CHAPTER FOUR

MAN IN RELATION TO GOD

"And I came to a bloke all alone like a kurrajong tree,
   And I said to him: 'Mate - I don't need to know your name -
   Let me camp in your shade, let me sleep, till the sun goes
down.'"

   - Stow, "The Land's Meaning"

Australia, a product of the nineteenth century, has
always been considered a secular, hedonist society, an
evaluation that appears to be as true today, as it was to
A.G. Stephens, writing in 1904:

Our fathers brought with them the religious habit as they
brought other habits of older nations in older lands.
And upon religion, as upon everything else, the spirit
of Australia—that undefined, indefinable resultant of
earth, and air, and conditions of climate and life—has
seized; modifying, altering, increasing, or altogether
destroying. In the case of religious belief the
tendency is clearly to destruction—partly, no doubt,
because with the spread of mental enlightenment the
tendency is everywhere to decay in faith in outworn creeds;
but partly also, it seems, because the Australian
environment is unfavourable to the growth of religion, and
because there is in the developing Australian character a
sceptical and utilitarian spirit that values the present
hour and refuses to sacrifice the present for any
visionary future lacking a rational guarantee.

1 Quoted by Veronica Brady in A Crucible of Prophets,
p. 1.
Modern critics, like Dorothy Green, however, argue that

If Australians are as secular, as materialistic, as historical as sociological writers seem to think, it is very strange that nearly all of its outstandingly important novelists and poets . . . can be described as religious in some sense of the word.2

Veronica Brady agrees that the major writers like Henry Handel Richardson, Joseph Furphy, Patrick White, Randolph Stow, Christopher Koch and David Malouf, move into "areas of metaphysical and even theological concern." She adds: "Seen from the outside, Australian society offers itself for understanding, not only through its history or by means of economic and social statistics, but through the forms of its imaginative life, by which our profoundest experiences take on social and moral expressiveness."3

In the work of Randolph Stow, both in his fiction and poetry we have a conscious syncretization of various modes of perception of not only a Supreme Being but a 'Supreme State of Being' thought of in Christian, Taoist, Aboriginal and even Hindu terms. The epigraph of this Chapter is taken from Stow's poem, "The Land's Meaning", which begins with the lines:

The love of man is a weed of the waste places.
One may think of it as the spinifex of dry souls.4

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3 Brady, A Crucible of Prophets, p. 2.
4 Randolph Stow, A Counterfeit Silence, p. 36.
Australian writers have a strong 'Sense of Place'. For Stow coming as he does from Western Australia, its Dead Heart, the desert vastness, is not only a geographical physical fact, but a symbol of the metaphysical 'wastes', the spiritual void, at the heart of Australian life. In the poem the land is made to yield its meaning. To discover the answer to the question: "What is God?", man has to make "the trek to the difficult country", thus pointing to the possibility of the existence of another more positive life. The seekers who make the journey discover that God is Man, purified by loneliness, but not damaged by it:

What is God, they say, but a man unwounded in his loneliness?  

But the question of God's existence persists, though it is 'applauded, derided' and 'falls like dust on veranda and bar'. One who has returned from the 'difficult country', describes the meeting between man and his Maker. The encounter is not the traditional one. It has now become democratized. Fay Zwicky comments:

Deity is metamorphosed into 'a bloke all alone like a kurrajong tree,' and is asked for comfort and protection in the secular terms of mateship. "Let me camp in your shade, let me sleep, till the sun goes down," Proof of God's existence is not required--'Mate--I don't need to know your name.'

5 Randolph Stow, A Counterfeit Silence, p. 36.

Stow's novels reveal a search for a personal God, without the paraphernalia of institutionalized religion. It does not matter what he is called—Christ, Wolaro, the Tao, the Green God or Shiva. Stow's God is the God of the Incarnation—God in Man. There is no dualism between Man and God. God unites himself with the world which he has created, incorporating both Nature and Man in himself. In the end all alienations are resolved between Man and Land, Man and Man and Man and God.

Chapter Two was a study of the horizontal relationship between Man and Man as present in Stow's novels. Chapter three will explore the vertical relationship between Man and God. *A Haunted Land, The Bystander,* and *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea* will first be taken up for study of the theme, Man in relation to God. These three novels depict colonial man, the man of property, concerned with 'having', and not 'being'. J.J. Healy, in attempting to delineate the "Image of Man" in Australia, speaks of, "the domination of positivism, especially in its aesthetic and moral implications, over the Australian imagination. Man in Australia is the man of property and party, divorced from the kind of philosophical principle that may, in some contexts, give reflective generality to both."7

Set down in a harsh and alien land, the God of colonial man was the Biblical God of the desert, a cruel God who visited him with drought, fire and flood. Man had, therefore, to fall back on himself, on his own resources, and work out his salvation in this world rather than the next. Colonial man, was concerned with carving out little empires in the wilderness, with possession and heritage.

Andrew Maguire, the central character of A Haunted Land, appears to have been made in the image of a cruel and relentless God, the desert God of destruction. Andrew's allegiance is to Malin, 'the hills and paddocks' of his empire and in seeking to contain his children within this world, he destroys both them and himself. In a more frightening way Andrew's allegiance is to his dead wife, Beth. As he himself admits, he has given himself over to a kind of "corpse worship", embracing death rather than life. Mr. and Mrs. Cross with faith in the Christian belief of the resurrection of the body, are able to accept the cruel death of their monster-son Tommy. For Andrew, however, Death is the only reality, and even after ten years he has "this tearing longing, this unkillable lust for what no longer existed outside the mind" (p. 93).

In attempting to mould his children in the image of his dead wife, Andrew plays God. As Vincent Buckley says, "Andrew Maguire plays God to his children; but it is a destructive
God that he plays; and the basic drive towards domination is a nihilistic one. There is an intense consciousness of the communion of the lost, the deprived, the desolated.”

On their part Andrew's children have an almost idolatrous love for their father. Adelaide equates Andrew with God:

He was cruel in his love, she knew that, but so was God. God had made an agony of birth, he had made animals so that they cried with the pain of love... .

She was embarrassed and ashamed to realize suddenly how far she was equating Maguire with God, and though she laughed at herself she was afraid that she was thinking blasphemy. But I may draw a parallel, she thought in self-defence, and oh, God, you are too distant to matter as much as he does. What do Nick and Martin care for Heaven when this hurtful love is at Malin? You could not wound them more, and they could not love you more, than Father.

In the novel Andrew is given the role of both God and Devil. For Edith, Andrew's sister-in-law, Andrew is the Devil. She tells Adelaide: "I once said he was the Serpent, but I was wrong. The Serpent has a will to destroy, Andrew has not. He destroys without intending it, simply because he is Andrew" (p. 64).

Remarking on the metaphorical and religious dimension of A Haunted Land Alice Oppen observes:

Within the compact unity of one family, Randolph Stow attempted to generate the basic forces which operate in a religious faith: primary emotions, sources of creation and destruction, worship and exile. So we have placed on earth the mythic struggle that has been symbolized in religion, here exhibited in a group of people who already have strong ties to one another. In embodying religious relationships in his characters, Stow has tried to place the supernatural world within.

the confines of the natural world, exploiting for this purpose the questionable sanity of the principal character.9

Andrew's blind rages are unaccountable but his sanity is called into question especially when after Tommy Cross's funeral he drives a stake into the grave, to "make sure that the werewolf is properly dead" (p. 224). It is ironical that Andrew does not realize that the true werewolf was not Tommy Cross. His was only a physical deformity. Andrew himself is the werewolf, human and yet almost wholly evil. The symbolic nailing down of Tommy's coffin is symbolic also of Andrew's acceptance of death as the end of life and his failure to transcend himself.

The funeral service conducted by Mr. Cross over the makeshift grave of his son echoes the main theme of the novel, the theme of death-in-life and life-in-death. For Mr. and Mrs. Cross, Tommy's misshapen grotesque body contained his immortal soul and in their simple yet strong faith, they were not prepared to be bullied by Andrew into burying Tommy like a dog. With Adelaide they sang:

"Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay."

"In the midst of life we are in death; of whom may we seek for succour but of thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased" (p. 222).

9 Oppen, Southerly (1967), p. 82.
After the final reading "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life..." Cross filled the grave, and pressed down the earth firmly, "as though he had just planted a tree" (p. 223). These words point to the resurrection of the body and are one of the few allusions to an after-life we have in the novel.

When all his children except Adelaide have left him, Andrew, alone and desolate, has a moment of self-knowledge that can be said to amount to an illumination. Heavy with drink and grief, he opens a book at random and shouts out a poem in the silent room. Damned, his soul suspended between heaven and hell, like Faustus he cries out for the grace that could redeem him:

"Broken in pieces all asunder,
    Lord, hunt me not,
    A thing forgot,
Once a poor creature, now a wonder,
    A wonder tortured in the space
    Betwixt this world and that of grace" (p. 250).

He then picks up a book of nursery rhymes that Beth used to read to the children. The poem points out various stages on the journey to self-realization. A child fits a great golden key that unlocks the gates to a kingdom, a green land of hills, valleys and rivers. In the kingdom there is a great city of domes, towers and spires. There are gardens and tress. There was no one in the town, the kingdom was his.
A dark cobbled lane leads to an empty bare yard in which there is a house. Entering a dark passage Andrew faces a room, and stops at the door. He walks slowly to a bed feeling like an intruder, and when he pulls aside the white cloth that covered a basket, expecting something dreadful, he finds instead, a bunch of flowers. "He took the flowers and held them against his face and he was laughing now. He said: "I did not want a kingdom, it was too big for me. I did not understand a kingdom, only the flowers I understand" (p. 252).

Andrew has his moment of 'yea-saying'. He understands at last that a man's kingdom is not of this world. His land, his heritage of "hills and paddocks", had tied his soul down to a mundane world. The basket of flowers, a thing of fleeting beauty, reminds him of the simplicity of a man's needs and the brevity of man's life on earth. Andrew has come at last to a knowledge of himself, but Adelaide will not allow him his vulnerability or his culpability. She holds him and in anger and despair cries: "It's not your fault! It's not your fault!" (p. 252). Andrew loses his chance of redemption. He lives out his days at Malin, a recluse, a bitter and lonely old man.

Anne Maguire inheriting her mother's dread disease and living as she does with the threat of an early death, believes in some sort of after-life. She wants to become
part of the natural physical cycle "to become part of Malin" and have "grass and flowers" to grow out of her death, but she declares emphatically: "I don't want my soul to go on living when I'm dead!" (p. 242). With no desire for transcendence like Andrew, she remains pitifully earth-bound. For Adelaide there is another kind of immortality in "the love of the living" (p. 242). Adelaide is one of the most affirmative of Stow's characters, the first example of the feminine principle of rejuvenation in his novels. She is linked with the image of the garden, a symbol of rebirth and immortality.

This first novel of Stow's, however, remains on the whole a study of man worshipping a God made in his own image and likeness—a Savage and a Dark God.

