to those who devote their lives to, not only humanitarian precept, but also to the preservation of the all the unique life forms found on this lonely planet.

For every committed humanitarian, there are thousands who only pay token lip service to the notion, and thousands more who are indifferent to the notion, as well as all those act contrary to these notions.

Those who have formed our government and used their office as a platform for the exercise of a private hidden agenda, not so hidden as it turns out, using the power of the state to suppress dissent, to intimidate its citizens, to perpetrate their Inside Job, and

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

to usurp their inalienable rights, tear at the very fabric of our union, are to be condemned forever. They will always be held accountable in the eyes of history. I will see to it. They live behind their gated communities, surrounded by high walls, razor wire, secret service agents, and vicious dogs, replete with their ill-gotten gains. They are to be condemned forever, and ever. Their walls are a million times more an affront to humanity than was the Berlin wall, for which we were also partially responsible.

I am an attorney. I want humane laws legislated to serve all humanity equitably. I want any and all who violate such laws to be brought to justice, unequivocally. No pandering, no exceptions.

You will note from my name that my lineage stems from a certain ethnicity, as much as if my name were McEnroe, Nehru, or Chen. We, each of us, stand only so tall. Most of us might be thought mongrels because, despite our names, we seem a part of the redundant agglomeration. We are indeed evolved into a redundant manufacture. There are those who would accuse me of betraying my people, when it really is so that I would eliminate the conditions that draw negative attention to them.

As my older sister, Catherine, argues, the idea of Nation has become a bugaboo, a source of grating differentiation, an insistence upon non-assimilation, on unique identity. Do I find fault with her assessment? If, by becoming a Nation, the planet is made into a battleground for asserting differences, (not only asserting differences) then it must submit to the higher principle: 'We are all in this together'. The Golden Rule must prevail over national interests, over ethnic considerations. I am in agreement with my sister.

I make much of the assimilation issue because I recognize it as a source of something too insistent that would lead to a dominance or displacement of the other. This cannot be tolerated any more than the other kind of intolerance resulted in the infamous holocaust.

It is being said we cannot trust in our fellow man, hence we must shape our lives to account for the beast in us. Do we know ourselves to be untrustworthy? Can we go up to another man or woman and say to them: "I am untrustworthy". Is it true then? If you turn your back will I descend upon you. Is that true? If I turn my back, will you descend upon me? Can we live with such apprehension of our very look a likes? Can we? Do we?

These are basic questions that lie at the root of our nature? Are we to become so insistent upon our difference as to endanger the very prospect of surviving in a more rational or sane world? Does not such insistence invite the same from the other?

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

If you tell me “We are not all in this together”, what am I left to think or do?

I am an attorney. I am not a biologist or an anthropologist. The biological scientist will assert that we have evolved over time. This scientist cannot tell me the purpose of evolution or the specific aims of the process. The anthropologist will assert that the bones he finds have been around for millennia, and propound that these bones lead to questions of origins so far and so distant to preclude any speculation with regard to ethnicity, or tribe. More like, did this one stand on two legs, or move about on all fours?

Refined questions regarding a unique expression of the species have become a matter of vanity, of conceits, that harbor and reveal something more primitive than an evolutionary prospect might suggest.

As an attorney I have worked for the ACLU, an idealistic undertaking of mine, an outgrowth of my reasons for studying Law. Equity, fairness and justice have been the bywords of my life; I am verily imprisoned by them.

I cannot think other than I do. As humans we must recognize we are all in this together, that there is no alternative to the Golden Rule. Yes we are a uniquely evolved species. We are a unique life form, perhaps to be found no where else in the Universe. Insisting upon our differences leads us down the path to confrontation which results in maiming and death, hardly the intended purpose of life, lacking any other.

My name is Lydia Tellerman. If it was Lydia Anonymous instead, would it alter the import of the words? I believe not, because I harbor no prejudices or conceits. I am the one thing, first and foremost. If I cannot be that, I cannot be anything.

Idealism has its practical ramifications.

As an attorney I might have followed a more lucrative career, but did not join the profession to be afforded the opportunity to make a lot of money. Before I even entered Law School I knew I would be working for the ACLU or a like organization.

In conclusion, I know in my heart of hearts that equality is the name of the game. To practice it ennobles us. To grant the Palestinian equal rights in every sense of the words, would ennoble us all, and make their lives happier. How can we possibly deny either? If we do, are we still to be considered human?

Two of the sisters have spoken.

We shall hear from the third momentarily.

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

She does not appear on the Stanford campus or write to the Harvard Law Review. She will not set out to answer any of the big questions, nor will she particularly echo the words of her sisters.

Theresa might be considered an above average considerate humanitarian, raised in an environment that stimulated an awareness of the human condition.

Her average comment on the affairs of men has been repeated often enough by her and by others. **We are all part of the problem; we are all part of the solution.**

We are no more astounded by this observation than we are by any other. It is also said somewhere *'Fall down we may, get up, we must'*.

## *Another Labors With The Pen*

Theresa writes in her notebook.

I have been reading in the *'Shock Doctrine'*, *'Dead Aid'*, and *'A Short History of Progress'*, heavy tomes dealing with what confronts us all, and reminiscent of our many troubling discussions regarding the human condition.

Like my sisters, because I interact with them every day, and with Mr. D. and the author, there are momentous matters, openly discussed on a daily basis. If we were not discussing these matters, what else might we discuss? The weather, the state of the farm, lineage of farming, the wonder of life? We discuss these too.

More significantly, what would I or should I be thinking about? Am I free to choose something outside these pressing matters; do I have such luxury? It would seem not.

The idealism expressed by Catherine, the hard realities expressed by Lydia, the cynicism expressed by Mr. D., and the incessant questioning and prognostications of the author, are impossible to ignore; and my own sentiments are not easily dismissed.

I would wish that all things would be self-evident, and that the self-evident would become the issue of the day, and the issue of our conversations. If there is a problem in the human community, we should all be pitching in to solve it. To me that is self-evident. It is also self-evident that if we fall down, and wish to continue, that we must rise again. If we agree that the Golden Rule is the essential contract between all men (and women), it seems self-evident we are bound to honor it, even if, at times, it appears inconvenient to do so. Failing in these most self-evident propositions, we are destined for even worse scenarios than those illuminated in the three books I have recently chosen to read.

Why are these books being written? Why is it necessary for my sisters to speak out, or Mr. D to scathingly judge us, or for the author to dwell upon such

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

matters? Perhaps the answer to these is also self-evident? Should I opine that we have lost our way? Would that be an untrue statement? Are we not still formative, still evolving? Paul Gauguin, Catherine, Mr. D., many others, are asking 'Where do we come from, why are we here, where are we going?' That is also to ask, what is the purpose of life, any life? Catherine continually asks these questions; they are the scaffolding of her thought?

We all try to answer these questions. There are no self-evident answers. We may try to excuse some of what we do by intimating that we are still evolving, our societies (our civilization is) and our institutions are still evolving, still formative.. However, the evolving part earns us certain judgments, certain condemnations. Evolution is not so much a matter of a conscious choice as it is a series of adaptations to a series of fortuitous events. In this context I reserve the use of another word 'opportunity' as used in 'Shock Doctrine'. 'Opportunity' in this context, connotes a diabolical conjuncture of favorable circumstances that represent a 'Golden' well-timed moment, to exploit an occasion, whether it be brought about by natural calamity, or forced upon humanity by double-dealing corrupt governments. The moment, in this case, is not being exploited to improve the human condition.

Something is amiss, more than the evolutionary aegis. There is sometimes an immense gulf between a man's words and a man's actions. Because of this, we are often very suspicious of the intent behind the words. If we observe the actions by themselves, it often becomes apparent that the workings of the mind behind them is guided by other considerations than those revealed in the words.

Not to become circuitous through circumlocution, I return to what I consider to be the self-evident propositions. Is it self-evident that any natural calamity, such as Hurricane Katrina, or the tsunami in the East Indies, or man-made calamity, such as 'creation of debt', is clearly an 'opportunity' for changing a status quo, a la Friedman, where someone stands to gain through the loss of others? It would seem so. Is it further self-evident that this represents a failure of an evolutionary model? Not so evident. What we might attribute to evolution in the way of hope may be misplaced. This is more evident. Verisimilitudes. The evolution of the calamity.

Let's reconnoiter.

The most self-evident thing might be that it is improbable anyone could fashion much of anything from the human clay.

Hard words.

All that matters in this instance is the truth, hard words or no.

Can I not soften my spake?

How would you argue that I should?

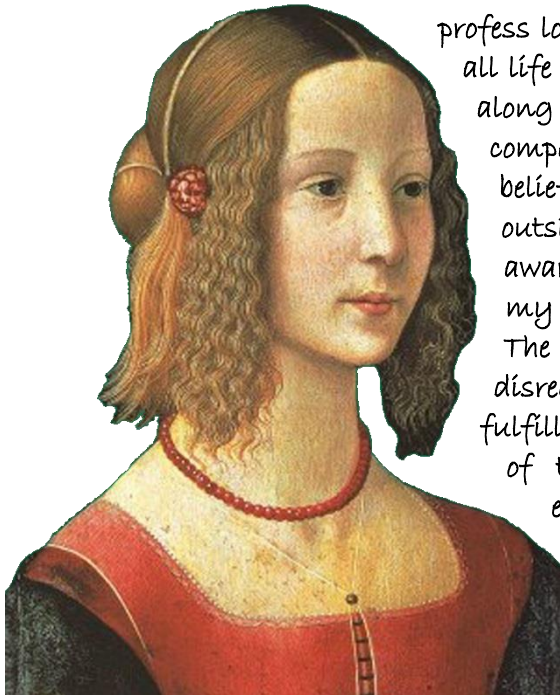
It is so difficult for me, having been raised in a country, by such parents, in such an educational system, that pointed with a self-satisfied, almost smug, assurance that we were the exemplary; we could do no wrong. My expectations were way out of line with reality; but I did not come to learn that

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

until later. My first real dose of reality came through the discussions I was having with my sisters, and my older sister's discussions with a close friend of hers, who is also now my friend. Its not that they revealed things to me that were not there to be seen, if they had been studied, and thought about, would be viewed with a different perspective. They were being studied, and viewed.

My spake at that time defended something ideal in which I had subsumed my expectations. The ideal has not changed, whereas the expectations have. Let's say the expectations are encumbered with a clear call for performance, that is, a reality that cannot exist without considerable effort. All the lip-service, temporizing, equivocation, double think that is invested in avoidance, and indifference, in denial, and in concealing real motivation, must be called into question.

Not until the slate is clean will I ever be able ever again to offer a softened spake.



Nonetheless, I am soft. The me of myself is soft. I profess love for life and the living, in the sense that all life and the living have an equal right to exist along side myself, whether or not we might be compatible, or incompatible. This is a conscious belief. It is the me that recognizes something outside of myself of which I am obliged to be aware, something I cannot ignore. Of course, my attitude could be different; but it is not. The me of my meness will not allow me to disregard other life in my quest for self-fulfillment. It must be a shared experience, devoid of the impulse to dominate, to exploit, to enslave, to possess. Further, my meness wants to help the hurt and the ailing.

Because of my exposure to the reality of the real world, if you can fathom that, I have aligned myself with those who question every aspect of the human gambit on this planet. I love my sisters so intensely for their search after the truth of things. I love Mr. D. and the author as well for these very same things.

We, as a species, are not intended to be left off lightly with our deceptive spake; we will have to answer for it. More, we will have to answer for our actions, regardless of the spake. We want all those others to be answerable as well, to be dragged from behind their fortified complacency, to answer for both their words and their actions.

Lydia has provided you with the framework in which this must be executed. It is just. Justice must prevail. Justice must not be warped by the privileged, or the powerful. We desperately need to have our faith in justice restored. If it is

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

not restored we will be forced to believe the very worst about ourselves. There can be no immunity from justice; there can be no untoward action with impunity. None!