In The Bystander, Stow's second novel, there is no hint of transcendence of physical and spiritual deformity. A haunted land is again the setting of the novel, a land haunted by the ghosts of the past who still inhabit the now rotting homesteads of Malin, Koolabye and Strathmore. Patrick Leighton, the illegitimate son of Patrick Maguire and Jane Leighton, is the owner of both Malin and Koolabye. His spinster cousin Nakala lives all alone at Strathmore. Keithy, a mentally retarded young man, son of the owners of Lingarin, is the bystander of the title.
In a sense all the characters are bystanders, unable to participate in life affirmatively and fully. Patrick is embittered by his illegitimacy and his lameness. His allegiance is to his dead relatives and his derelict heritage. He feels he has a duty to pass on his inheritance and therefore he marries Diana, a Latvian immigrant. For Patrick immortality means passing on his little empire to a son. Isolated by their own needs, their own inadequacies, the characters cannot reach out to each other in love. They are marginal men and women, faceless, bystander characters, who are content with living and partly living. The words of the theme song of the novel sum up their worldly aspirations:

"I don't want something for nothing,
I just want something for ever" (p. 11).

And yet they realize that nothing will last forever. Patrick realizes that the dynasty of the Maguires and Leightons has only lasted a hundred years and four generations.

The "search for permanence" that Geoffrey Dutton has traced in Stow's early novels, a sense of security alone, could not have satisfied the hunger at the root of Andrew's spiritual malaise or the vague unsatisfied longings of Patrick, Diana and Nakala. Andrew and his descendants like all men concerned with 'having' and not 'being', in their search for terrestrial beatitudes, what St. Augustine calls 'vain temporalities', fail to realize that here, in this world, we have 'no abiding city'.

The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea is again grouped together with A Haunted Land and The Bystander, because its subject matter is the colonial family. The underlying theme of the novel is the transition from illusion to reality. Time is symbolized by the merry-go-round which seems to whirl almost vertiginously as the novel progresses, taking the child Rob towards adolescence. The bitter-sweet mood of the novel is tinged with an awareness of change and impermanence, and because the world of the senses is all that appears to matter, there is no hint of transcendence.

While the 'Squattocracy' did owe allegiance to King, Country and God, religion was a matter of belonging to the Establishment. There is no hint of an experience of a personal God. For Rob, God was in His heaven, and all was right with his world. Even Rick's traumatic experiences in a prisoner-of-war camp, his experiences of man's inhumanity to man, do not lead to a search for a higher Reality that would provide answers to his existential questions about suffering and death, and provide meaning to his life.

Religion meant belonging to the right camp. At school the Protestants despised the "convent dogs" who went to convent schools. Rob's uncle Paul was Maltese and a Catholic but that was somehow different as he had married a Maplestead. Rob's father "was related to things like churches and courts and the Navy . . ." (p. 97). Rob believed
in God. He had a clear picture of what God looked like.
"God looked like the picture of Bernard Shaw in one of his father's books... But Jesus, Jesus was something different, and most curious. Even when he had first started going to Sunday school he had been able to feel no warmth for Jesus, and when they told the kids how Jesus had cursed the figtree, he had given up Jesus as hopeless... Jesus was just bad tempered and wasteful. He would have made a lousy farmer" (pp. 103-4).

For Rob, "It didn't seem to matter what religion people were. His father hadn't been to church since Nan was christened, and his mother only went to weddings and didn't really have any religion except being anti-Catholic... It just didn't seem to matter about religion" (p. 104).

"Blood" was linked with religion, Bog-Irish Catholic naturally being inferior to the Protestant Northern Irish blood of which the Maplesteads boasted. Even easy-going Hugh, the son of a butcher says: "'I hope these quaint old customs like Christianity die out some day!'" (p. 189).

Rick returns from the war to what Patrick White has called "the Great Australian Emptiness",10 the void at the centre of Australian life, that Rick fails to identify as a spiritual emptiness, though he himself feels a 'nothingness'

within him. As he tells Jane, who accuses him of being "frozen"; "'There's nothing there,'" Rick said, quietly staring at her. . . . "'There's nothing there!'" (p. 212).

The Merry-Go-Round does not overtly deal with God or religion. It does, however, point out very strongly the type of Australian society, materialistic and hedonist, that precludes religion in its truest sense. Rick does not recognize his dissatisfaction with the good life, and his failure to find fulfilment in a woman's love, as a yearning for something beyond what Australia or this mundane world has to offer. Rick remembers the hours spent in the school chapel that amounted to nothing more than "a feast of religion". The ritual meant something, the outward trappings of "pale searching arch" and music, but "as for God, had the idea ever crossed his mind?" (p. 247).

A clue to what is wrong with Rick and his countrymen is hidden away in the novel. It is a statement that Rick makes about Frank, an old farm hand:

"That's a happy old man," Rick said. "I think."
"Well, he's not a model I'd pick to follow," said Hugh. "He seems to have got everything he wants, just by not wanting anything" (p. 170).

In the last two lines Stow is introducing the Taoist concept of the ideal Sage, who eschews desire, greed, accumulation of wealth and in "not wanting anything", achieves 'everything', chiefly serenity and quietude. This philosophy would not of course be acceptable to an aggressive Western-oriented
society, in whose eyes Frank would be considered a "nobody", a man without land, or family or possessions. And since the Taoist sage preaches without talking, Stow contents himself with pointing out, unobtrusively, an alternative to the Australian way of life contained in the philosophy of Taoism.

For Australian readers and critics, The Merry-Go-Round remains a favourite novel, perhaps because of its local ambience and because it is a reminder of one's childhood, but for outsiders not influenced by nationalism or nostalgia, the novel is an indictment of a society, content with 'having' and not 'being'. Unless Australia recognizes its 'Great Emptiness', the void at its centre, it will remain, as Stow seems to imply, "a childish country".

In the character of Rick we have 'the outsider' figure, a self-exiled outcast from a one-dimensional society that fails to satisfy him. In Rick's troubled yearnings we can discern a longing for the other dimension, the "heroic life" he had dreamed of in the POW camp. Unlikely as it appears on the surface, Rick is a positive character. In the words of Veronica Brady used in a different context, Rick lives in "'a state of estrangement' which Paul Tillich characterises as the starting-point of faith, in transition from illusion to reality . . ."11

11 Brady, A Crucible of Prophets, p. 99.
The focus in Stow's earlier novels was on the outer landscape of colonial Australia. The white settlers with their immense station properties are shown primarily concerned with possession of land and later with the consolidation of their heritage. To the Islands is concerned with guilt and expiation, arising from the conflict between the white colonial usurper and the black native aboriginal. In A Haunted Land the aboriginal is in the background, a servant to be abused, used and even shot like a dog, without any compunction. By implication the aboriginals were not only considered an inferior race, they were almost thought to be sub-human. In The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea the aboriginals are linked with the immense age of the land. There is a statement of conquest and dispossession but no feeling of guilt.

These landowning pastoralists can be said to practise what Michael Cotter terms an "ecological imperialism". He says:

In their cultivation of the land, for instance, they are shown to be creating defense mechanisms to cope with their own poverty of soul, enforced by the demands of colonialism. . . . Only by the determined upholding of those socio-economic prizes, 'home, hearth, wife, land,' can . . . they maintain some sense of their own credibility with which to combat 'the tribal intentions of the black man'.

In *To the Islands*, the aboriginal comes into his own. The aboriginal is seen as a human being, as an individual, and what is more the aboriginal metaphysic of existence, their notion of the land uniting as it does a spiritual with a physical geography, is considered as a possible alternative to "an alien religion not nurtured in that soil and in that sky."\(^{13}\) The Dead Heart, the desert wastes, now becomes "lost man's country", a metaphor for the strange country of the soul. The novel is structured on the metaphor of the journey, a journey simultaneously charting man's outer and inner landscapes.

J.J. Healy looks upon *To the Islands* as "a more intense consideration of the moral implications of race contact in Australia than had appeared before in Australian literature."\(^ {14}\) Sister Helen Bond, the nurse at the Mission, expresses this moral element when she says:

"I don't believe in heaven and hell, but I believe in sin, and sins that aren't wiped out on the earth stay on the earth forever echoing and echoing among the people left behind" (p. 94).

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\(^ {13}\) Tiffin, *Awakened Conscience*, p. 147.

Heriot, the old Mission superintendent, echoes the idea that God does not punish man:

"We pay ourselves back. You know that. Because you know our crimes are like a stone, a stone again, thrown into a pool, and the ripples go on washing out until, a long time after we're gone, the whole world's rocked with them. Nothing's the same again after we've passed through" (p. 153).

In expiation for the massacre of aboriginals at Onmalmeri, Heriot had helped to found and run an isolated Mission in the Kimberley district of Western Australia. Now at sixty-five, alone, without wife or child, unfulfilled and with a vague presentiment of death, Heriot asks for retirement which is refused.

Heriot looking back on his life's work, feels that all along he had been just "marking time". He had not achieved much at the mission. Not much progress had been made in putting up buildings, teaching the aboriginals trades, relieving them of physical misery and above all the "misery of the mind". Heriot resents the fact that he has built something "nobody wanted". He tells Fr. Way, his second-in-command:

"... after all these years of being forgotten and ignored, I suddenly find that I resent it. I don't want to pass piously to a quiet grave. I've built something nobody wanted, and now the thing I think would give my life its full meaninglessness would be to smash it down and take it with me" (p. 77).

Fr. Way however, replies: "But it's not yours to smash, ... You were founders, you were like coral insects. You can't smash what you've started because you yourself belong to your successors--" (p. 77).
Heriot had always been a militant Christian. As J.J. Healy points out, Christian missions like the Forrest River mission in the Kimberlys, where Stow himself had worked for a time, had to face enormous difficulties. They were badly situated and inadequately funded by both Church groups and the State. It was therefore "hardly surprising that Christian vocations were sometimes turned by despair and routine into authoritarian practice." Heriot had himself been "a handy man with a stockwhip" (p. 17). Now in despair and frustration, with a natural aggressiveness that belied his very real "goodness", Heriot picks up and smashes a small crucifix in a dramatic, symbolic gesture that shocks the worthy Fr. Way. "'I believe in nothing,'" Heriot said softly. "'I can pull down the world!'" (p. 78). Later, in the wilderness, Heriot tells Rusty, the murderer, that he had lost everything, looking after his huts and houses (p. 150). Heriot quotes a line from Dante's Inferno, Canto XIII (V. 151): "Io fei giubetto a me delle mie case" ("I made a gibbet for myself of my houses"). John Beston, in his article, "Heriot's Literary Allusions in Randolph Stow's To the Islands", points out that in this line, Heriot "identifies himself with a suicide in the seventh circle of Dante's Hell ... who had destroyed himself in his concern for possessions; with Heriot

15 Healy, Literature and the Aborigine in Australia, p. 225.
it is the need to possess people, even the mission itself, that has been destructive to himself and injurious to others. "16

The breaking of the crucifix is not an act of sacrilege but a repudiation of a lifetime's work that has now become unauthentic. In the revised edition of the novel Stow deleted the reference to Heriot's "failed faith being so long a swag on his back to be humped by night over the hard countries of his privacy." The lines Stow retains convey Heriot's seeming renunciation of an institutionalized formal religion that has failed to satisfy his instinctual needs.

Now he could admit to himself that what was once the bright fruit of a young tree had shrivelled and dried and sifted away in the late years of loneliness, and was not to be found again on the ant-bed floor of a church ... (p. 79).

For critics such as Alice Oppen, Heriot's journey across "lost man's country" is a gradual transition from "the white Christian tradition and purpose of civilization, to the black mythic culture." 17 Helen Tiffin states that "Heriot must learn from Justin, the land, and the bush people a metaphysic of existence to replace the one he is haltingly discarding." 18 Robyn Wallace however argues convincingly

that Heriot's exploration of that strange country his soul is not "a rejection of one kind of belief for another. . . . Heriot learns as much through his encounters with the solitary white figures, Rusty and Sam, as he does through Justin."\(^\text{19}\)

It is true that Heriot finally identifies himself with the aboriginals: "'I'm a blackfellow, son of the sun!'" (p. 116). But all along his journey, singing of sin, death and punishment he has cried: "Where is God?" (p. 118). When Heriot comes to the cave drawing of the rainbow serpent, he says: "You are Wolaro. God." But in an echo of the lines in Stow's poem "The Land's Meaning", Heriot adds: "What does it matter what you're called" (p. 197). To support Stow's eclecticism, there is also evidence to show that leaving the mission, Heriot the militant, aggressive Christian missionary, a "suffering self-willed activist", moves towards a simpler, quiescent way to salvation, provided by Taoism, "a passivist religious philosophy which was dormant in Stow's work long before it became active in Tourmaline."\(^\text{20}\)

In his journey into the wilderness Heriot's thoughts are preoccupied with sin, death and salvation, as expressed in


his literary allusions in a number of European and classical languages, the evidence of "his learning . . . mouldering away in Oxford books of this and that . . ."\textsuperscript{21} Though the journey itself, as Helen Tiffin says, "might be seen as one of expiation, it is instead a rejection of expiation as irrelevant once the nature of man-man, man-land, and man-god relationships have been understood."\textsuperscript{22}

In attempting to describe his life to Rusty, a stranger, Heriot is actually interpreting his past to himself. He is in fact speaking to himself as Rusty obviously does not understand his thoughts, disguised as they are in classical allusions in foreign languages.

Heriot is above all aware of his need for expiation. He quotes "Villon's epitaph written for himself and his five companions awaiting death by hanging." Heriot prays for forgiveness:

De nostre mal personne ne s'en rie;
Mais priez Dieu que tous nous vueille absoulerre!

("Let no one laugh at our misfortune, but pray God that he may absolve us all.")

\textsuperscript{21} "On the shelves of the rough bookcase Heriot's learning was mouldering away, in Oxford books of this and that, and old-fashioned dictionaries, all showing more or less visitations of insects and mildew." Inserted in revised edition of To the Islands (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1981), p. 1.

\textsuperscript{22} Tiffin, Awakened Conscience, p. 152.
In the quotation in Spanish, from a poem called *Cancion*, by Garcilasso de la Vega, Heriot anticipates his death:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Y sé yo bien que muero} \\
&\text{por solo aquello que morir espero}
\end{align*}
\]

("and I know well that I am dying, merely for the reason that I expect to die").

Heriot then looks back on his life and in a German couplet from an elegy by the Minnesinger Walther von der Vogelweide, he laments:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Owe war sint verswunden alliu miniu jar!} \\
&\text{ist mir min leben getroumet, oder ist ez war?}
\end{align*}
\]

("Alas, where are all my years gone to? Is my life a dream, or is it real?").

Heriot's final quotation is from Xenophon's *Anabasis*, Book IV, Chapter 7:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Thalassa! Thalassa!} \\
&\text{("The sea! The sea!") (p. 150).}^{23}
\end{align*}
\]

The reference to the sea obviously refers to Heriot's intended destination, the Islands of the Dead.

Heriot while expecting and even awaiting death fears for the fate of his soul. His first prayer in the wilderness speaks of birth, death and the corruption of the body:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{"Fittingly is now my coming} \\
&\text{Into this world with tears and cry;} \\
&\text{Little and poor is my having,} \\
&\text{Brittle and soon y-fallen from high;} \\
&\text{Sharp and strong is my dying,} \\
&\text{I ne wot whither shall I;} \\
&\text{Foul and stinking is my rotting -} \\
&\text{On me, Jesu, thou have mercy" (p. 90).}
\end{align*}
\]

As Heriot goes further into "lost man's country", he gradually sheds his destructive European role, till he identifies himself with the aboriginal and says: "No more white man. I'm a blackfellow, son of the sun" (p. 116). His European consciousness adrift in an alien land, now expresses itself in the haunting music of its native people. In the aboriginal camp, Heriot sings to "a corroboree tune of tearing sadness."

"This ae night, this ae night,
Every night and all,
Fire and fleet and candlelight,
And Christ receive thy soul." (p. 130)

In sight of the aboriginal islands of the dead, Heriot thinks of immortality in aboriginal terms. He does not want to be buried under a cross and "to go right to heaven". There is a deep pathos in his questions to Justin:

"Will my spirit go back and wait to be born? I'd like that. Wait at Ormalmeri, in the water deep under the lilies, and when some woman came, enter her body and be a child again. Would that happen, Justin?"

"No," said Justin sadly. "That don't happen."

"Where will I go, then? Only to the islands? And wait there forever, and be nothing? And never," asked Heriot pleading, "never come again?"

"No," said Justin, "you never come again. Never, brother." He was touched with grief.

"What will you do with me? Put me high in a tree, and when I'm dry carry my bones away?"

"No," Justin protested, "I bury you under cross and say prayer for you, and you go right to heaven, brother." (pp. 198-99)

Heriot remains rebellious. The Lord's Prayer only reminds him that "'that's hell where His will is done as on earth'" (p. 199)
Justin, the Christian aboriginal, finally pities the white Christian missionary, when Heriot asks wistfully:

"My spirit can come back, for a little time. Can't it? I can visit someone I love?"
"They say—" said Justin. "They say spirit come back to his brother, if he a man, or to his wife. Or might be hang around the bush and come if someone say his name."
"But you don't believe that. You say dead people's names, you're the only one who does. You don't believe in spirits."

With the light flickering over his face, with its dark lines running across the forehead and from nostril to mouth: "Yes," Justin said, "I believe." (p. 199)

In this context it is interesting to note what J.J. Healy points out, that "although the social structures of the Forrest River tribes may have been in disarray, the belief structures were still resilient and capable of genuine adaptation." He quotes anthropologist Phyllis Kaberry who, he says, caught this "syncretic adaptive strength". She believes that "The blacks will adapt Christian beliefs to their own for many years to come; in this area they call Christ Bundilmiri, and God, Wolara." 24

In the end, "Heriot overcomes the dualisms of himself against people, the country, his God, the Aboriginal gods, himself." 25 He has come to terms with himself. He can forgive himself. Earlier, Heriot had felt insignificant

24 Healy, Literature and the Aborigine in Australia, p. 226.

25 Ibid., p. 233.
in the immense spaces of the universe, but now he tells Justin: "I'm not so small as I was. No, I'm growing now. There are powers in me. I have love, and courage, a little of it, and reason of a sort, and compassion." (p. 200).

An 'unaccommodated man', in his journey through "no man's land", Heriot had come closer to people, from whom he had earlier been forced by necessity and choice to erect a barrier. He tells Rusty that in his former life there had been nothing left to do but die. In retrospect, his work at the mission, had been a vocation, a duty, but now in this journey of exploration and expiation there is satisfaction in knowing that he has given, as one human being to another "not much, but a little, a little food, a little cold comfort. There may be still things, to do, and things to find" (p. 160).

Alone in the cave, Heriot faces his final reconciliation, achieved simultaneously, between himself, and the land, and between himself and God. He sings a wild corroboree song about himself: "Where are you going old ghost? Going to the islands, are you? Going to Bundalmeri? He is your lord. His country is outside--outside" (p. 206).

John B. Beston points out that "Heriot is the only character in Stow's writings that we see carrying out a favourite fantasy of Stow's: to go into the country and die of it, to merge unburied with the land... Within Stow's
poetry, the notion of dying and merging with the land occurs in 'A Fancy for His Death', 'As He lay Dying', and 'The Singing Bones'. For Heriot, the rock he hurls into the sea is part of the cosmos, made up of molecules and atoms, protons, and neutrons, and its "innermost" self. As Heriot earlier wonderingly asks Rusty: "'And what if that should be God?'" (p. 153).

The rock is also himself. The name Heriot signifies a feudal service restored to the lord on the death of his tenant. John Beston, quoting Stow in support of his interpretation states that "Stephen's heriot is the return of his body to the Lord, thought of in Taoist rather than in Christian terms." The throwing of the rock then would signify, the fusion of the body with the elements, a concept Stow reiterates in Cawdor's illumination in Visitants, when Cawdor says: "'I saw. Timi, I saw. Down the tunnel. My body. Atoms, Stars!'" (p. 185). In Taoist terms this fusion would be a returning to the 'Source'. Robyn Wallace, while referring to Beston's interpretation, states that the name Heriot suggests a "strongly Christian element, linked with the concept of 'reckoning' in Everyman and the notion that life is lent, not given. . . . Rock and water are powerfully evocative images in more than one series of wisdoms."  

27 Ibid., p. 176.  
Considered in Taoist or in Christian terms the throwing of the rock into the sea, remains a ritual; an act of self-surrender, of purgation and of renewal. Heriot has moved from the wilderness of his outer landscape, to an understanding of "the strange country" of his soul. Here, at last, in the cave of the dead, among the skulls and bones, Heriot awaits his ending. He has "earned his sunset" (p. 150). He has achieved his 'quietus'. His life has been consummated.

Tourmaline is a novel whose action "is to be imagined as taking place in the future", and as Stow himself says, simultaneously in the past.\(^29\) The multiple-time structure is necessary to evoke the mythic quality of the novel reminiscent of Eliot's "Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future continued in time past." A.D. Hope sees the township of Tourmaline as "slumped in a decaying nineteenth century past." It is also, as Hope says, "an uncompromisingly realistic picture of character and life in a moribund gold-mining town in Western Australia and on the other a kind of apocalyptic allegory, parable, fable, mythus, or what-have-you hardly anchored in time and space at all."\(^30\)


\(^{30}\) Hope, The Australian Experience, p. 249.
In this study of Tourmaline "Man in relation to God", it will be interesting to consider the town of Tourmaline as an analogue for Australia itself, the land being a metaphor for the human condition and more specifically the history of the town charting the progress of the Australian 'Soul'. Australia, a product of nineteenth-century utilitarianism, a secular nation with Mammon as its unacknowledged God, is shown as lying in a "coma". Australia is of course, the subject of Byrne's ballad, that echoes through the novel:

"New Holland is a barren place
in it there grows no grain,
nor any habitation
wherein for to remain . . ." (p. 15).

"But the sugar-canes are plenty,
and the wine drops from the tree . . ." (p. 25).

Tourmaline's historian, called "the Law", while looking back to a lost Eden, and bemoaning its present aridity, speaks prophetically of a time when "Terrors would come. But wonders, too, as in the past. Terrors and wonders, as always" (p. 221). Australia, like Tourmaline, has "a bitter heritage, but that is not to run it down" (p. 7).