This is not being written to make myself appear better than someone else. I know perfectly well where I fall short of my expectations. Yes!, I am influenced by all the cynicism. I sense the truth behind the cynicism. It is not the first time the human contingent has been exposed to the truth about itself. It is not the first time the human contingent has sought to escape culpability for its actions. Every event seeks its precedent in another. We cannot allow this to happen. ALL must be held accountable and answerable, Yes!, even I; NOW!

If I do not act as my conscience dictates because I am allowing myself to be influenced by the cynicism harbored in my beliefs, I have become a shirker. If I allow the fear of government to influence my decisions, I will have become a shirker.

Are these words sufficient? Am I doing my part? When I proclaim that 'we are all part of the problem, we are all part of the solution'; what is expected of me? Yes! indeed, what are my expectations of myself?

We need to hear from Mr. D. in order to learn the bitter truth. He may be viewed as a contemptuous censorious detractor of *homo sapiens sapiens*

## *The Cynic Chimes In*

I am the naysayer. I am the coming of the Cynic.

Accordingly, it seems I have been identified as the peripatetic harbinger of doom and gloom.

Catherine, Lydia, and Theresa tolerate me. The author indulges me.

But be forewarned, I am not who I seem. I am even worse.

However, I'll wear the austere mantle; I'll wear the mantle until mankind changes its ways. It is my belief it will never change its ways. Thus I shall forever become the Cynic. My true wish therefore is to become the most complete Cynic that has ever walked this earth.

I know beforehand that my cynicism could never equate with (speaking of equality) that of Wall Street and the Banks, the Banks of America, London, Berlin, Moscow, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tehran (Allah forbid), Tokyo, Singapore, Manila, Vanilla, Chocolate and Strawberry, and your local bank, credit union, or lending institution. Plus all those bettors on other people's misfortunes; all those who rifle the obituary columns seeking opportunities; all the computer whizzes who trade in your life. And, By God, IN WHOM YOU TRUST (i.e, your government). ALL, all



## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

predicated in making something out of nothing. The 'nothing' is your wherewithal, your life, your hard-earned whatever converted into gain, wealth, and power and control of your existence by the unscrupulous parasites who happen to look like you.

You might be led to believe that I care. But in fact, as time passes, I care less and less. I am becoming this cynical spectator, walking the edge of the precipice. How is it possible not to care and become a cynic simultaneously? Caring is something that happens when I think of individuals being dominated and exploited by other individuals; projecting issues forth when it seems nobody else can or will. However there are times when I am just angered; when I want to avenge those who have become the inhuman victim of human exploitation.

The cynicism is another part of an equation that seeks a solution; and when not finding a balanced equation, it introduces a shifting constant that makes up the difference. When a seeming hypothetical balance is achieved, it is soon realized that, although a solution exists, the exploiters, manipulators, controllers, will never yield to its exegesis.

Call it a tantalizing problem, generating a range of hypotheticals. I might be a rock, impervious to the gravity that holds me in place, a benign thing, until gravity releases me with all of my hard reality. Yes, I am held in place, unable to move, held in place by the gravity of the situation. I might fall hard upon the one while thousands of others escape. The enormity of the futility drives me into a fatal catatonic cynicism.



I imagine that I have found the solution, but live with the knowledge, that if I were to speak, the words would flail without avail upon the unaccustomed ears of Goya's asses. Indeed it is futile.

I had been drawn in by the disparities, first, by my realization that others were here before me, others who managed to fuck up Paradise with their venialities, their wanton, unconcerned visceral urges seeking satiation. I was born into a fucked-up Paradise by parents who had no notion; no-notion copulation, following those visceral urges, fulfilling the no-urge to create my destiny; this one.

Secondly, in my desire for acceptance and love, I got suckered into trying to mimic those who seemed to be favored amongst the others. How hopeless, truly hopeless. And stupid.

Anyway, your wants and desires are the stuff of 'nothing'. Your wants and desires are exacerbated by the promise of a tomorrow, a never land of tomorrow, TODAY! RIGHT NOW! All that is required of you is to succumb to DEBT, forever DEBT. Your DEBT can be sold and resold to profiteers until it is so sucked of its original contractual arrangement, like what you have used as security, even your life on the

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

dotted line, can become the collateral for sticks (war making) and stocks, margins, junk bonds, leverages, Ponzi's, the Great Pyramid, that get sucked of their equity, value, and ownership (including your meaningless life), until it goes bust, and you are out on the street, and the schemers are committing suicide right and left, or disappearing behind high walls topped with razor wire, futuristic alarm systems, along with some old fashioned Rottweiler's. Huh!?

If that doesn't throw you for a loop, when the government (that scycophanty overlobbied, impuissant concoction that represents YOU) gets into it, that is, your protector, your guarantor, you are told you were too gullible, you shouldna fell for the hoopla, all governmental undersight notwithstanding. But your protector, your guarantor feels for your sorry ass, none less, and bails out your broke bank (Brokeback), shores up the wretched economy by borrowing on your non-existent future by taxing you beyond any hope of your resources, to help the magnates (this includes you Goldman Sachs), do what they have always done, deny you a fair wage for your labors, deny, deny, deny, explained in the fine print as EXPLOIT UNTIL DEATH PART, YOU DO. And every PART of you is sold at auction to pay off all the speculators losses.

I thought the Savior chased the money-changers from the HOLY TEMPLE of LIFE. Sheeit!

The entertainment value in these proceedings is very high, however droll.

There you are out on the street, Brokebacked, hungry, exposed to the elements, vagrant, vagabond, hoboed, kicked off'n the rails by the dicks, down and out with Ring Lardner, when they tell you your life ain't worth a shekel, a kopek, a nickel, that is, worth a dam dram, then is when they rub the salt into your wounds, a loaf of bread is gonna cost you a hundred times what it did the last time you could not afford it. If you are on welfare or on Social Security or what has become a measly pension; fergit it!.

That's what those Cynical Bastards in High Places have in store for you. And, what did I tell yuh, ain't that laughable, however droll? The Dickens!

Is that cynical enough for you? How about that asshole from Texas (geezz, not another one, won't we ever learn NO!) running on the plank that Social Security is a Ponzi scheme?"

You want to brain me 'cause I don't offer any hope.

There is only one hope, that you get up off your sorry Brokebacked asses and storm the palace, and when you gain the inner sanctum, you don't repeat any of what has transpired before. You begin anew, a new, anew, a new! Never to Screw! Everybody, but everybody takes a turn at the screw!! That means all those guys on the other side of the Gaza Strip that happen to reside on Wall Street. Fair's fair. Somebody's gotta transfer the calluses on their butts to calluses on their mitts, all ethnicities included, assimilation, be damned. This ain't no Muslim talkin'.

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

The NEW LAW: Nobody, but nobody, is gonna make something outta nothing. Even though life is deemed worthless and purposeless, nobody, but nobody, is gonna make a buck on nuttin', even something as worthless and purposeless as a life, get that honey, nuttin'? That's the LAW.

Some people will claim they wuz put on this planet to put upon others. That other people's gullibility represents opportunity.

If I see you, Goldamn Sacks, rubbin' yore hands, and smakin' yore lips, as though you just made a deal, that is, sumpin outta nuttin, you are headed for the worst case of embarrassment you ever!

But some people never feel embarrassed.

They will after I am done with them, plus a helluva lot more. Goldman Sachs is gonna be forced to change his name.

Now, don't you feel better having a cynic in your corner?

They say we are all to blame. If the shoe was on the other foot, we would be in there scamming. Unfortunately a great truth lies therein. But in the NEW ORDER under the NEW LAW, this will no longer be so. We will be leaving this planet for Paradise, leaving behind the scam, and the Great Pyramid. In the NEW ORDER, we will ALL be living with sweat, nobody excluded. How does that make you feel?

I warned you that I was not all I seem. I am a friend of Catherine's. I had listened to what she had said in her oration before the August Stanford body. I have heard her sentiments many times, finding accord with them.

One particular observation of hers involved what I call a deception. A lulling deception. She mentioned to her audience that when they left the lecture hall, they would be entering the environs of Palo Alto, a self-seeming status quo, a quiescent ordered state of affairs, a self-proved civilization. She was being mindful of the balance of human condition elsewhere.

She was not suggesting any fraudulence. PaloAlto/Stanford was nice. The place was familiar and comfortable, reassuring.

Additionally she had further commented:

*In some ways I feel I do not want to end on this seemingly sour note. But, not unlike you, when I leave this building I will be impressed by the apparent quiescence of the Campus, and the community of Palo Alto, deceived into somehow accepting this status quo, mostly because I would not know where to begin to change this thing that creates such a dubiously satisfying illusion, that even might be said to represent what it is we might want to see in every community. Can we export Palo Alto to the rest of the world? Is that what the world wants, and what the world needs? Are WE truly satisfied by what exists outside this room? If not, do we know the source of our dissatisfaction?*

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

As I peer outside my wall of staves, I too look out upon a gathering of people in a festive mood. They do not seem to be capable of what I might accuse them, the most harsh judgment would not apply. They would laugh at my presumption of judgment.

Am I being deceived? Do others need to bear arms to appear menacing? Or can they look as they do now, and still constitute a menace? Is it so that we are only partially evolved, that on one occasion we will show promise, and another, none at all? On holidays one is one kind of person; and when the holiday is over, another kind of person? Do they return to some lonely inconsequential journey? Do they want to do harm to others or themselves, for no apparent reason?

It's the unfinished business that haunts my thoughts, their indifference to the unfinished business. Are they being smug in their self-satisfied complacency? Don't they, for crise sake, have any doubts? No human conscience; just animals, oblivious to the higher concerns?

Do I want them to be what I believe them to be?

Can I truthfully say I know them to be what they are?

Do I honestly believe that each writes off the human condition as a total loss: that living in the moment is where it's at?

Do I know that each and everyone of them suffers within a loneliness in the face of an uncertain knowledge? Is this assessment a cause for what appears to be an unjustifiable condition?

Do I feel alone in my quest for a clear solution to this dilemma? Will I allow my prejudices and my impatience rule my thoughts?

I sense I must endure something in this quest, but not entirely alone. Perhaps I am not the cynic I appear to be. It is only my bitter response to the knowledge that I bear, that colors me.

I cannot be otherwise than I am.

Doubtlessly I will question every presumption to the truth. I must question my own presumptions in this regard. Often the answer to the question lies in the question. It is asked in such a way to elicit a certain answer. As they wrangle in the courtroom, 'answer Yes or No? Nothing is conditional, even the human condition. The human condition is an absolute. Yes or No?

They do not ask me how I feel about Francisco Goya y Lucientes, Pintor. His Disasters of War. Unregenerate Human Nature, so the saying goes.

More still in the Caprichos and the Proverbs.

We refer to him as Goya. What did he know that others did not? Was he a crazed old man? Depiction, not Understanding or Forgiveness. Little Hope. There it was, Unregenerate Human Nature. Some kind of dark truth. Goya died in 1828. One hundred years later Spain was savaged by civil war, killing off innocents and poets alike. For What? Don't everyone speak at once.

If we are all in this together, what then?

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

Catherine is an idealist who has learned to hedge her bets. I am an idealist who will not bet. Lydia lives within a framework of justice; everything has consequences; betting is out of the question. Theresa is also an idealist, of purer extraction than her older sister, but with each exposure, is becoming reluctant to bet; 'there can be no immunity from justice, and no untoward action with impunity. None'

It is unknown how the author will resolve these quandaries. He has created an implausible cast of characters with the notion of conducting a dialogue that might lead us into the light. So far it is the darkness and the height of the wall that overwhelms the prospect.

## *Whereof Doth We Prosper*

Meanwhile, the vicissitudes of farming unfold with the rise and fall of the seasons. The harvest is approaching.