Tourmaline and by implication, Australia, awaits a "baptism" through water. It awaits a messiah to come out of the desert surrounding it. The 'prophet' who comes from the outside world, in "the truck", is literally picked up,
half-dead from the desert. He calls himself Michael Random and is a water-diviner. He is welcomed by the people of Tourmaline as a messiah and saviour. But he turns out to be a false prophet. As a diviner he fails to find water. He finds instead, gold. As a religious revivalist, he fails to satisfy the spiritual hunger which his coming and preaching had engendered. But the need has been created for a leader and Kestrel, the town's publican, who had left when the diviner took charge of the town returns to fill the position vacated by him. If the diviner poses as a Christ figure, Kestrel emerges as the Anti-Christ.

Yet, there is hope for Tourmaline. Like Australia it has a bitter heritage, but that is not to run it down. Terrors may come, but wonders too. The salvation of Tourmaline will be brought about not by outsiders, Messianic 'Godmen' like the diviner or power-hungry 'politicians' like Kestrel, but by Tourmaline's and therefore Australia's native sons, men like Tom Spring and Dave Speed, mystics and rugged individualists.

Tourmaline is a town in a haunted land. "There is no stretch of land on earth more ancient than this. And so it is blunt and red and barren, littered with the fragments of broken mountains, flat, waterless" (p. 7). This is desert land, harsh and sterile, but the spiritual quality of the land is hinted at: "At times, in the early morning, you would call
this a gentle country. . . . It is at dawn that the sons of Tourmaline feel for their heritage. . . . After sunset, the blue dusk, and later the stars. The sky is the garden of Tourmaline" (pp. 7-8).

The images of desolation, of red dust and wind, however, prevail. "Tourmaline dust is nothing if not sterile" (p. 14). The inhabitants of Tourmaline are lethargic, "their lassitude was a communal affair, or perhaps a form of pestilence" (p. 14). Tourmaline is "not a ghost town. It simply lies in a coma" (p. 9). The people of Tourmaline are, however, shown as "waiting". Ostensibly, they are waiting, as they have done every month for years, for the monthly arrival of "the truck", from the outside world, bringing their supplies—food, liquor and kerosene. Helen Tiffin and Robyn Wallace, in their studies of the novel, have interpreted this "waiting" as an instance of cargo-cult millenarianism linked with messianic visitations.

Helen Tiffin quotes anthropologists Charles Julius and Kenelm Burridge to support her thesis that in Tourmaline there is "a destructive urge towards the millenial and the messianic,"\(^31\) Stow, as a student of anthropology, and as an assistant to Dr. Charles Julius in the Trobriand Islands in 1959, would of course have known of the cargo cult uprisings

in New Guinea. He would also most certainly have read Burridge's *Kambu, A Melanesian Millenium*, published in 1960, three years before the publication of *Tourmaline*.

If Tiffin argues that "the story of the rise to power of the diviner and the subsequent details of his career have very close parallels with anthropological accounts of cargo cult activity in Papua New Guinea," In *Tourmaline*, the millenial urge finds expression in the "myth-dream", of a return to a greener past. The 'Cargo' the people of Tourmaline require is water. This necessitates the emergence of a charismatic leader who will activate the myth-dream. And as Robyn Wallace points out, since "Underlying all millenarian beliefs, . . . is the concept of salvation, or deliverance, or redemption . . ." a religious revival is implied.

*Tourmaline* is thus, basically, a religious novel, concerned with salvation on both the personal and the communal levels. But it is not so much concerned with "God and sin and repentance", as it is with the concepts of Truth and Falsehood. Stow in an interview given to Xavier Pons and Neil Keeble in 1976, categorically stated: "I tend to adhere to Taoism, which is a very pragmatic religion concerned mostly with time and change, action and inaction. That warped kind of

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33 Ibid., pp. 111-12.

Christianity which the Diviner brings into Tourmaline is the absolute opposite of this."\textsuperscript{35} Again, in 1979, Stow elaborated on the religious element in the novel: "'Truth' as I see it is represented by Tom Spring, a Quaker-Taoist. 'Falsehood' is represented by the water-diviner, a sort of Billy Graham. But the longing for God is genuine in them, and I can see no inconsistency in that. If the book gives a pessimistic impression, it should be remembered that the Afrikaners claim to be the last bulwark of Christian civilization."\textsuperscript{36} The novel can, therefore, be considered as a philosophical debate between Christianity and Taoism.

The diviner is a typical religious revivalist with a genuine love of God, and therefore a strong sense of mission; an almost aggressive evangelism, based on a destructive desire to take charge of men's souls. Like all cult leaders he fulfils a need in men, who have 'gold', have all their material needs satisfied, but have a yearning for transcendence, a desire to be "reborn".

The people of Tourmaline look for salvation to the outside world which they imagine is not tainted by their sense of doom, while the Diviner coming from the outside world,


\textsuperscript{36} Björksten, \textit{Artes} (1979), pp. 8-9.
where it is "chaos"—"wild beasts are loose on the world" (p. 45) is struck by their "innocence" and incorruptibility. Before his coming the people had a sense of brotherhood, "warm, acidic, undemanding" (p. 7). The gaol is abandoned. There are no crimes committed in Tourmaline. The diviner with his daily revivalist meetings in the ruined church, creates a false sense of community, and with all his talk of unity, opens out "so many gulfs" (p. 202) between Tom and Mary, Jack and Dave, Deborah and Byrne and Kestrel.

The diviner, on his arrival in Tourmaline, seems an unlikely figure for a Messiah, but as a stranger from the world outside Tourmaline where none of them had ever been, they assumed "he brought news" (p. 18). "Tourmaline was agog", Rock and Mary were "avid", Jack Speed "looked like a child at Christmas" and Horse Carson called: "'Where is he?' with all the eagerness of a fasting cannibal" (p. 17). The Law with an inexplicable apprehension of "terrible danger", still admits to "curious yearnings".

Picked up in the desert, the diviner is swollen, disfigured, unconscious and as helpless as an infant. To strengthen the image of the diviner as a Messiah, Stow uses, as Helen Tiffin points out, "Christian motifs to identify him". He is, therefore, at first, regarded as a helpless child—the babe at Bethlehem? He is hailed as "a new life in Tourmaline . . . A life for Tourmaline" (p. 19). He lies in bed for three days, before he rises to meet the people of Tourmaline, while Mary's one rooster crows forlornly.

As a leader, a cult figure, the diviner has an undoubted charisma. He calls himself "Michael", and has all the splendour of an archangel. Tall and fine-boned, with golden hair, his eyes remain the most remarkable feature of his face. They were a very vivid blue, a "kingfisher" blue, a "copper sulphate" blue. The Law thinks of him as "all blue and golden". "He burned in the fading light all blue and golden" (p. 114).

The diviner stands for "Falsehood" because the religion he preaches is a religion that maims and does not sustain. Deborah admits to being "reborn" after the meeting in the chapel. She tells the Law that Kestrel has been cast out of her, like the devils in the Bible. She has a feeling of "being young. And starting--starting again: "Joy: that's what he means!" (p. 180), she tells the Law. But when the Law asks her: "What could he have said to do this for you?"

... All the joy went out of her, and she would no longer look at me" (p. 181). She then tells the Law of her two visits to the diviner's hut and the visit to the chapel.

On her first visit she told Michael that she loved him and wanted to have his baby. For Deborah with her aboriginal ancestry, her simplicity and honesty, sex is not a dirty word. It is not "filth". She does not feel like a "harlot", a word straight from the Bible, that Michael uses
to describe her. "I can't understand you," she burst out.
"I'm honest, that's all. And why are you frightened?"
(p. 112). For Deb, having a baby with a man she thinks she
respects and loves is not a sin, but an act of creation.
It is her way of fulfilling herself as a woman, of bringing
"life" into a dead, childless town.

Like all religious revivalists, the diviner preaches
hell fire and damnation. His God is the Old Testament desert
God. His moral code is the rigid Mosaic Law. The adulteress
is not sent away with forgiveness and compassion. He tells
her:

"... you'll burn. All Tourmaline."
"What have we done?" she protested. "Tom and Mary
burn? I don't believe it."
"Forgotten God's law," he said; remote, pontifical.
"For the sake of some law of their own. And others'll
burn for the sins of the flesh, or for blasphemy, or
just for not listening. Or at least, they would have
done--"

"But you came?"
He repeated it, in a dead voice. "But I came" (p. 113).

In despair, Deborah asks him:

"What'll I do? ... I mean, about hell, about sin.
How do I know what to believe. Tom says one thing, you
say another thing. Kes says: 'Bull' to both of you.
Maybe nobody's right."
"Yes, somebody is," he said. "I am."
"Because God's spoken to me," he told her, with eyes like blue
glass (p. 113).

On her visit to the church, after Kestrel had left, she is
drawn towards the diviner almost against her will. She has
a genuine desire to effect some change in herself and her
life. But she shrinks from the diviner, instinctively feeling
that the diviner is no longer what she had thought him to be.
"'You've got like Kes . . . Don't be like him. I hate him!" (p. 155). She doesn't want him to touch her, because as she
tells him "'You're not--like other people!'" (p. 156). It
should have been evident to the diviner that Deb was not a
promiscuous woman, but he insists that he wants to win her
for God. He calls her a harlot and an animal.

"Oh, what are you doing?" she cried. "Even Kes
couldn't be so cruel. Not even to Byrnie."
"Won't you admit it? Won't you confess? It's
not too late to find God."
"I've done nothing wrong!"
"You don't believe that."
"Let me go."
"Shall I tell you what's in your mind?"
"No! You don't know!"
"I'll tell you," he said, . . . holding her captive, .
he began to give her his interpretation of her thoughts
and her desires. . . . he poured into her ears such a
stream of filth as she had never, . . . heard, much of it
dealing with her supposedly unquenchable lust for his,
the diviner's, body. As he spoke he burned, in zeal
and exaltation (p. 157).

Deborah slides down to her knees, weakly sobbing.
She confesses to being a sinner. "He towered above her, in
the sunlight, all blue and golden." "'Our sister's saved!'"
he proclaimed to Byrne and Rock who had come up. "And he
stooped and lifted her to her feet, and dropped a chaste
kiss on her forehead. While she stood, supported by him,
like a baulk of timber, unable to speak or think, or even
look about her" (pp. 157-58).

To the diviner Byrne is deformed, physically and
therefore spiritually. He is unable to look beyond Byrne's
scarred face, his bouts of drunkenness, his abject humility, to discern a genuine love for people, and a very real goodness. The Law, for a moment, rebels against Michael's domination, when Byrne says: "A dog's got to have a master. If the one he's had walks out on him he just has to go and look for another. So—I was lucky. I found one to take me on." For the Law, this self-disgust was "spitting in the face of God" (pp. 183-84).

Tom is not a disciple of the diviner's and could therefore judge him impartially. The diviner, he tells the Law, has no power in himself. He is not inspired by God but by the people of Tourmaline. "'You thought you needed him. You convinced him he was what was wanted, well good luck to you. Mr. Frankenstein—it's a fine healthy boy!" (p. 185). There is a reference to the cyclical nature of millenarian movements, when Tom tells the Law, "Haven't we had enough of these lunatics in the past?" It has all happened before. "'These black and white men,'" he said, "'these poor holy hillbillies who can only think in terms of God and the devil!'" (p. 185).