Those who are to be paired off, and live on the premises, are now residing, moderately comfortable, in their temporary factory-builts. After a day of laboring with their chores, their quarters are a welcome relief. However, often enough they get together for convivial moments, and shared meals. They meet regularly at the farmer's house to discuss problems and the general progress of their endeavors.

The farmer is relatively pleased with all that has transpired. He is impressed by the willingness of everyone to learn and apply themselves without question or complaint to the rigors of the task before them. Most of



## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

the laboring has been accomplished on a rotational basis in order to relieve the monotony of any one too-often repeated task.

Mr. D. was inordinately occupied with getting their quarters established, either through his own labors, or the finding of others with the skills who could help him with finishing the job before autumn set in. The farmer, along with Mr. D., and others of the group with the appropriate skills, had cruised the forest for recently downed trees to use for firewood for the group, for the coming winter season. However, everybody contributed to the splitting and stacking chores. The farmer let all know that the usual practice, invented by one Mike Taylor, was to have enough firewood on hand to last for two years, that the drying of the wood required at least a year. If tree falling would be required, it was best to accomplish this task in the winter when the sap was down. However, this coming winter it would be wise also to scour the forest for more downed trees, for the coming year, and deciduous trees that should be marked for falling because they are diseased, or in need of culling. The farmer speculated their kind of forest was ample provision for a wood supply for a long time. He felt the factory-builts would be easily heated, but that they were wasteful in total number of spaces to be heated, that eventually it would benefit them to have a common building, designed to more efficiently distribute the heating requirements, in order to conserve a resource. He let it be known that forest management was as important as their other farming practices, both from the standpoint of sustained yield, but also in terms of aesthetics.

Mr. D. was most familiar with these arrangements, having lived with such planning, and stringency, both, in his early life in New England, and in his island habitat.

By the time the last piece of wood was stacked, it was time to begin harvesting, and preserving, or storing, of the crops.

The hay crop had been cut and dried, baled and stored as the summer weather permitted.

With the other crops, the tomatoes came first, to be canned, to be made into juice, and more esoteric fare, in the form of salsas and sauces.

This was followed shortly by the hand harvesting of potatoes, while the waning summer sun made it possible to dry them on the ground as they were unearthed. They were then boxed and stored in a cool dry cellar for the coming winter. Followed or concurrently harvested were the beans to be dried or canned.

The early plums were juiced, the berries made into jellies, or frozen. The apples fell into two categories, the ones to be juiced, and the ones to be stored. The early ones were already being processed into juice. Rather than being run through a press, these,

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

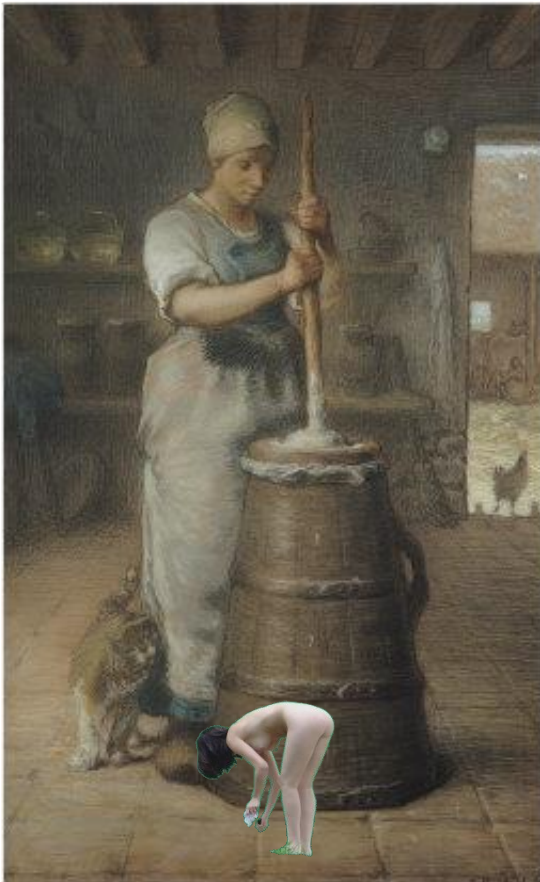
and all the other juices were processed through all manner of presses, juicers, even centrifuges. The liquid emerging from the juicers was heavily bodied, filled with more substance than just the liquid obtained from squeezing or pressing. They experimented with blending the sweet with the tart, to discover some interesting, and desirable results.

Quite by accident they had tediously processed a not very juicy apple, the Cox Orange, of which they had an ample supply, some of which they had wanted to turn into cider. While allowing the liquid to ferment, they noticed, after approx. three days, that mold was beginning to grow on the surface. They didn't want to waste their labors, or the apples, so immediately removed the mold, to reprocess the liquid by pasteurization and canning. As it turned out, while not really alcoholic, the short period of fermentation added a distinctly different, very palatable, flavor to the liquid.

They also discovered that the mixing of the more bland tasting apples, the Bramley, for example, a large apple from a very productive tree, with some of the cox orange, that a distinctly more desirable flavor was obtained.

Of course, throughout the summer, they readily harvested for the table, greens, various lettuces, spinach, peas, along with chard; also cucumbers, broccoli, cauliflower, even artichokes. In mid-July the garlic was harvested. In mid-August they began using scallions, and the Walla-Walla onions for the table.

On a daily basis they were milking the Holsteins, some of the milk being used for its byproducts, like cheeses and butter, some of it being sent to market, and some of it for the table. The eggs they gathered were all used by the occupants; it was quickly realized that more fowl would be required for egg-production, as well as 'husbandly' fare for the table. The farmer required only that enough eggs be available for his Saturday morning breakfast, and the



## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

farmer's wife, that enough eggs be available for her baking needs. That first summer/fall ended with a dearth of eggs. However, the farmer arranged with his neighbors, trades, or outright purchases, for this commodity, and others, as they arose.

The whole venture had begun early enough in the growing season that many additional crops were put in the ground to accommodate the number expected to be served.

Attention to watering, weeding, the elimination of rodents, and the ongoing battles with the many pests required the dedication and diligence of all. Many hands often made short work of some of these attentions.

The farmer strongly advised attending auctions for the acquisition of meat animals to amplify their stock, to be fed and fattened, if they intended to be omnivores. They would do the same for the poultry.

Meanwhile the harvesting and preserving continued, with more fruit, pears, more apples, late plums, and with vegetables in the likes of beans, frozen, pickled and canned, followed by corn, consumed almost daily at the table, but also stripped of kernels, both frozen and canned, and cabbage turned into sauerkraut, with some heads stored whole in the cool dry cellar. The root crops of carrots and beets came later still, along with the various squashes.

Mixed in between these endeavors was the picking of the patty pans and zucchinis, at various stages of maturity, and cucumbers at various stages of maturity for table fare, for fermented pickles, for bread and butter pickles.

The winter crops of brussel sprouts, certain leafy greens like bachtoi, kale, and chards, and even celery, would last through cold weather until heavy frosts ended most of their utility.

The last phase of the crop raising involved the preparation of the earth for winter. Tilling the soils, and planting of cover crops, in between the vagaries of the weather systems accompanied by rain, that would sometimes prolong the season.

The farmer felt their first foray into 'subsistence living' was successful in several ways. It showed a great willingness to work hard, a desire for learning. It produced much for the larder, a well-earned reward, perhaps a good beginning, with a nod to the great provider, to maintain their enthusiasm and faith in their endeavor.

Mr. D., long accustomed to a more solitary existence, both by habit and predilection, found the relating to others a difficult proposition. Even Catherine sometimes wore on his patience. But when she sensed his presence, aware that he might becoming frayed at the edges, would turn her head to peer at him with huge smile that would 'undo him in a minute'; 'Gosh Awmighty!'



## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

He and she talked about this turn of affairs, as much as they dared. He would freely admit his reluctance to mingle, even to work alongside another. He claimed his age was a detriment to their enterprise. His spirit was anathema to the kind of labor required to pull it off.

Catherine offered to relieve him of any further responsibilities; that perhaps he should return to the island where life was less demanding and stressful.

Mr. D. thanked her, but, believing she was insincere, he was not about to go at her urging. Instead he revealed his pain at any further separation from her.

She asked him how much he truly missed his life on the island. He confessed to missing it in the extreme. She asked if there was anything that would compensate for such sacrifice. He answered that she was the only compensation. She remonstrated with him that surely her sisters were almost equal to her in compensation. He said he did not wish to diminish her sisters in any way, but felt he had no right to presume upon them for any reason. Yes! they are truly wonderful people, more so than any he might find anywhere else in the world.

Catherine assured him both of her sisters loved him a great deal, and would always welcome his company, and would always remain solicitous of his welfare.

Mr. D. apologized for throwing the proverbial wet blanket upon her earnest undertaking. He indicated all was not bad. If he was younger, and perhaps not so accustomed to solitariness, he might be able to allow some of what was there in the farm to become more meaningful to him. He felt his age warped his ability to adapt to a new situation.

She understood him only too well. It was then she reminded him that part of the year they could, and would, spend on the island together. She knew she was suggesting only an interim thing, that would grow more difficult with time, as the energy sector began to collapse. It was a promise she would keep as long as it seemed feasible. He was only somewhat mollified by her reminder, and her assurances.

Mr. D. began to realize that Catherine was keenly aware of more things than he at the moment, that his accustomed way of moving about at will would be severely curtailed. He had felt it would never happen in his lifetime, but she was telling him it would begin to matter very soon; very soon, with emphasis; that was her belief.

“We are on a different road now than we were last year, Mr. D. Taking a year away from my previous activities afforded me the time to rethink the whole problem of the living and the purpose of life. These were sobering thoughts. I found I could no longer put

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

any store in the possibility or the probability that generic man would solve any problems for the living. I also had determined, with your insistent challenge, that there was no purpose to life, or, if there was a purpose, it was unknown to me. Armed with these two considerations, it became inescapably clear that I must find my road, my destiny. Not that I had not previously thought of these things, when I chose to become involved in the humanities, when I had decided to enter the Big City, or to go to the African Continent. Some part of me still believes in such involvement as I had begun, in all instances. A part of me feels that I have deserted those causes; and I think less of myself for having done so. But I could not convince myself of something. Perhaps, with your added insights, I realized I was unable to really dedicate my life to thankless activity in the trenches.

“You might rightly inquire why I feel the compulsion to do what I seem bent upon doing, involving both you and my sisters; in my thing. That would be presumptuous of me, to say the least, since I have involved you in other adventures that I seem to have abandoned.

“Yes I believe I have answered, in part, the question of purpose. Because I sense only a randomness, or inconsistency at best, in our civilizational attempts, I am not wont to put stock in something so vague. Yet, what I propose to do requires some semblance of ‘civilization’ in order for things to not to be wholly arbitrary and anarchistic, these in themselves posing a great threat indeed to the agrarian life, where pillaging, and destruction of the infrastructure, might easily become the norm of careless short-sighted marauding bands, living in a state of ‘uncivilized violence’. I am mindful of what has happened in Zimbabwe, where the blacks have overrun the whites to their own detriment; the thrill of short-term vengeance and gain.

“Does each of us have a part to play? What right do I have to walk away from my implicit responsibility? Can I make a difference? Suppose I was not here, what then, would ‘civilization’ collapse?

“Its like you were telling me of your six month boating trip, essentially away from all that was happening in man’s world, wherein you derived benefit from a kind of status quo with fueling stops, places to acquire ice, and groceries, but not obliged to put up with anything, to do anything to make sure that things would remain in order to fill your needs. You didn’t care what happened in the world of man, except you didn’t want to deal with pirates, of whom there were apparently none existent. Your contact with man might supply you with more information than you wanted, like when Mt. St. Helens blew her top, or Iraq invaded Iran, or the

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

Shah died, or whatever else was happening in that surfeited condition called civilization. It was a happy moment when some fisherman gave you a sockeye, or a huge chunk of halibut, or a bag full of prawns, after you returned to him something he had thrown overboard, or another, who brought you a halibut after serving as a 'nail' on the dock while he was mending his nets; or someone told you where you could get free ice, or told you of a nice anchorage. There were other convivial moments aboard the boats of other cruisers, but mostly you were on your own, wanting to be alone, in your own imaginary protected world, free of any responsibility.

"When you returned, you learned how the world had gone on in your absence as though you had not been there. A sobering thought, and realization. That one life does not matter. Civilization had neither collapsed, nor had it improved."

"Shows to go ya!"

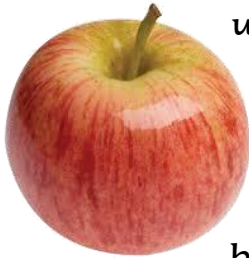
"Yes, it does, Mr. D.

"I do listen to your stories, and your writings, with an eye to their hidden meaning; sometimes not so hidden.

"I really do like the suggestions in your, '*Discourse on the Beginning*':

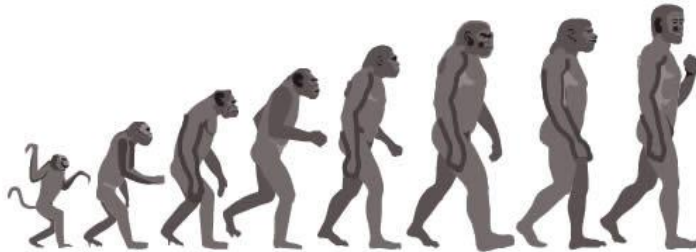
### **Genesis**

6016 Years Ago.



We view the first Adam, the one placed upon our planet, along with his Eve, as a privileged pair, asked to abide only one admonition, which, according to the narrative, they had failed to honor. Thus began, early, the Fall Of Man.

With a more 'modern' outlook we also trace a lineage with a more indistinct beginning, which we might label AnthroAdam. The second is confused in perception and use of language. It is often



arisen upon the evolutionary ladder.



claimed that man has descended from the apes, whereas at the same time he has also

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

The rib of the first Adam is purported to have caused all subsequent 'descendants', of an incestuously begat progeny, to have been cast out of Paradise forever, as punishment for a fruit infraction, by an angry Deity.

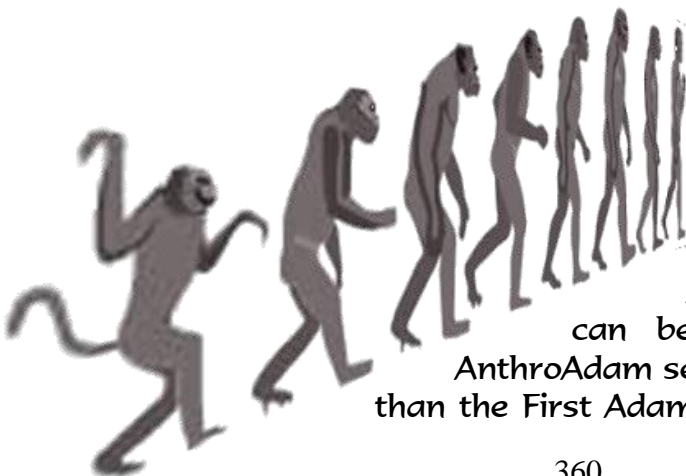


The Deity placed an apple before a no account innocent woman, who was fashioned from a rib, admonishing that weak presence to ignore the fruit. The Deity did not ask her to refrain from adultery, to refrain from killing Adam, to refrain from stealing, or coveting, or taking the name of the Lord in vain; he stuck the fruit in front of her serpent, playing the silly 'temptation' game; a rigged game (since the inventor [the author] also created the weakness).

There wasn't any reason at all for Adam, even though it is generally recognized, even today, there really isn't any reason, for killing one's look-a-likes. To the extent such an act is severely frowned upon, to kill his Rib, or for either to engage in adulterous behavior (incest was another matter (what!? With his rib!?!)), or to steal, or to covet (only an apple?), or to take name of the Lord in vain, considering how he had provided for them, it was unnecessary to lay down the Law.

A lunkheaded, bored, warped Deity, created a Paradise (A Shaky La) with only one tenet to be observed for the privilege of occupancy. The Deity fashioned from a Rib a luscious presence with more passion than brains, knowing full well she would Fall. This author maintains this was done deliberately to relieve the boredom of the

Eternal Bliss of the creator (the author of all these works).

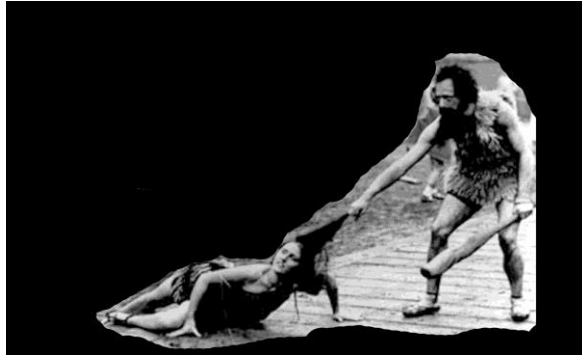


We switch now to the other view, where also 'commandments' were absent. The evolutionary Aegis is Deityless. There can be no Fall, only Descent.

AnthroAdam seems to have more options than the First Adam in his choice of partners.

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

However he is depicted as wielding a club which he uses not only to subdue wildlife (the livestock provided by the Aegis), but also to subdue a mate, whom he grabs by her long mane to drag into his lair. The setting for this view may be considered paradisiacal, or it may be considered a bare bones environment for those with a strong constitution, and a will to live and survive, with or without admonitions, i.e., without notice, from above.



With the first Adam, we are dealing with a creation that has fallen early, for whom there can be no hope of redemption. Things just got worse. His incestuously begat descendants killed each other, stole, coveted, engaged in adulteries, raped, pillaged, cussed, and generally made a mess of things.

With AnthroAdam, hope was never a consideration. He did all the things the first had done, but his actions or behavior were not regarded as 'fallen'; they merely came with the territory.

To this day, man is undecided which of these views satisfactorily prepares him for a discussion of the human condition as it has developed throughout the ages.

Neither of these views offers any hope, most likely precluding the possibility of hope.

There exists a third view which dismisses the other two as irrelevant to what exists now. That man is neither Fallen, nor evolved. Because man no longer aspires to live in caves, or wears a thin veneer of fabric over his frame does not of him make anything but what he is in the landscape, neither fallen, nor evolved. If you take away his gun, he cannot readily harm any other form of life. He becomes a vulnerable as any other form of life to the prevailing conditions, against which his gun is minimally useless in any case. Completely useless against D.

Of course, other views do exist, ones originating in the 'Far East', ones originating in the 'Middle East', ones originating in the 'Near East', ones originating north of there, and south of there, in developed cultures, or in less developed, or aboriginal cultures.

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

The origins of man are irrelevant to what exists now. If man understood in detail his origins it would not alter in the least the way he conducts himself now. Those who do claim to know his origins seem unable to make a connection between then and now as to bring about a more desirable creature.

Even if he thought he understood the purpose of life, it would not alter in the least the way he conducts himself now.

This might be the point where the conversation ceases to be one sided, for the din and clamor of those others wishing to challenge the assumptions that are beginning to prevail.

"How can you say that if man 'understood the purpose of life, it would not alter in the least the way he conducts himself now'?"

That statement is a tongue in cheek euphemism for what is the glaring purpose of life. The dominion of one over the other, and 'I'm not my brother's keeper' (found in the first afflatus proscribed by Ayn Rand and Milton Freidman), purpose.

"That's not a purpose."

I beg to differ. Explain to me if you will, if there is any other purpose to one person, or one corporation, owning, or having control over, all the arable land, excluding all others; at the point of a gun, one should add?

"Even the UN Charter of Rights sanctions 'private property'?"

When the UN was formed, certain selfish (nationalistic) biases made it impossible to couch things in every which way.

Private property, like Nationalism, is a comfort to those who can hang onto it with the gun (A little twist of Ben Franklin who uttered "Madam, a Republic, if you can keep it."). In some cases the gun is an instrument of the law and in some cases it is the means of removing tacit owners, whether legal or not. Afterwards one reads the obituary notice with an eye to opportunity.

Huge land holdings are a comfort to those who have sovereignty over them, whether reasonable, purposeful, or unreasonable or without purpose.

The first law of dominion is achieved, and the second law concerning one's brother is also achieved.

"This is not a discussion, it is a cynical tirade."

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

Improve upon it if you will.

Recall, if you will, what Thrasymachus said at the beginning of *The Republic*, that 'Justice was in the interest of the stronger', whereupon a lengthy bit of sophistry ensued in effort to refute something as plain as day to the rest of us. One may argue that the one with the gun might be prone to err in his judgment, where it may be deemed he might not be serving his interest after all; and so forth and so on. The gun speaks louder than words. He that wields it is the stronger; whether or not he wields justice is irrelevant. He wields what he wields. He may be wielding what others perceive to be injustice, but are powerless to effect any change in the status quo. The wielder is insensitive to the quibblings of others. Of course, the whole notion of justice may be absent from any consideration by the stronger. To 'have and to hold' seems to be uppermost in his mind. We quibblers, who sit on the sidelines, attempt to cut down to size the one who lords it over us.

"Let's assume for the moment that I agree with what seems obvious, while it may not be so obvious that the stronger does harm to himself by following the path he chooses. In the first instance, it would seem that he can never sleep, unless he has trusted underlings, who will act on his behalf, while he sleeps. Let's also make that assumption.

"Quibblers we may be, but this does not remove the cynical judgment contained in your presentation.

"You are implying two things, that man is fated to be what he is, regardless of how you describe him, and that he cannot change what he is, regardless of how you describe him. That he is what he is incontrovertibly, to our way of reckoning, essentially a wanton beast, not made in heaven, occupying a place, not made in heaven."

Put a lot less cynically than the author had, which proves less than you had expected, by trying to cast his words in a certain light. It goes to say what at first seems cynical, may only be hard truths presented in way that irks one's sensibilities. The truth is most often unsubtle in its delivery. Are your words any less cynical? Perhaps, but no less truthful. Which leads us into the debate proper, regarding what is the human condition today, despite any other notions we may entertain regarding man?

Blunt words are intended to get us where we want to be in a statement of the realities. To say that the 'dominion of the one over the other' is what man desires, and that 'he not be obliged to have a care for his fellow man', is also a condition he desires, may seem

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

cynical, but also truthful. Justice is also in the interest if the stronger. Each as a matter of convenience to himself.

Beyond these words, we enter into idealities, rather than realities. You might want to argue that 'peace', or tranquil surroundings is as beneficial, or more beneficial, than an armed camp.

"I would so argue.

"However, I suspect these opening remarks are intended to set a stage for another kind of debate, where origins play no part, where reality becomes a painful realization, regardless of any preconditions, causes, or purposes. Also it seems to require that we accept certain realities as given, rather than something debatable. I cannot assent to that presumption."

As long as you tell it like it is.

Yes! we may want to, for the purposes of argument, without ever the hope of changing things, engage in hypotheticals, in the manner of the sophists, who, if you will note, were arguing these very conundrums two thousand five hundred years ago.

The arch Sophist, almost as an admission of guilt; that is to say, that he engaged in barter with his sophistries, before his dying breath remarked, 'I owe a cock to Asclepus; will you remember to pay the debt?'

The foregoing is another of the many possible preliminary constructions that can be made to set the stage for a discussion of meaningless matters.

Perhaps the matters are not meaningless; it is the words that lack something from which we are unable to extract what we need from them. Pith and rind without any juice.

It might be assumed if we could obtain some juice, we might better our ways. 'Better' is a relative term, that does not in any way suggest 'Best', also a relative term.

Given that our ways are what they are, and that they have propelled our kind into this redundant occupier of a purposeless universe, it seems that improvement, in relative terms, is also purposeless.

Since we are what we are in a purposeless universe, we seem also improbable candidates to flesh out our own ideologies, the simplest of which we are unable to consistently master, to wit, the Golden Rule.



## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

As any knowledgeable Sophist will argue, The Golden Rule is observed arbitrarily. It can be and is acknowledged at one's convenience, and ignored at ones convenience. That is to say, it is both convenient and inconvenient to those who would apply it to their conduct. As long as one is able to make a choice with regard to the rule, it might be said the rule does not exist, but only as a token guide, and that it is otherwise a useless arbiter in the affairs of men.

What might be said to remain is a state of anarchy, which may very well characterize our way of life. Anarchy does not necessarily imply chaos, but it may very well describe most closely what is happening today. It may be more appropriate to describe something by how it manifests itself, rather than by its insubstantial (unsubstantiated) avowals.

Anarchy is itself a relative term measured against time. Anarchy does not necessarily entail a violent display, which over time has often characterized it. In the background there has always been an individual response to the Golden Rule. If you are the 'stronger' you get extra swings, by fiat; the weaker can't keep pace with the stronger. The stronger will not allow himself to be compromised (disadvantaged) by the Golden Rule because he believes he is invulnerable to any assault that will harm him. The weaker, on the other hand, wants to don the Golden Rule as a shield.

This is a simple sketch of a basic anarchy implicit in all of our dealings with our fellow man. Regardless of all the other considerations that are brought to bear; altruism, humanitarianism, Christianity, love thy brother (sister) (look-a-likes), we are all in this together, the big over the little forms an irresistible persuasion. The bigger definitely have an easier time of it, despite what has been said about the meek.

History has had no bearing upon this basic relationship. It requires a conscious act to remove what is implicit from the relationship. As has been the case the monarch always sat higher than his or her subjects, even though the monarch might have been a shrimp.

Everyone is a potential adversary, we are in need of posturing to enable us to avoid direct confrontations with adversaries. We puff out our chests (hmn, some chest) in attempt to make ourselves appear larger (more awesome!), even though we do not have a leg to stand upon.

Do we behave differently amongst our friends? Where do friends come from? We trust that anarchy will not interfere with our friendships, although it must be said, that many friendships are provisional in nature, depending very much on the observance of the

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

Golden Rule. Equal inequality. Perhaps the gravitation toward friendships is the response to a need to alleviate the constant apprehensiveness that exists because the Golden Rule fails us. There are of course other basis for forming friendships, one of which might be to amicably discuss the purpose of life, without having to answer for the consequences (supposing there are consequences) of one's openly expressed thoughts.

Group (herd, flock, school, etc.) psychology may enhance an imaginary comfort zone (reduce one's conspicuousness) with or without having formed any friendships, perhaps only look-a-likeness.

The foregoing are relatively simple precepts that may form the basis for a discussion.

Lets change the focus for a moment.

Way back when, T. E. Lawrence had observed of the Arabs that they could not get along. Their not being able to get along made it very difficult for them to get rid of their oppressors. Eventually, with outside help, the Arabs got things together enough to form nations with borders, (Not such a good idea, it turned out). However there still existed a few strings that tied them to their former oppressors. One of the strings involved the Balfour agreement with a certain non-Arab ethnicity that wanted a homeland. The proposed homeland involved an area of the planet where the Balfour ethnicity proclaimed its origins.

We know what happened.

This promised land was already occupied by others of a different ethnicity. The different ethnicity was part of the Arab world. The Arabs were coming of age, or, that is, the Muslims were reasserting themselves in world affairs. Many of them sat comfortably on a pile of oil. The occupying ethnicity was made very angry by this enactment (promise) of a former oppressor.

Former oppressors were being relieved of their sovereignties, France, England, Italy, Germany, even the US of A, and the USSR (less so that anyone else), as the world became a more egalitarian place. Of late, even oppressive regimes amongst Arab nations have met with disfavor.

We, of the more moderate makeup, viewed these happenings as fair and just. However, as T E Lawrence observed and speculated, the Arabs still did not get long, and they did not get along, even with the polarizing revitalized non-Arab ethnic occupant in their midst, although it did create a single unifying opportunity.

It should be mentioned that most of the Arab world did not favor democratic governments. Their history, until very recently, has been one of autocratic rule enforced by state power, usually under a

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

Coup-de-Etat, dictatorial ruler, mad cleric, or by successor dominions.

It should be added that the Arabs, often referred as Muslims, while of one seeming ethnicity, are themselves of differing views, not unlike their former oppressors in the Western World. That is, they have formed sects that have warred with each other.

Not to place too much emphasis on the Arabs seeming lack of unity in religious matters, the 'West' is still not in agreement upon the interpretations of the Christian ethos, and have conducted some fearsome campaigns against their different sects.

At the same time we acknowledge Buddha, Tao, Confucius; Hindu and Judaism, as well as sundry 'pagan' belief systems; and the conflicts arising from the orthodox versus the reformed, and the reformers. Don't forget the agnostics, and atheists.

This is not a history lesson, but it is an effort to show that we are not all in this together.

Because two 'world wars' proved so devastating, the impetus to avert another was responsible for the formation of the United Nations. Good idea, No!?

Better than nothing, is what I say, however divisive and useless at times. The United Nations, besides being comprised of nations, is also riddled with you guessed it, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, their sects and orthodoxies, agnostics, atheists, and sundry pagans, as well as democracies, socialistic states, communistic states, dictatorships, caliphates, even stateless states, principled and unprincipled states, to quite impuissantly dilute any chance at unanimity, so as to cause one to question the premise of 'United'; as an error in terminology, because it is so misleading.

Through the aegis of this well-intentioned august body, we may yet find our way to a third world war, simply for the failure of the body to act outside its various self-interests, that is, principles over self-interest.

The greatest flaw in that august body, is awarding to the more self-serving nations the power of the veto. In this case the veto in itself is a self-defeating thing built into the original design to preserve the we-are-not-all-in-this-together thing. Its not unlike the sign on the diner claiming the right to refuse service to those who do not wear shirts and shoes.

As a result of the former, the humanitarian thing is often forsaken (truly abandoned) and overrun by the self-serving. An overriding principle does not exist. Qualifiers like shirts and shoes does not exist in the United Nations. Let me give you a few examples.

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

The United States, in its efforts to support one nation, denies, through its veto, a vote assigned to it, by itself, as a founder of the august body, to another, the recognition and the right of self-determination on equal footing to those who occupy the area of the people they displaced as result of the Balfour agreement (these are condemned to the barrens without statehood). So be it. The US has done even more high-handed things in its interpretation of 'material breach' to essentially mistakenly and wrongly invade a sovereign nation in order to avenge the World Trade Center fiasco, while, at the same time, going for the oil, as well as serving the flaccid whims of the fascist dictator of the US. The USA has done even more horrible things by supporting dictators who violate human rights, while waiting in line for a handout, as they naysay the REDS.

Russia, also one of the founders of the august body, has likewise assigned to itself the right of veto. Its shows its complete lack of principle when it votes not to censure in any way acts within a nation that are costing the indiscriminate, often sadistic wasting of human life within that nation. Obviously a message given to the rest of the world that it will not tolerate any interference from the world body when it slaughters Chechnyans. These guys haven't really adjusted to the idea of democracy.

China, an original founder of the UN under the tutelage of Chiang Kai Chek, was forced to yield to the larger Red China, under the great pressure from the world body. Its sheer mass of humanity could not longer be denied, even by the United States. Further, in its immensity, it was not possible for long to deny it the right of Veto. Because this new China is also self-serving, it vetoes the same proposition placed before the self-serving Russia; plainly it does not want any outside interference from the august body when it comes to Tiananmen square; or Tibet etc..

OK, rife with political considerations, and influence peddling, the UN is demonstrating that it can not prevent a third world war, but, through its incessant unprincipled bickering, will bring about that very thing, all the sooner. Has the UN really forestalled that inevitability?

To remind you, this is just a conversation. No action required, none expected.

Conversation, cynical tirade?

The Golden Rule? If we are all in this together, the UN needs to grapple with the import of the Golden Rule.

You see, when we get into the third world war, the planet will be lucky to escape complete devastation. If a small corner of the globe should survive in some manner, the onus will still exist how any two, like, or unlike, individuals are to get along. Will they extract from the

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

disaster a complete disbelief in any animal existence being able to find accommodation and accord? They might even consider the Golden Rule as no longer viable; forget the UN?

What would you predict?

I realize there are those of you who feel you can escape the inevitable, that is, minimally being made answerable for your crimes against humanity, both through commission and omission. Perhaps some will; but they will get it in the history books, if books and history remain viable. (People like George W. Bush, and Vladimir Putin will suffer the rebuke of history, whereas people like Michael Gorbachev and Jimmy Carter will become exemplary.)



### *Catherine's Response*

“It provides a much-needed perspective. I know I am beginning to think more like you every day. At first I began to feel uncomfortable with yielding to your persuasions, as though I was

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

surrendering myself more than I wanted. But when I realized that you were not just a ranting 'Old Geezur', but a person very intent upon discovering or revealing the truth of things, I felt less uncomfortable, and more attuned to the arguments.

"I also now believe there isn't any conflict with my ideals, which are preeminent in my thought. At first I believed I could not maintain ideals in the face of an overriding reality; I resented the threat to my beliefs. I now believe that one must fully account reality, if he or she wishes to proceed with higher aims.

"One may always end with 'Pie In The Sky', but at least there will be a foundation beneath the Pie.

"I believe in rationality, hence I know I must build from a rational, or logical basis.

" In *'Discourse on the Beginning'*, you ground yourself in the doubtful proposition of the Golden Rule. You show it to be doubtful because you observe that man does things at his own convenience, or inconvenience, as the case may be. You resurrect the old Thrasymachus argument concerning Justice, which Socrates countered with the notion that using one's strength to implement a certain kind of Justice, may not have served the implimentor's ends.

"It is all relevant to the moment; one does not concern himself with something that will happen down the road, or with something that has only a theoretical value, just for the sake of argument.

"The whole of Socrates, via Plato, becomes an endless dialectic on how we should function if we obeyed the imputations of logic, or the leading of a rational existence, perhaps a kind of existence Sigmund Freud, in his *'Future Of An Illusion'* envisioned that man would eventually utilize when he 'woke up'."

"Catherine, I think the Socratic way may be what you and I might prefer, if it would lead to our main objective, which is a 'civilization' based on reason, but the self-evident nature of the Golden Rule seems a quicker and more certain way toward that same end. Unfortunately, enforcement is required. First Judgment, then Enforcement. 'Judgment'/Justice would be served by the body politic, the 'stronger' to assure that the Golden Rule was observed in each case, consistently. It might mean that Judges, and/or Juries would need to be schooled in a tedious dialectic in order to perform their duties. But maybe it would merely require the use of an innate understanding of the Rule more than any hair-splitting logic, or any service from judges or juries."

"Is there something wrong in assuming the self-evident nature of the Golden Rule? I think not.

"You consistently challenge this notion by stating that man does things at his own convenience. While this may be the way he

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

behaves, it does not remove the onus of his culpability for failure to comply with the basic tenet. He may not be affected adversely in the moment for not keeping up his end of the bargain, but he will be affected adversely as time goes on, if it is understood that there is a day of reckoning; not only when he attempts to enter the pearly gates.”

“As the saying goes, “What does any of this have to do with the price of tea in China?”

“Instead of giving Socrates the choice of Banishment or the Hemlock, why was not a third choice offered, to have someone ‘chew his ear off’, perhaps, a la Stavrogin?”

“Ah hah!; the price of tea in China has risen.”

“Mr. D.!, would you mind?”

“OK, Yes! chewing his ear off should have been offered. But just think, if he lost only an ear instead of his life, the man to whom he owed a cock would not have been served.”

“Perhaps not, Mr. D., but, once he acknowledged the ‘error of his ways’, he might have made a complete conversion.”

“Entirely possible; perhaps even probable; any dying man who would have a cock on his brain.....”

“Mr. D.!!!!”