The Law points out that Deborah is happy.

"Happy!" Tom said. "You see a healthy girl turned into a hunchback overnight, and you think she's happy?" "But she loves him."
"Isn't that nice?" said Tom. "And hates herself. And he hates himself. But they both love God. It's as good as a bloody wedding. Ah, he's a bright boy, all right, to do all that in a quarter of an hour. It took Kes years to do the same to Byrne, and he had no luck at all with Deborah" (p. 186).
Tom is surprised that the Law has not realized that "a man who hates himself is the only kind of wild beast we have to watch for!" (p. 186).

The diviner not only hates himself, he has been having, as Tom says "a fight with God". The diviner admits to Gloria that he loves God and that God has saved him. He has found God "Through pain, . . . Shame. Weakness. He makes me suffer. Persecutes me. Won't let me go. So I know I've found him!" (p. 96). After this strange admission it is not surprising when Gloria wonders if he in reality hates God.

For Gloria, God is a father. She really believes in the Lord's Prayer, which she says at Michael's request, but her impromptu prayer, reveals how real God is to her. For her, it does not matter what he is called—Christ or Mongga. She places rain stones on the altar in the chapel. In a sense, without consciously realizing it she is preparing the church, as a place to receive the "cargo" when it finally arrives. Her religious belief and practice, Stow seems to imply is what Christianity is really about—loving God and loving one's neighbour. She prays for rain because "people pretty hungry in the camp now." In contrast, when the diviner prayed, "He sounded wild, . . . His ferocity, that had in it almost nothing of self-pity, exploded before the altar like a grenade. He had had enough, he seemed to be saying. But of what?" (p. 98).
He has a genuine longing for God, but a feeling too that he is damned and therefore beyond salvation. He shouts:

"--ah God, what do you want me for?"
Astonishingly . . . the old woman murmured: "One talent."
"One talent," he repeated, foolishly. "One talent.
Is that it?"
"Let your light shine," she said. "No good hiding it under a bucket. Let it shine."
"My talent," he said; or groaned. "My talent" (p. 98).

The diviner who is sure of his mission, thinks of himself as a "voice crying in the wilderness." The 'time of redemption' is at hand and he enlists the Law's support.

". . . you're to become my follower, and through you I'm to channel the spirit to everyone. You're to become the Law again, more truly than you ever were. But I'm to have the real dominion." His voice was "like an incantation; a shaman's voice" (p. 166).

Jennifer Wightman believes that "one of the most difficult tasks Stow undertakes in the novel is to convince us of Michael's persuasive power, and his success depends in part on the fact that we see Michael through the eyes of the Law, and with his emotions." She gives as an example, the climactic scene in the chapel, when the diviner's preaching is interrupted by Dave Speed. The "emotional orgy" is contrasted with Speed's "tough sanity", but "the speech also has a charismatic quality which almost takes us in; given the carefully prepared setting of the old church, and seen
from the viewpoint of the Law, such speeches involve the reader sufficiently to make the mass response of the town people explicable...38

In the poem "The Land's Meaning", Stow describes the search for God, and concludes that it does not matter what He is called. It is enough that God exists. In drought-stricken Tourmaline a physical and spiritual wasteland, the Law "half in love with ruin", sees the failure of man as leading to the death of God. He concludes that "man is a disease of God; and that God must surely die" (p. 104). But the people of Tourmaline, needing a God, create one. Like the Negress in the fairy-tale, the diviner "seeing himself reflected in the pool of the town's eyes, comes to believe himself beautiful."39 The aboriginals identify him with Mongga, the God of creation. The Law himself, caught up in the ecstasy of the church services calls out: "He is Christ."

It is ironic that the Diviner destroys the innocence of Tourmaline, a town that had a genuine unity of goodwill, before his coming, to create a false sense of community,


a new "brotherhood" centred solely around his personality and his preaching. Even the Law is deceived:

I looked down, from the height of the stars, and saw us united. All Tourmaline, all together; elbow by elbow, cheek by jowl, singing as one, shouting and weeping as one, praising God, beseeching God, wordless, passionate. I felt the power of our unity rise towards the stars like waves of heat from hot rock.

That was what he, the diviner, had done for us. There was never before this strength of unity, this power, this tremendous power. It was he, it was our faith in him (faith which I, astoundingly, now found myself to share) that bound us, in love and passion, together (p. 172).

In the novel, the tolling of the church bell takes on a particular significance. Before the diviner's coming it had tolled, "purposeless, moved by the wind." Calling the people of Tourmaline to the diviner's church meeting, it sounded "beautiful and arrogant and summoning" (p. 168). During the service it clanged and pounded, merging with the sounds of Byrne's guitar to create a mood of euphoria, and near hysteria.

When Michael is ready to test his power to divine water, the people of Tourmaline are awakened at dawn by the tolling of the bell. The "brotherhood" follow the diviner across the dry bed of the Tourmaline lake, till he is in a trance and his rod moves without his control and points downwards, at a particular spot. The diviner tells the men that they will find water there, at a hundred and fifty feet. The people watch with uncritical faith the progress of the digging. At last when the excitement is at its height, Rock comes to tell the diviner that it was no good. The hole was
dry and could not have been anything else. Facing the accusing eyes, the diviner cries out: "'It was there! The water was there. God's betrayed me.' One last flicker of his flame before it died. Then all was over. He was nothing" (p. 207).

Tourmaline relapses into its coma and one day the truck brings a passenger, as it did once before. It is a 'Second Coming', as Kestrel gets out of the truck and walks into the hotel with his deformed helpers. The diviner decides to go back 'home' and rejecting Byrne's offer of love, he "broke into a sprint and leaped the trailing barbed wire of the fence, and ran away laughing, into the gathering wind" (p. 216). The messianic cycle is however resumed, as the need has been created and Kestrel announces that he is the new "pope." The church bell will now ring at his summons, but now, for the present, it kept tolling, "Purposeless; moved by the wind" (p. 220).

Robyn Wallace admits that "there are other ways represented in the book, other religions, and that these remain a potential answer to Tourmaline's deprivation. "Structurally, however, [she argues] the religions of Dave Speed and Tom Spring are peripheral. The central figure is the diviner and what he signifies." She concludes that the diviner remains "unauthentic", while "dust silted up the stock route well at Dave Speed's camp." Even Tom "fails to 'cure'."
The luminous light goes out of him, leaving him cold and blank, a dead sun, just as the diviner loses all his light." We cannot but agree with this critic, if we go solely by the text. Tom and Dave remain in the background and the diviner dominates the novel, as he does the town. But, when we take into account Stow's avowed statement that "Truth is represented by Tom Spring", then Tom's 'religion' becomes central to an understanding of the novel.

A.D. Hope was the first critic to see in Stow's poems, "From the Testament of Tourmaline: Variations on Themes of the Tao Teh Ching", a key to the understanding of the novel. These poems appeared in 1966, three years after the publication of Tourmaline. In two soundly argued and enlightening articles, Hope introduced readers to the tenets of Taoism.

The philosophy of Tom Spring is in direct opposition to the aggressive Christianity the diviner preaches. Tom attempts to "cure" the Law, to wean him away from the destructive influence of the diviner, but the very nature of Taoism forbids him to preach. The Taoist sage has to teach


"naturally", for "good words are not persuasive, persuasive words are not good." Tom can therefore only "unveil his God":

And he did try. But so stumblingly, so clumsily, that it was difficult to attend. He unveiled his God to me, and his God had names like the nameless, the sum of all, the ground of being. He spoke of the unity of opposites, and of the overwhelming power of inaction. He talked of becoming a stream, to carve out canyons without ceasing always to yield; of being a tree to grow without thinking; of being a rock to be shaped by winds and tides. He said I must become empty in order to be filled, must unlearn everything, must accept the role of fool. And with curious, fumbling passion he told me of a gate leading into darkness, which was both a valley and a woman, the source and sap of life, the temple of revelation. At moments I thought I glimpsed, through the inept words, something of his vision of fullness and peace; the power and the darkness. Then it was hidden again, obscured behind his battles with the language, and I understood nothing, nothing at all; and I let my mind wander away from him to the diviner, at the altar, brilliant by flamelight, praising a familiar God, through the voice of a ritual bell.

When Tom stopped speaking, I made no remark.
And he said, wearily: "That was meaningless to you."
I was candid, and said: "Almost."
"Words can't cope," he said. And he added, rather bitterly: "Your prophet knows how to cut the truth to fit the language. You don't get much truth, of course, but it's well-tailored" (pp. 186-87).

The personalities of Tom and the diviner are contrasted.

Tom is the first person to be described in any detail in the novel.

A small strong thin man, Tom; quiet, so quiet one might stop and listen, in surprise. A deep Quaker quiet, an act of religion, that might help his soul to become like a great cave and trap and amplify the faint whisperings of God—that was the silence he was building, behind his quiet eyes, under his thinning hair (p. 13).

42 Quoted by Helen Tiffin in Studies in the Recent Australian Novel, p. 105.
Tom is also described as sitting behind his counter at the store "like a small ivory statue of a sage". By calling Tom an eastern sage, Stow gives us a hint as to Tom's philosophy and attitude to life. At the beginning, the diviner is shown as respecting and trusting Tom. It was almost as though he looked upon Tom as his mentor. But Tom is not able to offer any certainty regarding "the Word" when the diviner asks Tom what his belief is, he says: "'I'm still waiting ... Who'd dare say before the end of the road?'" (p. 46). The diviner not only has to believe in a God, he wants to be God, something he does when he gains control of the town. For Tom, "'We'll live till we die ... If we believe we exist, that's enough!'" (p. 47).

If Tom is the gentle mystic, with his "luminous smile", Dave Speed who shares his philosophy is a rugged and an outspoken individualist. Tom calls him a "desert saint" as he had "learned the tolerance of deprivation" (p. 82).

The sage does not hoard

Having bestowed all he has on others, he has yet more;

Having given all he has to others, he is richer still. The way of heaven benefits and does not harm; the way of the sage is bountiful and does not contend (V. LXXXI)43

43 Tiffin, Studies in the Recent Australian Novel, p. 106.
Dave preached "Complete passivity to the drought, to the desert, to the sun" (p. 87). As he tells Tom, "If the water comes, it'll be when we've stopped needing it" (p. 86).

Both Tom and Dave are, however, unable to share their beliefs with the Law and Deborah, though between them they had an "impersonal understanding, wordlessly, endured" (p. 152). The Law protests: "I don't understand you ... What do you mean? Can't you talk in words?" But they said nothing at all; more in sorrow than reproof" (p. 153).

As the diviner's influence grows in the town, Tom's face becomes less luminous. He refuses to support the diviner in converting the town, because as he tells him, his teaching was dangerous. But Tom will not speak against the diviner either, because:

the sage keeps to the deed that consists in taking no action and practises the teaching that uses no words.\(^4\)

Tom agrees to go to the church "for the sake of peace". He seemed as serene as ever as he made this promise to the diviner, "But all the light had gone out of him; a dead sun" (p. 168).