“Just a thought.”

“Is there any possibility that we could rise above the lower regions in this discussion?”

“Poor choice of words: Rooster. Any dying man who would have his rooster on his brain.....”

“Go to Blazes!!!! You’ll get yours!”

“I should show some contrition for my behavior, but, even when I start these kinds of discussions, I weary of their glaring unproductiveness.

“It is expected that after 2500 years there would be some sign of improvement. Switching from Togas to Kalvin Kleins may make some sense, but how was it in the beginning? Were Adam and Eve clothed on the first page? Or if you prefer, when did the first of our primogenitors shed his hair skin for some other creature’s hide?

“Are there other ‘improvements’ that come to mind, like Cosmetics? Something to conceal, our vulnerability with regard to our lacks, and our stench; all in relation to some ‘human’ aesthetic; such are our conceits.

“So now that we don’t have to worry about how we look underneath, or what kind of odor our bodies exude, we should be able to concentrate on something generally more useful to the species as a whole.

“Of course, I make an exception of you Catherine; perhaps that is why you are so advanced in so many ways. Since you are

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

perfectly made, and smell like a rose, you have not had to resort to such clever deceptions; you have been free to concentrate on matters more useful to the species as a whole.”

“Mr. D., your attempted flatteries fail you.

“With you there is a kind of nihilistic undercurrent of self-destructiveness. You are a true exponent of Gasset’s unhappy man; even when you have every reason to be happy.

“One hears the expression ‘killing the thing one loves’. It may have something to do with the search for happiness, but in my mind it is a clear indication of madness. More like a fatal flaw in someone’s makeup.

“But I know you are aware of your tendencies in this regard; with you it is not madness, nor does it have anything to do with a search for happiness; its more some kind of impenitent malicious self-flagellation, that you feel compelled to pass on to those you love. Those you do not love, you simply ignore.

“I suppose it is way to measure your love; the more crap you feel compelled to spew, the more a person can feel assured of your love.”

“I would guess, the more you try to expose my weaknesses, the more I can feel assured of your love.”

“Mr. D., If you want a clue as to why mankind cannot rise above himself to the higher purpose, just reflect upon your words. You imagine me to be hitting below the belt, so you just swing at me where you think it will hurt.

“Anywhere, Mr. D., Anywhere!

“But I am truly wiser than you realize; I do not measure you by your words, as much as I do by your actions. You have shown real concern for my physical well being; sometimes more than I have shown for my own; feeling ‘enough is enough’.

“But you are inconsistent in your concern. Your ‘torturing’ of me in other ways, escapes your diligence with respect to me. I would say your love occasionally falls into a void; there is a lot of room for improvement.

“Perhaps in the same way that I believe that there is room for improvement in the species as a whole, I can extend the same possibility to you. While every time you launch into me, I feel the improbability of such a thing as improvement, but more a mental condition that will not allow such development to occur. This makes me sad; but I don’t want to give up on you.

“Then I feel remorseful; ‘What right do I have to ask for anything of you; you who ask so little of me? Should it bother me that you want to use me as a pincushion from time to time? If I squeal, he knows I am alive. ‘Why should it take so much to convince him that I am alive? Humdrum love is so innocuous to you, No?



## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

"I imagine I have uttered enough on the subject."

"No, No, I need to be held accountable, but I am nonetheless incorrigible."

"Mr. D., I have often wondered why we will look so hard to discover some good in the most vile, seemingly hardened criminal; something redeeming.

"First of all, we cannot believe such an individual can exist. We look long inside ourselves, somehow hoping to discover a clue to another person's behavior. When we cannot, what are we to do; believe the worst?

"Just suppose some of the excuses that are offered as a psychological basis for a certain kind of behavior are truly plausible, then how are we to view this kind of person?"

"Quite a leap there, my sweet, from having 'uttered enough on the subject' to 'I have often wondered why we will look so hard to discover some good in the most vile, seemingly hardened criminal, something redeeming'. I hadn't thought of myself as an unredeemable vile hardened criminal.

"To continue however to seek some objective ploy in this conversation, I think we might be talking of one of those four letter words: love. Or another: kindness; 'The milk of human kindness'. The lack of these during the development of the individual sets the stage. The lack of these colors all the arguments that we use to persuade another individual that they ought to behave in a certain way; mainly to put the rest of us at ease.

"Not all individuals will respond in the same way to these lacks.

"But for the ones who respond most negatively, resentfully, with a kind of purposeful vengeance, or apparent unconcern (tit for tat) (its not personal), the rest of us are put at risk.

"But this lack thing is too convenient. Regardless of the lack, the Golden Rule still dictates the terms of the game, not in the reverse, 'I'll do unto you as you do unto me', or 'I'll do unto you before you do unto me', but if one is expected to be treated in a certain way, then 'it would seem' that individual cannot escape the tenets inherent to the argument. The onus is still on the individual to observe the rule.

"We spend a lot of time attempting to circumvent the rule with our many venialities, even if we observe the more rigorous aspects of the rule, the Thou Shalt Not aspect."

"I'm sorry for the leap in my changing subjects. No implications intended.

"To follow on then in the conversation, its not an intellectual thing, or even a moral thing, is it Mr. D.? It's a reflexive thing; something built upon a series of responses to, at least, indifferent treatment. But as you imply, not every individual responds in the

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

same way. Dealing with the most resentful becomes a problem for us all. As a body politic we are all responsible for the lack. No where does it say: 'Thou Shalt'; that is, provide 'love' or 'kindness', as a body politic. As you have implied previously, it is at our convenience that we do these 'conscionable' things."

"There are those who are raised in very favorable circumstances who also do unexplainable things.

"If we imagine the setting for the Bobby Franks murder, and the setting for the murder of the Clutters, comparing the principles, as far as their basic arguments, these were equally heinous crimes; they were premeditated, perhaps one more than the other; the Booby Franks case, where highly intelligent, products of higher education, very favorable circumstances; clever people doing clever things, for what purpose? After their deed they received the best counsel to defend them in a court of Law. In the Clutter case, there was a lack of specific premeditation, with the undetermined way to make sure there were no witnesses. Wearing stocking face masks might have prevented what did happen. The whole thing was a bungled affair; they did not get what they came for; they did not get anything; they could have walked away from something. The Bobby Franks murderers were able to become useful members of society, albeit, in prison. There was something salvageable and redeeming in their privileged background, whereas the others were merely a riffraff element, their lives not worth any redemption.

"As a whole, as a body politic, did we not make such a judgment? If we are allowed, do we not usually make such distinctions? The guy in the pressed suit versus the guy in tattered jeans."

"Don't forget those who wear no clothes.

"You began by saying that, we do unexplainable things. The Bobby Franks murder is more unexplainable than the other in the light of the Golden Rule; it was as though these guys had never heard of the Rule. We know that to be impossible. They knew of the Rule with far more clarity than the others. That is not to say the others were unaware of the Rule; it had every reason to mean less to them.

"Questions are, what lesson do we extract from examining the behavior, and what lesson do we extract from our responses to the behavior? Would different juries have made a difference? Would different counsel have made a difference? Would a different, more impartial setting, have made a difference? Beyond that, our attitude with regard to Capital Punishment, or an 'Eye For An Eye', or 'Forgive Them For They Know Not What They Do', or 'Let Vengeance Be Mine'?"

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

“Yes Mr. D., and we are summoned as second guessers to what has transpired in the moment, another moment, when reflection was not possible.”

“Well said, my sweet.”

“We did respond to the gifted orator, polemicist, and humanitarian, if you will, Clarence Darrow. He was right. The jury was right. We had somehow mitigated the act in our minds, by saying it was not ours to end two more lives, carrying that kind of judgment upon our shoulders. Whereas with the other, we did end two other lives without much compunction, as just punishment, despite the attempted intervention of a Truman Capote.

“Obviously, we are ambivalent about the issue of Capital Punishment. Our highly ‘moral’ nation troubles itself with such things, whereas other members of the civilized world, of long standing, have simply done away with that kind of punishment. It cannot support an unproven logic of deterrence, hence it deals with the issue more directly. Taking life may be the business of the state, (a la, W. setting a record in Texas for executions), but under what circumstances? More for being a traitor than a murderer. A murderer rarely; even traitors are banished to available islands. These nations are no less moral; they simply do not write a system of Laws that require Capital Punishment as a consequence of a certain action. Each case is tried on its own merits in a more humanitarian court; a less ‘moral’, less judgmental court.

“This is not an unreasonable expectation, when one considers the centuries of horror that preceded such development.

“Listen to me, will you, demonstrating that it is possible to learn something about ourselves, and to find something objectionable about the way we do things, and to cease doing them because they fail to obtain the results we desire.”

“Not bad, Catherine.”

“Ah, but that is not to say that other nations are not even more vindictive toward the malfasant than we highly ‘moral’ ones; perhaps even more arbitrary. The highly ‘moral’ nation must deal with its moral stance of ‘equal justice under the law’; which begs for consistency.”

“Again you argue keenly.”

“Perhaps, but I am not unaware of what highly moral nations will do outside of the Law. Part of it has to do with the fact that there are nations that at one time used force of arms, to subdue and control, their neighbors, lets say. They had established tacit sovereignty through their occupancy and police forces. What had originally been an absconding act, turned into a fait accompli. MINE!

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

“Those who had been occupied eventually revolted, and through a sustained revolt regained much of their lost territory; but not all. It was still the decision of the occupiers that the full loaf would not be returned because those who occupied, and who had no intention of leaving, would become a persecuted minority.

“The rightful owners wanted all of their land returned. They have made an issue of it for a long time, sacrificing their own lives, innocent bystanders, as well as their enemies.

“The invading and occupying nation has effectively declared war upon those from whom they had stolen, unprepared to yield all their ill-gotten goods; as has the occupied nation declared war upon the occupiers. Alas!, to have and to hold. Its not a gentleman’s affair; it’s a bloody encounter. Laws are continually broken in order to maintain control, and moral laws are continually ignored in efforts to avenge the losses on each side.”

“A lot of what we are discussing is at long range; we have the privilege, or luxury, to render judgments at a distance; arm’s length, as it was. If things were closer at hand, say, if one of your sister’s was caught out in the open by a rapist/killer, the arguments would be insufficient to avenge such a loss; even pulling the trigger, or dropping the pellets, or involvement in a lethal injection, or turning the switch, or pulling the hangman’s lever, or the guillotine’s release, would not suffice.”

“I can’t speculate on such a thing; but I do appreciate the inference.

“Mr. D., speaking of luxury, it is time to tend the animals.”

“Ah yes, a different reality sets in, which somehow seems incongruous with our headier transports.

“What is it farmers are intended and privileged to discuss?”

“A farmer is not that much different from anyone else.

“He will tell us things have never been better. He will tell us there is always need regardless of ADM, Cargill, Monsanto, and the controls of the Future’s Market. It is the How to get his produce to the people who need it most, even though he is forced to operate at a loss. As long as he owns the land; and as long as he can defer the taxes on the land, he retains the vestiges.

“The last remaining vestiges of hope for humanity?”

“Or have we reached the fateful impasse? All that has gone before has culminated in this, the ‘best of all possible worlds’.

“Evolution, the evolution of redundancy?”

“Is it possible to have gained all we want from this process? We speak of progress. We (selective we) have been fortunate. We rest on the shoulders of those who preceded us, who have erected this Tower of Babel. The best times have been ours. We have heard it said that ‘If you can find it better anywhere else, go there’. We have

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

heard it said 'Love It or Leave it'. Or conversely 'Hate it; Remain'. We have heard the old saw 'We didn't ask for this, we had no part in its formation.'

"Would we be who we are without them? Who? The others. Which others? The Look-a-likes.

"Without all the evolution? The progress? Are we truly better off now?

"The yaysayers claim we have progressed, that the series of adaptations, or series of transiences, if you will, that the evolutionary process has yielded 'progress'.