Dave Speed is more direct in his denunciation of the diviner. He interrupts the church service when the ecstasy and hysteria are at their height.

\(^4\) Tiffin, Studies in the Recent Australian Novel, p. 90.
"What is all this crap?" asked Dave, showing as many teeth as he had. "What's it in aid of?"
Somehow the bell only underlined the silence.
"You won't find no water," Dave told the diviner.
"You? You ain't a diviner's bootlace. You're either a nut or a flicking con-man. Why don't you hop on the truck and go home?" (p. 197).

The core concepts of Taoism are belief in the individual and the futility of force. The diviner not only uses force in summoning the people to the church, and taking charge of the town through the Law, he also commits the gravest sin in the eyes of the Taoist. He does not "honour the single soul". As the Law says towards the end of the novel, "There is no sin but cruelty. Only one. And that original sin, that began when a man first cried to another, in his matted hair: Take charge of my life, I am close to breaking" (p. 221). When Kestrel returns to take charge of the town, Tom warns him:

"Honour the single soul."
"I think in thousands," Kestrel said, "and tens of thousands" (p. 218).

Not much later, when the Law visits the store, seeing Tom with his head on the counter, he realizes he was not asleep, but dead. Stow explains Tom's death: "He dies sort of quite arbitrarily, and he doesn't die of anything in particular. . . . What Tom represents couldn't survive in those new conditions."

45 Pons and Keeble, Commonwealth (1976), p. 79.
Tourmaline has a bitter heritage, but that is not to run it down. "The failure of the messianic figure motivated by self-hate, yearning, and a ferocious pride, qualifies but does not negate the spiritual experience of Tourmaline." The novel in the end is celebratory.

If Tourmaline is an analogue for Australia, then the philosophy of Taoism, according to Stow, would be a means towards its spiritual rejuvenation. To quote Bruce Bennett, Stow in his novels makes an attempt "to re-imagine the self outside the spheres of Western civilization and religions." Stow's interest in eastern mysticism indicates a search for alternatives "to the Australian Way."

If Australia emerges as the Last Frontier in Tourmaline, Stow's succeeding novel, Visitants transcends both place and time to project 'a mad apocalyptic dream'. The novel can be profitably studied as an example of apocalyptic literature.

Apocalypse comes from the Greek word 'apokalupsis' meaning revelation. It is concerned with expectation, based

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47 Bennett, South Pacific Images, pp. 141-42.
on Time. Twentieth-century apocalyptic literature attempts to define the eschatological crisis, 'Kairos', inherent in modern history or 'Chronos'. Recorded history, the past, is linked with the present, the future being a resolution of the past and the present.

All literature is apocalyptic in theme, as all literature is primarily concerned with the two basic existentialist facts—birth and death, a beginning and an end. Every individual and every society is haunted by the fear of 'end'. This fear is expressed in terms of some myth. In every religion there is the myth of an Alpha or Genesis, and the contrasting myth of an Omega or Apocalypse. The end expressed in terms of a revelation is, however, not a vision of annihilation. In secular apocalyptic literature, man's imagination pushes against the frontiers of his existence in a dream of immortality. In the words of T.S. Eliot: "What we call the beginning is often the end / And to make an end is to make a beginning." In the end as Cawdor says in the message he leaves for Dalwood, "Everything will be good, yes, everything will be good, yes, every kind of thing will be good" (p. 138), which is a version of Eliot's lines in Four Quartets, "And all shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well."

"The Apocalyptic allows for a dialectic, conflict, or tension of oppositions . . . [which] is the stuff of
literature. In *Visitants* this conflict is present internally in Alistair Cawdor and externally in the cargo cult uprising. The link between Cawdor and the islanders, is provided by belief in the space-raft, that will bring deliverance to both. Belief in extra-terrestrial beings can be seen to be a belief in the Divine, a sign of affirmation. Stow, when questioned about whether the novel expressed an opinion about extra-terrestrial visitations said, "only the view that I think it's sensible to keep an open mind; not to be dismissive. What interests me more is not whether they do exist or not, which I can't have any firm opinion about, but why so many people want to believe that they exist. That is why so much attention is paid to Cawdor's enthusiasm in the book."  

The description in the Prologue, of the sighting of a space-ship at Boianai in the Trobriand islands is factual according to Stow. He was questioned about this "machine", as a Patrol Officer, on duty on the island of Kastava. The incident was also, according to Stow, recorded in a book by Jacques Vallee called *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*. In a Note

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50 Ibid., p. 314.
appended to the novel, Stow states: "Like William of Newburgh, recording a strange aerial apparition over Dunstable in 1189, 'I design to be the simple narrator, not the prophetic interpreter; for what the Divinity wished to signify by this I do not know'" (p. 191).

*Visitants* is about beginnings and ends and the technique of the novel reinforces this theme. In the circular structure of the book, the end is in the beginning. The novel ends with the reported death of Cawdor and the image of his body as a house invaded by "visitants", bleeding to death. The novel opens with Saliba recounting Kailusa's report of Cawdor's suicide: "And he screamed: The house is bleeding. There is nobody inside, he said" (p. 7).

MacDonnell is irked at the "futility" as he expresses it, of the official investigation into Cawdor's death. "Futility. The thing is ended. That was the point" (p. 8). The beginning, of course, for Cawdor, as MacDonnell astutely observes, was not in Osiwa but on Guadalcanal, twenty-seven years earlier, where Cawdor was born to missionary parents. His mother was probably killed by the Japanese when they invaded the Solomon Islands. Cawdor was raised in boarding schools (p. 172). He did not have much of a relationship with his father who had died probably at the time Cawdor's wife had deserted him (p. 71). These are the 'silent griefs' indicated in the epigraph to the novel, that haunt Cawdor,
and coupled with his malarial fever, lead to his suicide.

S.A. Ramsey, commenting on Cawdor's interest in the star-ship says:

"Cawdor's exultation at the news of the sighting of the star-ship is not the delight of mere curiosity: It is joy at the realisation that all is not futile, that there is something beyond the loneliness of this existence, something that will assure us that 'we're not alone.' Cawdor's reaction also confirms a suspicion that we have already had of him. If the visitants do exist, whatever they may be, then Cawdor is almost definitely one of them—and his association with them is quite clearly a religious one."

In MacDonnell's house, Cawdor muses on the beginnings of the islands: "Think about that, the receptiveness. So many visitants coming, none that anyone knows of ever driven away. Think about the history. A riddle, but one can guess" (p. 30). Dipapa, the tribal chief, expresses the attitude of the islanders to these visitations:

"They come, they go," Dipapa said, sucking his gums and looking towards the sky, like a man half asleep. "Black men, white men, canoes, streamers. They bring their somethings. But we—we stay and watch, that is all. Every day the same" (pp. 91-2).

The islanders themselves have their own myths regarding their beginnings. These myths, in the form of a millennial cult, formed the basis of the "Wailala madness" or cargo-cult, that Cawdor reports had taken place on the island of Kaga,

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in the past. According to Cawdor, these "myths and traditions of the 'cargo' type" are part of the 'experience' and 'memory' of the people (p. 155). In the uprising on Kailuana, Metusela gives his version of the myth, speaking as Taudogo, "A man of the stars" (p. 157). He tells the people the story of the two brothers; Kulau'ibu, the ancestor of the natives and Dovana, the ancestor of the Dimdimas, or the white men.

Among the people who listen to him are the painted men who had earlier run through the villages creating a kind of hysteria with their shouting and music. It was "a quick, loud, confusing music, that was made, you knew, by people not listening to one another, but hearing only themselves; their own finger-drums, their own pan-pipes, or moaning to themselves the very old songs whose words nobody understands. It was a sound . . . of very hungry, very lonely people (p. 155)"

The loneliness of Cawdor is linked with the loneliness and hunger of the islanders. The sighting of the space-craft therefore has significance in so far as it impinges on the imagination of the islanders and of Cawdor. For both, the space-ship has a millennial significance. Both look for a 'cargo'—salvation or deliverance, to come from these extra-terrestrial visitants. The old chief Dipapa, as Helen Tiffin observes by his "vicarious participation in the cult 'rites',
whatever his covert political motives, suggests that like his people, he has seen the end of a world, and his response is to create his own millennium of destruction."\(^{52}\)

'Catastrophe' preceding 'renewal' is part of the pattern of apocalyptic literature. In the novel the catastrophe is the cargo-cult uprising, that leads not only to the destruction and restoration of the village but the death of Dipapa and the introduction of a new era under the leadership of the young, western-educated Benoni. The 'catastrophe' in the case of Cawdor, consists in the events leading to his suicide, a death which is a rebirth.

Visitants, as Helen Tiffin points out, "is a political as well as a religious novel, and in the colonial context the two are frequently inseparable."\(^{53}\) One of the most noticeable reactions of the people of Papua New Guinea to white rule has been repeated outbreaks of "vailala madness" or cargo cult. For the natives, life is one of unending toil. Surrounded by all the wealth of the West they are unable to come by any of it. Their resentment is perhaps augmented indirectly by the work of the missionaries. Christianity, the religion of the Europeans, proclaims the spiritual equality

\(^{52}\) Tiffin, JCL (1981), p. 120.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., p. 122.
of men, but white rulers are rarely willing to practise the ethical implications of the doctrine. Dominated as they still are by magical thought, the islanders take refuge in fantasy, that takes the form of a myth. A leader or 'prophet' emerges who tells the natives that their ancestors are about to return with a large cargo of European goods. These goods manufactured in the spirit world have all along been misappropriated by the white man. In *Visitants* the islanders look to the star-people for deliverance. They clear the stone circles, the Ukula'osi, which they believe to be air-strips (pp. 100-101) and build a shed to receive the cargo.

S.A. Ramsey points out that "The star-ship ... is explicitly connected with the star of Bethlehem and is heralded as the long-expected sign of a new beginning." In the novel Cawdor tells Benoni:

"When Jesus was born," he said, "there was a census and a new tax, just like this. I think patrol officers were called publicans then. I think they wrote JOSÉPH-MARY-JÉSUS in their book and never thought of it again. ... (p. 96.

Benoni replies:

"Taubada," ... "there was a star. Taubada, is that true? There was a star" (p. 96).

Cawdor, however, will not commit himself: "... I am an ignorant man too, Beni. Like all men in the world. We live on the world like an island. Who can say he has seen every ship that sails on the sea?" (p. 107).

Cawdor has also been reading Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*:

In the following years, three comets were seen; and not long before the coming of the Spaniards a strange light broke forth in the east... It resembled a vast sheet of fire, or, as an old writer expresses it, "seemed thickly powdered with stars". At the same time, low voices were heard in the air, and doleful wailings, as if to announce some strange, mysterious calamity!... the speedy downfall of the empire... Such rumours,... found their way up the grand plateau, filling the minds of men with anticipations of the near coming of the period when the great deity was to return and receive his own again... Then it is that the atmosphere is agitated with the low, prophetic murmurs, with which nature, in the moral as in the physical world, announces the march of the hurricane (pp. 110-11).