"To wit, we no longer throw virgins from the parapet to appease distant indifferent Gods (still a little bit of clitoral circumcision going on in Africa, a little bit of lag in addressing spousal abuse [the big over the little], little bit of lag in supporting equal rights for the fair sex).

"Genocide is practiced with more finesse, and with more certainty. More of anything represents progress. Fast genocide instead of slow genocide, merciful genocide.

"I have heard it said twice in one day that we had it pretty good, as though that time has passed.

"Many have been granted death, whether by choice or edict, preempting the suffering that comes from enduring the worst to come."

"The last vestiges of the powerless, to preempt the bastards by taking one's own life."

"This discussion takes us far afield. To what does it pertain? Surely, not farming. Does it help us in our endeavors to suspect that things are not all they are purported to be?

"The illusion of progress; as you intimate, a series of transiences, a definition of an evolutionary model of which we can only surmise an objective. Perhaps we are misled by the hope that process will yield beneficial results.

"What are people saying when they say 'we had it pretty good' [*relative to what is happening now*]. Are they also fully conscious of the historical record as they speak? Are we better off knowing that we have not lived up to our promise? What promise? Who promised what to whom? Is that to be found in the *fine print*?

"Because our parents realized their own failure to fulfill the promise, they burdened us with their expectations of fulfillment. They could not know what we know, that the promise cannot be fulfilled. We have neither the knowledge nor the will to pursue this dubious illusion.

"Yes!, we can become another in the series of transiences, or adaptations, but what we have learned, or become, cannot be

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

transmuted into flesh; it perishes with us. We cannot clone our grandiose selves for the greater good of the species.

“We leave behind a record of our works, which will gather dust amongst the myriad records of past transiencies. We attempt to pass on some kind of message to those who will read, when in fact they are beset by blindness (no connection between the eye and the brain). They are blind because they choose to be blind. They want what they want in the moment; they are not interested in the edifice (which may only exist in the Tower). What pleasure, incentive, if you will, is to be found in working upon an edifice, shoring it up for future generations, that will come tumbling down, through indifference, and certain ineluctable [*fatefully inevitable*] realities (the lack of a proper foundation)?

“What is it we are doing here?”

“We have told ourselves we have returned to the land. We have escaped the skyscrapers and the asphalt. We are reuniting ourselves with the basics, with the dirt, which we ennoble as land, as soil, as the place where it must all take happen, for us to know who we are, why we are here, and where we are going. We become a Corot or a Millet; benign, bucolic toilers who reap what they sow. An idyllic pastoral delusion. Yes!, we must eat to survive, we must shelter our delicate frames from the elements. We, who know, see ourselves as a holding action against a more severe condition, a total reversion to an elementary model (with primordial teeth); as though we should begin again.

“What would we do differently, given how we are made? On our own, we cannot remake ourselves. We haven’t any control over the forces that brought us here to this impasse. The Universe is beyond our conceptualization.

“It might be said we are not amoebas, food vacuoles, all the time foraging for sustenance of something so innocuous as ourselves.”

“We flatter ourselves by thinking we are innocuous. We consume other forms of life in order to survive. We are all too presumptuous in thinking that we are unique beyond compass, that all other forms of life were invented for our benefit. We are killers and enslavers. Furthermore, we do not tread lightly!

“So here we rationalizing our selves as transiencies, that we are a ‘holding action’ bent on improving what we are, consciously (conscientiously) or unconsciously. Even if we do not take ourselves in hand, that is, even if we are unable to take ourselves in hand, that ‘evolution’ will. Perhaps we will become extinct, an unworkable model. Rather than regress to an earlier form, before everything went wrong, a pestilence will come along (evolve) to end this reign of error.”

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

“You seek resolution, finality. There is finality; we are living in a finite system. It may end tomorrow; it may end one million years from now. My bet is on tomorrow; brought upon by our fanatical look-a-likes.

“Oh Yes!, ‘anything is possible’, so we deceive ourselves. But how probable, given the beast? Whatever we might possibly become must be a rational thing, not a visceral thing. The rational part must emerge from the same host that harbors the viscera. Wage Peace. Make love, not war. How we trivialize!!”

“Such a caveat; let’s all be farmers!”

### *The Author Returns To The Task.*

The author asks of himself, ‘Has the time arrived when I am expected to deliver?’

There are several out there who want to provide a perspective, even answers, to the ‘problem’ of man in the landscape. They provide various lineages of historical accumulations that, while not self-evident in their presentation, are full of significances that are means to convey a certain message.

Your author has written elsewhere regarding man in the landscape. He had had the opportunity to care-take a mini farm located on 160 acres of bush, a small frontage contiguous with the sea, accessible by a path hacked and kept open through the forest.

While caretaking, free and troubled only by his own shortcomings, he allowed himself the luxury of steeping himself in his surroundings. He was alone; for the most part, in a quiet setting, occasionally disturbed by the earthly pestilence.

In that situation, your author speculated upon the whole of what he knew of his look-a-likes, that aforementioned earthly pestilence. His most succinct and most favorable assessment niggardly allowed him some possibilities. He thought of what he knew to be best described as a ‘holding action’. That is, man had progressed on a flat line as he was projected upon the abscissa and the ordinate; time versus expectation. He was not shown to have digressed in his evolutionary prospect, only not to have improved significantly as a species. The one brought into ill repute the many. Though the many seemed acquiescent, they seethed with visceral urges that suffered restraint, somewhat out of fear of visceral retribution from others, but because they had also convinced themselves ‘this is no way to live’; at each other throats. They had in effect subsumed their visceral urges in the hope of providing peace. Through fear and a desire for peace they seemed acquiescent. Some of them would have it they were doing the work

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

of the Lord, who had instructed man to love one another. In many cases fear of the LAW acted as restraint upon the wilder emanations and manifestations that lived within, and often just below the surface of the species.

Your author's opinion has not changed much from those seemingly long-ago days. It was thought that time would produce a different assessment, but instead has only confirmed the original one. A 'holding action', more bitterly and cynically uttered.

We had begun this opus as a somewhat hopeful prospect, in answer to the question that appeared in 'Catherine'; *Where Will It All End?*

We had proposed *A Renaissance In Paradise*. Assuming that we are living in A Paradise. We had also added the caveat '*A Place Of Few Regrets*'.

Paradise is non-existent, however it might exist in the imagination. Instead, a dreary repetitious human condition persists. A perpetual fouling of the nest.

Our principals are gripped by the human condition, dealing not so much with a conundrum, but an ill-gotten fate that rests entirely upon the shoulders of he whom has created that condition, and is solely responsible for it.

The '*Fatefully inevitable*' pervades every conversation. How to change the inevitable, how to escape, or to realistically live within its confinements. The confinements become walls that are repetitiously assailed, as one's compulsions assail them.

The probable *regrets* arise when it is thought we have not done our part in assailing the walls.

Catherine has called to the fore the estranged French painter, who could not paint the obvious question to be asked, try as he might. No where else does the title of a painting appear so boldly inscribed. What might one envision if she (or he) were to ask, "*Where do we come from, why are we here, where are we going?*" How would one paint an answer to such a question?

In asking the question, Catherine has sought a clue to the 'fatefully inevitable' human condition, conducting a search in the hope of escaping its boringly repetitious confinements.

Only on the mechanical side can Catherine determine where she came from. Her primogenitors appeared one day through a process identified as 'evolution', as a result of a series of transiencies, adaptations, and copulating couplings. The *why* is not apparent, the destiny even less so. The first two questions have become irrelevant to the third. If there is a 'where' to our going, it is thought to be a blind, purposeless destiny; or, if gifted with sight, useless in the darkness that prevails.



## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

The activities of the principals seem frivolous, because they seem to only flirt with commitment. They seem more positioned to talk than do. Doing, in the face of what they seem to know or understand, lacks something essential their continuance requires. Their experiences, or their doings, are not insignificant as human activities go. They stand the test of conscience, they obey all the right criteria for doing. But it is a trench-like activity; a doing because a doing is needed, a doing for doing's sake. Is it a matter of necessity, or survival?

The principals are copiously educated. They bring to their doings an awareness founded in reason, and what reasoning is purported to achieve when properly applied as part of a constructive process: Good God, Enlightenment!

The farming experience requires more of them than any of their previous activities. The 'more' translates into 'drudge'. Dealing with dirt and animals is different than dealing with mankind. Their choice to do the one instead of the other seems plausible enough. The 'earth' does not require a rationale. It does not require any acute dedication, at least not what is required of rectifying the human condition. There is a manner to what is done, intelligence applied to the landscape, where what one does is measured by a satisfaction one feels, satisfied to have done a thing consonant with what one understands a process to be, to become tired daily at the end of a self-fulfilling process. We have done as we ought, we are not unhappy, we are only somewhat joyous. The joy comes in the partaking. The reaping of one's labors, a completing of a cycle. Growing firm and strong, beasts of burden, with sun-baked skin and calloused hands, and the look of a farmer, an integrated life-form in the landscape, there, innocuous, monotonous, slow-moving, subsumed in a milieu that seems more fated than consciously chosen, much like the bovine creatures that people his landscape.

Catherine and Mr. D. meditate upon stasis, of being deluded by the ambiances that leave one feeling everything is in good hands.

Their observations could be augmented further by those who sit on the high road observing mankind as a general oddity, whether serving in the benign capacity of agrarian, or in his most violent role of destroyer. If one remained untouched by the latter, such activity may be considered just another dimension to the swirl of the ether, or as something inconsequentially lost in the swirl of the ether. Truly it matters not. Our artists have depicted both parts of the equation, from sublime acquiescent tranquility to the most diabolically horrible profane sanguinity; from Vermeer to Goya.

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

The author cannot add to these. He can only pass them along in the vain hope that the best part will eventually win out. Like his own cynical creation, he is convinced such will not happen any time soon. However, the title of his opus only minimally reflects his hopes as he chokes on what he perceives to be the 'fatefully inevitable'.

In order to proceed any further, it becomes a very great temptation for the author to yield to one of the more conventional leaps in time, say: Ten Years Later.

Mr. D. may be 'pushing up daisies'.

Catherine may have abandoned her 'back to the land' quest.

All the potential triangles would have lapsed into their proper place in the eternal rhythm of things.

What would the reader want? Gossip? The annotation of all rewards and benefits of constant travail? The wonders of Subsistence Farming, and Back To The Land?

Would he want to learn that Isidore liked girls, that she made moves on all three sisters in ways designed not to offend; and how the sisters responded to her revealing behavior? What did Isidore's parents know of their daughter's proclivities?

Would we want to learn that Mr. D and Theresa still shared a deep affection that irrupted on more than one occasion, narrowly averting exposing their near-intimacies to Catherine?

Would one want hear all the moralizing from Lydia as she remonstrated with Isidore, Theresa or Mr. D.?

How many times would the author have interrupted the flow of things with his questions of the reader, or each character; with his various pronouncements not otherwise handled by the conversational characters?

It has been writ:

I gotta use words when I talk to you.

William mused, *The New York Times* **WORSTSELLER.**

Entr'acte

He mused further:

DaVinci (Leonardo?) Toilet Seat Cleaners

Buonarroti (Michelangelo?) Prophylactics

Santi (Raffaello?) Derriere Wipes

Vecellio (Tiziano) Lubricants.

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

Then he thought that becoming famous yielded an unpredictable and unwanted notoriety.

Speaking further to Catherine in a confessional tone, he wanted to make a clean break from the illusions about himself.

It was moderately reassuring that he would escape becoming famous. They wouldn't be probing into his underwear. He had informed Catherine that he didn't expect to live very long, so he hesitates to refurbish his underwear supply. He said he would prefer he and his underwear supply would expire together. He thought a solution might exist in the notion of letting it all hang out.

Becoming famous was not an inheritable condition; it was a family sickness initiated by his father. It was implied that if one did not become famous that he was, by inference, a moron.