Cawdor connects this 'second coming' with the sighting of the space-craft by the islanders, to conclude, "We're not alone," he shouted... We're not alone" (p. 112). Both Cawdor and the islanders are 'visited' with signs of impending doom and against this background, we have the 'catastrophe' of the cargo cult uprising and the death of Cawdor. Elizabeth Perkins describes Cawdor as "a catalyst in a situation already prepared before his arrival, and he comes at a time when the old order, represented by the chieftain Dipapa and the old white planter, MacDonnell, is about to give way to a new."55

The mission church plays an important part in the cult movement. Dalwood has a bizarre and terrifying experience when he accidentally comes across the church-casino. "Stow's description of the horrible church sacred to the crucified

airmen and their aircraft, and the native travesty of Western religion, materialism, progressivism and power, are an indictment of Western civilization as compelling as Conrad's in *Heart of Darkness*.

The "Church-Casino", as Stow explains, is "drawn from the life". "It was a village called Kaulaka in the Island of Vakuta, and it had, you know how it's described there, [in *Visitants*] these carved shapes, hearts, clubs, diamonds, and spades; it had little planes hanging from the rafters; it didn't have the pilot-crucifix, which is an invention, but it did certainly have the look of being some kind of a cult place."

The house was a church, it had a cross at the peak of the gable. But all along the top of the pandanus-leaf half-wall were shapes in wood, beautifully carved.

I wondered if they had a native catechist for this casino, and then remembered Mak saying that on Kailuana God died in the Great War. Yet there the church was, in the fresh-mown grass, the paint of it still spanning new; and some people who had once played cards somewhere had worked hard for weeks or months to make it beautiful like that.

I walked nearer, and looked up the cross. It wasn't a cross at all. It was a plane, a nasty-looking sharklike plane, carved in ebony.

Inside, from all the rafters, planes hung from cords and revolved in the faint breeze. Planes of all sizes, painted bright colours, or of polished wood with patterns picked out in lime. There were shiny planes, too, built of tin cans, and some crude little ones in brass. I thought of the old ammo around Dipapa's flower-bed, and Osana saying: Then their cargo went bang in their faces.

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The earth floor was bare, but at the end where an altar might have been in the God-times, a huge black plane, another ebony one, hung upright from a rope. As I came near a puff of wind hit the wings and twisted it round, and I was looking into eyes.

Cowrie-shell eyes, the underside of the shell, like puckered white lids with no eyeballs behind them. They stared back at me, out of an ebony face. It was a pilot, there could be no doubt about his being a pilot: he was wearing all his gear, I made out the straps of his parachute and the goggles, pushed up on his helmet. He hung there by the neck, with his arms stretched out, crucified on his plane (pp. 92-3).

As Dalwood is about to leave Metusela calls out to him from inside the church:

"My friend," he called, and I looked back and he was up where the altar should have been, beside the dangling crucifix. He had his arm around it, as though around somebody's shoulders, and white eyes were watching me out of two black faces.

"You see?" he called. "You see this fellow?"

"Yes," I said. "Very good."

"This Jesus," he said. "Black man Jesus. No white man Jesus. Jesus black."

"Yeah," I said. "I see." And I turned to go again. But he had one more thing to tell me, and he yelled after me, not my friend this time, no, more rough with his voice than I had been with my hands when I pushed him half across the church.

"You hear," he shouted. "You hear," he said more quietly. "One time you kill black man Jesus. Another time, no. Another time, no more." (pp. 94-5).

The apocalyptic image of the storm prefiguring the uprising as well as the death of Cawdor is present in the novel. There is also the image of darkness, when the painted men rush through the night chanting: "They will come . . . They will come, the star-people" (p. 149). Above all, there is the apocalyptic image of fire. The islanders burn their crops and destroy their harvests. Fire is, however, symbolic
not only of destruction, but is linked with refinement and purification. As such it points to the disintegration of the old social order on the islands, as well as its rejuvenation.

The 'Catastrophe' on the island is paralleled by the internal fragmentation of Cawdor that leads to his suicide, and his 'resurrection'. All along, Cawdor's yearnings have been a search for authenticity, strivings essentially religious. A 'visitant' himself, he is aware that here on earth in the words of St. Augustine we have "no abiding city." His renunciation of the world, though an act of self-destruction is no mere suicide. The preceding weeks before Cawdor's death can be seen as the "dark night of the soul", an emptiness that is a prelude to an illumination. Cawdor slashes himself in a 'frenzy' with 'exultation'. Before losing consciousness, he tells Dalwood: "'I saw Timi, I saw. Down the tunnel. My body. Atoms. Stars!'" (p. 185). The words that follow, "I can never die" (p. 186) are not a statement of despair, but an assertion of immortality.

Cawdor's physical illness was the result of individual and social malaise. At death, his soul and his body merge with the cosmos to effect a final healing. In the fusion of these inner and outer galaxies, Cawdor moves from non-being to Being. In his personal apocalypse, Cawdor is not engulfed in darkness. His death is a transition from chaos to cosmogony and as such it is a 'Resurrection'. 
The idea of man as a visitant is further explored in *The Girl Green as Elderflower*, in many ways a sequel to *Visitants*. A recurring motif in Australian literature is the theme of exile. In the Australian Dream, man is Adam in exile, in search of a new Eden.

In *The Girl Green*, the theme of exile and alienation runs through the main story of Crispin Clare as well as the connecting myth stories. The green children at their first appearance are described as having a "likeness to pictures of our first father and mother before their fall" (p. 118). Stow speaking of the "extraordinary medieval world" in which his myth stories are located, mentions particularly that the myths interested him because they seemed so "full of resonances and suggestiveness". As an example, he refers to the myth of the green children: "... the story of the green children has all sorts of resonances, it makes one think of alienation." 58

Towards the end of the novel, the Priest tells the dying green girl:

Our home is not here, it is in Heaven; our time is not now, it is eternity; we are here as shipwrecked mariners on an island, moving among strangers, darkly. Why should

we love these shadows, which will be gone at the first light? It is because in exile we grieve for one another, it is because we remember the same home, it is because we remember the same father, that there is love in our island (p. 135).

Veronica Brady commenting on the motif of the 'island' says:

"The island the priest speaks of is no longer an image of isolation but part of the continent of Being itself. So the priest goes on, echoing Dante's vision of the ocean of Being as he emerges from the Mount of Purgatory".  

In the garden of God are regions of darkness, waste heaths and wan waters, gulfs of mystery, where the bewildered soul may wander aghast. Do not think to rest in your village, in your church, in your land always secure. For God is wider than middle earth, vaster than time, and as His love is infinite, so also is His strangeness. For His love we love Him, and for His strangeness we ought to fear Him, lest to chastise us He bring us into those dark and humbling places (pp. 135-36).

While below the surface of the novel, whose colour is "white emboowered in green", there is a pervasive sense of loss and alienation, there is an eventual transition from a state of homelessness, to a final 'homing', a return to God's garden.

For no man is lost, no man goes astray in God's garden; which is here, which is now, which is tomorrow, which is always time and time again (p. 136).

God's garden is not the sky of Tourmaline. It is here on earth, in a vision of love not only between man and man, but between human and non-human.

God in the novel is not only the Christian God of the priest, Jacques Maunoir, or the God whom the green girl

59 Brady, A Crucible of Prophets, p. 106.
worshippers who is at once the Green Man and Shiva, the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. As Stow puts it in his poem, "The Land's Meaning": "Mate—I don't need to know your name / Let me camp in your shade, let me sleep, till the sun goes down." "Does it matter?" asked the girl with a shy laugh; "I have so many truths to tell!" (p. 134).

In The Girl Green, Stow while not renouncing the world of reality moves through the world of fantasy and myth to explore a deeper kind of reality, a movement from the phenomenon to the noumenon. In the words of Robyn Wallace: "the underworld, or otherworld, whether it is the country under the sea or the country under the earth or the country under the conscious self, is finally the source of life, and of a life which can accommodate death." 60

When the novel opens Clare is shown at the beginning of a new year, as making "plans for the future, of picking up pieces which had been broken desperately small" (p. 5). Recovering from a traumatic illness while on assignment in New Guinea, where he had attempted suicide, Clare appears optimistic at first, happy in the company of his cousin Alicia's young family. But small incidents unbalance his precarious hold on his health and sanity. He faints when at the ouija board he gets a message from his past that says: "You'll never escape . . . I'm still here" (p. 18).

The Tarot card of the Hanged Man that he sees almost immediately, appears threatening. Later, when he meets the American Jacques Maunoir in the pub and guesses correctly that he is a priest, "Something happened inside Clare's head, something which had happened before. It was as though his brain fell backwards a short way" (p. 31). "Oh, I thought it was over! Clare muttered in despair. 'The priests. The psychotherapists. I thought it was all over!'" (p. 31).

Even when Clare settles down to translating the medieval Latin stories as a form of therapy, a school friend's visit unleashes the terror of the past. His friend's visit, acts however as a form of catharsis, for he is able to cry "unashamedly and exhaustibly" on Perry's shoulder and later is forced to remember the night he tries to hang himself. He had wanted to "Put an end to it, remove myself, because nothing else was wrong there, only me" (p. 75).

Clare emerges from his 'wolf-pit', and moves towards a 'Resurrection'. For Stow, as we have seen, man has to go on 'a journey' to find himself. "All must be explorers, must touch their Antipodes, in order to come home to themselves. The wise man must know the extent of his foolishness and the fool of his wisdom, the gentle man of his violence, the cultured man of his savagery,--as Clare does here, getting to know himself as he gets to know others and the stories of the people who lived here formerly." 61

61 Brady, A Crucible of Prophets, p. 107.
When Matthew Perry sends him a Tarot Card, Clare at first "felt a horror of it, of the malice which must have sealed it and addressed it... He turned the Banged Man over. On the back was written: 'Your card = Resurrection. M. J. P.!'" (p. 108). Robyn Wallace explains the significance of the apparent contradiction: "This of course is thoroughly within the complex mystical traditions of the Tarot pack. Man hangs as an upside down triangle symbolizing that his spiritual values are in chaos but his hair and the few shoots of green grass imply that life can come out of virtual death. It is the Judas card but also the resurrection card, as the elder is claimed to be the tree Judas hanged himself on, but also the tree on which Christ was nailed."^62

Clare's sense of alienation, of 'being lost', is echoed in the myth stories, which are "grim and black",^63 dealing with sin, cruelty and damnation, and exile from both man and God. In the medieval theocentric world with its strong religious beliefs in God and the Devil, Good and Evil, "go to the devil" or the medieval phrase "May the demons fly off with her!" had a literal meaning and was never uttered lightly. For as the Priest tells Malkin's mother, "For the Devil our adversary, as a roaring lion seeking whom he may


devour, destroys some, namely those given to him, whom he
then holds imprisoned without hope of redemption; while
others, such as those cursed, he merely torments and afflicts
for a time" (p. 57).

In the first myth story, Malkin the sprite, has been
in exile for seven years living with a witch and her son,
as a servant. Malkin was born of incest and rape and her
young fifteen-year-old mother, one day in a fit of rage said:
"Mischief take the squawling bastard" (p. 58). The baby was
immediately lifted off the ground and it disappeared.