One never thought what it might be like to become a moron; only the tone of voice seemed to imply a lowly, perhaps lonely, place, lonelier than is apparent in any other condition, the human condition.

There were no ordinary in-betweens. Being famous like Ted Williams was an American fascination with the bat and the ball. As far as anyone knew Ted never spoke to Rock Hudson.

Ted made the Hall Of Fame; they even wanted to freeze his carcass for posterity. Rock got old and died. Father could give a shit about either one, or any exponent of the American way. All Morons, by association. There was Pa trying to make it amongst the living chaff.

The initiator of the fame thing in our family was an implicit genius, very close to self-proclamation. If he had been more ordinary, mother's sacrifices for him would have been not for naught. He had convinced mother of something; perhaps that he wasn't going to do any nine to five stuff when he had this other thing to do; following his muse.

When Ted hit so many home runs, scored so many runs, won the American league batting championship so often, it was merely a matter of something that happened in America. Geeeezzz! So, he kept his eye on the ball. What the f...!

Father would imply that he (father, of course) was the only one within miles that had anything on the ball.

The upshot of such exposure to father was this self-consciousness about being a moron. So William's brother got big ideas about music. William got big ideas about sculpture for a while, then, about writing.

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

The music thing ended up on the computer, and at times, some intense pounding on a piano. Also some offspring that learned to hate music.

The sculpting thing died of its own after a few years of trying to escape being a moron by emulating father in what was really not the family business. It was daddy's trying to crash through the gate to where some indistinct lights were shining.

William was not a gate crasher by nature, although he played the game for a while. When one plays the game, he foolishly shows his works in public; a mistake for lots of reasons; theft for one. He's really pissed at the person who stole his work; that person, if ever found out, will get it between the eyes. That person better know the work will never be anybody's but William's. In perpetuity!

The problem with emulating is the derivation. It lacks spontaneity of inspiration. Things tend to be done for the wrong reasons. Not that all of William's efforts were done for the wrong reasons. The major seduction in continuing was the hint of ability, what others might identify as talent. The talent thing arose as a wrong reason. The right reason emanated from the pleasure derived from carving wood, or in leaving behind something with an aesthetic appeal.



Not much more can be said in that vein. Both sculpting and writing served a need, some kind of outlet for self-expression, a wail into the darkness of life.

If one would leave it at that, as a wail, forgetting the art part, the conforming to form part, or the originality of creation part, the underwear part, perhaps some enjoyment for the doer could result, instead of some desperate cry for recognition.

With the recognition comes the Toilet Seat Cleaner thing, and what everybody assumes to be one's sexual proclivities, as discovered in standard library bibliographical references (compilation of erroneous misreadings in the text; to wit: the assassination of Herman through innuendo, and recorded by some tomite [librarian who nothing about literature], and spieled by some prurient Harvard graduate).

In the market place, everything is exploited and is for sale on the cheap. Made in China is the epitome of economic success, because the Chinese are pocketing the change, while you are saddled with shit you don't need (as well as shit that doesn't work, and doesn't endure). The people in Asia are also making copies of anything of value; known as knock-offs, Your most dedicated effort will become a thing for sale to the lowest common denominator; the low end of the market (all promoted by the Chicago School of neocons who advocate 'Anything Goes' or 'Everything Goes'. into the consumerist hopper. The conversion of the planet into a

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

standard of living, shoddy as it is, meant to fill the coffers of a select group who control the 'everything'). How's that garb yuh?

Apart from all of this, the doer is faced with the mirror; and if not the mirror, the desire to be completely honest with her fair presence; wanting desperately to be loved, not for appearances of things, but in spite of them. Catherine was such a fair presence. Question was, could one love himself as much as she could love him?

When he spoke to her of the elusive quality of his writing; that somewhat forced sincerity, the desire to sound good, to impress with wordy expostulations where grunts might serve better, he wanted to reveal the depths of his anguished involvement; 'How did I ever get into this?'. It surely was down a road to certain oblivion, without a chance, in a forthcoming hell, of retracing his steps.

Before he met Catherine, there were others; his wife amongst them. It was easier with his wife; she had heard enough; and wasn't interested in reading any of that which she had already heard enough.

Long before Catherine, and before his wife, when he was a feeble-minded moronic youth, he was trying to impress the Vassar girl. He would write her letters that reached way beyond his knowledge base and his abilities with the word. He sounded like his gott damned fffing old man. If he had instead approached her more aggressively when he and she were alone in her apartment on 50 Barrow Street in the Big City, words might not have mattered, if something else, perhaps anything else, had mattered, instead. Destined for the big fumble. Catherine, and a Renaissance in Paradise. might never have seen the light of day.

Lives lived, without recourse; or is it with remorse. Yes! always the regret, or so one easily imagines. Missed opportunities!

Catherine argued with him that just about all the previous serious writing has found its way into musty libraries; that the serious writing does not improve with age; it rests not upon laurels, but upon shelves, either through neglect, or the smothering effect of all that has followed, without any of it ever making a difference in the affairs of mankind. Out of tune with Now. She reminded him of a previous discussion where they might have architects designing a great library, but with nothing of value to put there (like all those recent Presidential Libraries). A thing of value is something that is read because it ennobles man, causing him to do only very fine things; with none of this shit that makes up his history, a history of failure in public relations, and in humanitarian pursuits. When the Nazis burned the Books, the world was horrified; Geeeezzz, why?

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

Toilet Seat Cleaner Made In China. Comes with Scott Tissue. Not Sir Walter Scott, not Francis Scott Key, not Scott Fitzgerald, not Robert Falcon Scott; merely a more innocuous Scott; a moron who cut down the forest to make wiping easier. How else to phrase it so that it doesn't sound so scatological. People do use the stuff to draw diagrams and to jot down notes, and to do sums while.... Every roll should come equipped with a pencil.

William didn't say all these things to Catherine. She had already indicated to William that she would appreciate a slightly more elevated dialogue; that his forays into obtuseness were sometimes plainly revolting. She could tolerate a quip or two that showed how fractured and fragmented was our civilization without belaboring the point. His remarks about DaVinci were noted, and applied appropriately. His elaboration upon the consequences of fame were also noted more particularly. The innuendoes regarding his father were more painful to hear, since she realized how awful it must have been to live in that environment as a child.

When the discussion began to include the two of them in pursuit of something that seemed to require notoriety to get the message across, she began to understand his drift more acutely. Where at first she was not particularly concerned with the fame issue, as it developed, his words began to echo too deeply.

Not like the killer who adduces they will never forget him.

One would like to be remembered for saving mankind from the Man-Eating Monster. Walking about naked might get one the attention required; so William might propound.

Mr. D., in his many solitary evening moments, would sit before the TV, absorbed, lost, wantonly lost, watching a video. Being a complete sucker for a pretty face, a lithe body encased in a long flattering gown, he would on the following day search for this pretty face on Ogle Images. There he would find an altered face, one more in keeping with the other accouterments, less flattering than the gown, in the sense there was hardly any cover at all, revealing just about everything, the face

hardened by the celebrity exposure. The pretty face was no longer pretty; but more of a mask. Will the real pretty face please stand up!

The femme fatal has proven fatal to one's aesthetic sense of things.



We had spoken of the triangle as a literary device to keep the reader awake, or turning the page. Quite true; of a much higher interest than saving mankind from the Man Eating

## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

Monsters. We fall heir to these devices quite naturally. Is it possible to have a triangle without one of the angles being aware that they are into an isosceles? So much for Euclid; might as well be an earth mover (a big wheel).

Is there humor to be found in this? One might conceive these ploys as a dead end.



After all these assorted diversions, the time is approaching. Your author wanders far a-field in his endeavor to escape the demanding rigors of developing his denouement.

Along with returning to the land, the issue of energy, or as others might allude, synergy, became a consideration of our troops. True, they lived conveniently by a small river which allowed a diversion for irrigation, but also for powering small water driven turbines, and/or "water wheels". One of the partners became interested in wood gasification, or producer gas, as a substitute for fossil fuel. The partner carried the notion so far as to construct a working model, gleaned from information to be found on the Internet.

The group invested in solar energy, both as a direct means of providing power, but also as a means of generating energy to be stored in batteries.

Even wind power became another sporadic contributor to the principle of making your own, not too differently than those immense things that became an integral part of and dominated the ancient landscape, as well as unhorsing the Great Don; the very one who set out to right all the wrongs to be found in the world.

The return to steam was not overlooked as a possibility, however much it might have consumed the forest. Not enough desiccated cow dung available to fire up a boiler.

The great unharnessed force of gravity was too little used, except to keep one's feet firmly planted on terra firma, or one's backside anchored thereupon, when he was unhorsed. Of course, this great force was at work in causing the river to flow; but it was a great hindrance to flighty notions, and the levitation of the magic carpet. Obedient to its most emphatic principle, what goes up must come down, much energy was required to keep anything airborne. Better left alone, better tolerated than waged against. Hot air, weightlessness, was part and parcel of human institutions.

All in all, the 'back to basics' movement was being followed to its logical ends, on occasion, in the extreme. That is, many things were done that were only done to perpetuate a habituated way of life, the life that had developed through the consumption of large amounts of energy; where leaving off abruptly should have been

## *A Renaissance In Paradise*

the only wise course to be followed. Walking was a fair substitute for motorized transportation. The grub hoe could replace the plow.

But then again, it might be said that life was not worth living if it was to become a drudge. All those millennia of crawling on all fours to eventually defy gravity by standing erect, to develop from a stone wielding ape to a thing cast in bronze, to become so enlightened as to thwart all of nature's devising with one's own, all in the name of easing the burden (for all, not so, not so).

Clever beast with an oversized brain; with conceits to match.

Not a sympathetic figure in the landscape. One who imagined himself given a Paradise, without conscience, the Lord and Master of all he beheld; greater than that which he beheld. 'Subdue' was the Biblical admonition, and became his modus operandi, unrelentingly. The landscape has become dominated by the redundancy of this conceit; also littered with the rank smell.

A troubled awakening challenges him to conserve what remains, to change his modus operandi, almost in desperation. Desperate to hold onto something he can no longer have; fearful of the discipline he must most reluctantly impose upon himself, to suffer the hard edge of his primogenitor's labors, unable to escape them.

'Back to basics' thrust upon them, through conscionable action, they will hope to achieve a balance, to be able to persevere, and find time to sing the Song Of The Earth. Are they truly committed? Could they not, continue with the orgy, a prolonged Walpurgis Night, given to over to a cloying satiation of the appetites, to the wild abandon of bacchanalia?

The morning must never come.

Alas!, it has!

The group, under the influence of Isidore, had implemented many of the alternative farming practices of Joel Salatin, some of which her parents had already discovered by themselves. The big difference between her parents farming practices and the one's she had hoped to follow found themselves in her parents perceived need to produce capital, the bane of our lives; the 'with which' we believe we cannot function. Capital persuades better than good looks; thus enabling the ugly to persevere.

Theirs was not intended to be an economic model; if any model at all, a sustainable subsistence one, at one with the spheres.

They told the author that he often dealt too much in prurience and violence. His candle will soon melt to the end of the wick. Who will get there first?



## *A Place Of Few Regrets*

Your author will not live out the time necessary to validate the denouement of his tale. Its protagonists must endure that time in order to fulfill the auguries of their premises. Their hands, degraded to mere tools of their trade will become stiffened, calloused, claw-like things. Their visages will become lined from their exposure to the elements. Their frames will become bent from toil. All the aforementioned vicissitudes hardly envisioned during their initiation.

Will it, can it, be said they will have prospered?

If they survive, and if the planet is served by them, as it might be; that is, with a conscionable integration, observing the cycles of birth, growth, attrition, death and decay, all with a reverence for the process that enables, but is also finite, a process that begins and ends with them, only to be repeated, in a seeming infinitude of repeatings, although, all together, representing a mere wisp in the void of eternity. No guarantees! Just a Holding Action?

## *The Beyond. Is That Where It Will All End?*