In the second story, "Concerning a wild man caught
in the sea", the story of the merman, carries the theme of
exile on land rendered more acute by the merman's inability
to talk and the cruelty meted out to him by Corporal Snark
who considers him a 'foreigner' and therefore an outsider.
In the ballad of "Annis and the Merman", the human girl
voluntarily leaves her home and her God to follow the Merman
to his home under the sea. She bears him seven sons, but the
sound of church bells, reminds her of her exile from the
world of humans. She leaves the Merman never to return.
Malkin's mother damned her daughter for the sake of respectability
and security. Annis marries the Merman out of greed, for the
sake of a "band of gowd", a pair of "gowden-buckled shoes" and
"a harp of gowd, for me to sing / When me heart was sick with
sorrowing" (p. 89).
Matthew Perry, Clare's school friend is identified with the Merman as well as with Matthew Pedlar, the Jew of Lynn. Matthew has a tattoo of the star of David on his arm, for 'solidarity' and in memory of "Auschwitz" as he tells Clare. His wish to belong is linked to the centuries-old persecution of the Jews and their long exile from their homeland. Clare, listening to Matthew recalls his own sense of lostness: "Oh but to be so cut adrift. Perhaps even the German Jews didn't quite know that" (p. 76).

Exile is also the condition of the green children, "a boy and a girl emerging from the earth" (p. 113). Helen Watson-Williams, in her very perceptive study of the novel, speaks of "two ways of meeting this condition of exile. The priest finds his consolation in a Christian view of love, life and time. . . . But the girl green as elderflower gives another answer. Within the story she is sexuality itself, represented by the green of her eyes which even on her deathbed returns to confront, silently, the priest's belief. Her home is the green home of nature, the gods she worships are the mother goddess of Neolithic times, the phallus, and the head carved on a stick of the Leafed Green Man . . . ."64

The Green Man is first glimpsed by Clare in a dream, "a face made of summer leaves, not sinister, but pitilessly amused" (p. 4). Elizabeth Perkins contends that "The Green Man, of course, is a European life-cycle figure, descended from the older King of the Wood or god perpetually resurrected after dying on the sacred tree." When Clare thinks of the Green Man again it is in a moment of physical well-being and happiness, after lighting the fire-place and feeling his "fibres undrenching in the warmth" (p. 7). He looks at the fire and thinks of it as an ancestral god. "And as the kindling spat at him and he stirred, he seemed to glimpse once more the god's face, the smile unchanging, whether sketched by leaves or flame" (p. 7). The Green Man is here, both the God of Spring and in Hindu mythology the fire God, 'Agni'. He is also 'Shiva', the Creator and Destroyer, flames and leaves being images of destruction and rebirth, respectively.

In the Shoulder of Mutton pub, with Jacques Maunoir, Clare admits to feeling "paranoid". It seems as though he is caught in a trap, part of an endless cosmic revolution.

Clare pushed aside his emptied pot and looked at the circles on circles stamped in drying beer over the shining wood of the bar. So inside atoms. So in all space. The everlasting terror of a process without term (p. 32).

He remembers his dream, "of how he had looked up out of his hole, his pit, his wolf-pit, and seen the foreign leaves, which had formed themselves into a face, invulnerably amused" (p. 32). As the Knight later tells the Green Girl, one would call the Green Man "A strange god ... One would say a cruel one!" (p. 127). "He is," said the girl, "the bringer into being and the destroyer. He is neither cruel nor merciful, but dances for joy at the varicosity of everything that is!" (p. 127). "In this late definition of the green god" as Helen Watson-Williams points out, "all the earlier allusions are brought together in an affirmation of the beauty, the diversity and the inexhaustibility of the natural world. At one level such a definition is a structural device. From the book's opening pages when Clare wakes in the New Year from his dream of the Green Man his experience has been moving towards such a declaration ... ."

In the Green God and the green girl, we have the dual principle recognized by all cultures and formulated as a fruitful tension between two forces. If the Green God is 'Shiva' then the green girl is Shiva's consort, 'Shakti'. In terms of Hindu thought the green girl is the dynamic female principle 'prakriti' which includes the lower as well as the higher nature, in creative interaction with the male static principle 'purusha', manifesting itself in a form which belongs wholly to 'Paraprakriti', the Higher Nature.

In Taoist philosophy, the Green God and the green girl, represent the Yin-Yang cognates of female and male, in perpetual interaction. The Girl is the 'mystic female', the 'valley spirit'.

The valley spirit is not dead:
They say it is the mystic female.
Her gateway is, they further say,
The base of earth and heaven. (Tao Te Ching, 6)

R.B. Blakney paraphrases this verse from the Tao Te Ching as follows: "There is a spirit that haunts the valleys that mystics know. It has the female characteristic of preferring to withdraw. It is like a gateway through which man attains heaven; and heaven reaches man when he is receptive to its nature and open to its influence." Paradise can thus be re-entered through the feminine principle, the 'female', a point of view Stow offers for consideration to an Australian, Western, patriarchal, and male-oriented society.

In the Green Girl's worship of Saint Martin, the patron saint of her land, in her mating with all the main male characters in Manor house and pub, we have an oriental affirmation and celebration of the 'becoming' in evolution. Her encounters with Robin, Roger, the Knight, and the Knight's son are frankly sensual, but in the context of the novel they have a religious mystic aura, an eroticism that in fact amounts to an exaltation.

Contrasted with this 'pagan' sexual mysticism is the western preoccupation with the relationship between love and chastity, described powerfully in the writings of the fifth century Latin Doctors, Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine, and reflected in the attitude of the Knight's son and the priest. The priest tempted by the Green Girl says, "'It would be a sin, it would be folly, it would be pain. But... I have loved you, and do, as no other child of God. So try me no more, but believe in my love...''" (p. 130). The young clerk of nineteen years cannot overcome his beliefs and his inhibitions. "'I don't want to'" he tells the girl. "It is sin, it is the risk of eternal perdition" (p. 132).

In the novel, different types of love, heterosexual and homosexual are transcended and sublimated. Love is shown not only as transcending barriers between human and non-human, but divine love is described in terms of earthly love. The Girl Green as Elderflower is a culmination of Stow's vision of land, man and God. God is shown uniting and incorporating within himself the world he has created. Man need not despair for there are more "green homes than one" (p. 124). Even in man's 'wandering' he rests still "in reach of God's hand. For no man is lost, no man goes astray in God's garden..." (p. 136).
The Suburbs of Hell is a moral fable, an enquiry into the meaning of life and death. Cast in the form of a thriller, with all the suspense and intrigue of a "whodunnit", the novel is about the events leading up to the Coroner's verdict on the death of Frank De Vere in a Suffolk newspaper. This bit of local news is part of a page at the end of the novel, made up of headlines of world news of horror and carnage: '1000 BENAGLIS MASSACRED IN ASSAM', 'BELFAST PUB HOLOCAUST', '72 DIE IN AUSTRALIA'S ASH-WEDNESDAY BUSH-ARSON', among others. Facing this page is Death the Reaper, represented in a Tarot card, with an inscription underneath it that reads:

All too late, all too late,  
when the bier is at the gate.

Carl Jung in "Psychology and Literature" speaks of "the archetypal image of the wise man, the saviour or redeemer, [which] lies buried and dormant in man's unconscious . . . it is awakened whenever the times are out of joint and a human society is committed to a serious error. When people go astray they feel the need of a guide or teacher or even of the physician."68 In The Suburbs of Hell the

novelist himself is the prophet crying in the wilderness, that the time of reckoning is at hand. Death, in the guise of the murderer, who comes "as a thief in the night", visits Tornwich, a "little town in the mist" not out of envy or hatred. "No; it is never hostility or malice. Simply, it is correction, a chastising" (p. 2).

With horror and pity, Stow in The Suburbs of Hell creates a world of lost souls, who seem to cry out: "Is there no one, no one in the whole swirling chaos, no one in the abyss and no one in heaven? A soul can go, then, so unspeakably poor, back into nothing, in the grey mist" (Ibsen, Peer Gynt, V, x). In a nuclear world of chaos and uncertainty, poised on the edge of annihilation, men spend their lives, living and partly living in a twilight world of negation. It is the world of Webster, where men preoccupied with death are unable to look beyond a present reality. In a world where God is dead, Man is his own deity. As Flamindo in Webster's The White Devil says:

While we looke up to Heaven wee confound
Knowledge with knowledge. O, I am in a mist. (V, vi, 258-60).

In To the Islands there is a suggestion in the significance of Heriot's name, that life is only lent not given. In The Suburbs of Hell the Old Testament God of Justice demands that man render an account of his life.

Living in the 'suburbs of hell', in false security, men are not prepared for "The day of the Lord [that] will come as a thief in the night" (p. 1). 'Begetting and laying waste', they do not heed the warning: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee" (p. 2).

In The Suburbs of Hell modern man is portrayed in his urban ghetto, metaphysically cast adrift, while apparently 'cocooned' in the confines of a house. Stow gives us a cross section of modern society, of people of varying ages, "their characters all potential, veering between virtue and vice, charity and atrocity, begetting and laying waste" (p. 164).

As Neil Philip in his review of the novel puts it: "The maniac they face seems not a bodied character but an idea of the author (and the Author), visiting them with wrath for the aimlessness of their lives: 'How they have annoyed me with their diversions and sidetracks leading to no development; pathological killers of time.'"\(^{70}\)

Stow appears to divide the characters in the novel into clearly defined groups. Linda De Vere is the ultimate example of one of life's spectators. Significantly enough she is shown as spending her days watching television and reading escapist fiction. Linda's moral inertia is more

soul-destroying than her husband's positive inclination towards evil. Evil is a kind of affirmation of life, a positive force. While evil can be overcome, people who live in the twilight world of moral uncertainty are irredeemable because they are not able or willing to "choose in the dark". They remain forever suspended in a void between this world and the next, the physical world and the spiritual world both being equally unreal.

Paul and Greg, on the other hand, are good but weak-willed. Paul is described as quiet and harmless but vulnerable and therefore easily "undone by hurt". Greg is the perpetual student, dependent either on the guidance of his elders or the mores of his peer group. He has tried drugs and is portrayed as weak-willed. Unable to come to terms with his brother's murder, he goes mad.

Frank and Dave are amoral characters with the instincts of the world of the jungle which they create and live in. For them moral distinctions are not blurred. They simply do not exist. Dave sends Harry his protector, and a man he admires to his death in order to save himself. Frank is almost wholly evil, an Iago-type villain, who with 'motiveless malignity' kills, to use the modern idiom, 'for kicks'.

There is also the twelve-year-old boy called Killer, an endearing combination of innocence and cunning. He
represents a future generation who deriving their values from their elders, while equipped to live in the world of the adult 'jungle', will have no knowledge or experience of a higher reality to make life satisfying or redeemable.

Harry, Ena, Commander Fryke, Black Sam and even Donna, are 'participants', engaged in leading useful if dull lives. While there is no indication that they practise any institutionalized religion, yet they put into practice the greatest commandment of Christianity, "Love Thy neighbour as Thyself". In the giving of themselves they transcend the spiritual poverty of their lives. They are cut down by Death the Reaper's scythe, but before the Judgement Throne they can 'render an account of the stewardships' of their lives. They are shocked by the suddenness of death, but are not unprepared to meet their Maker. Like Cawdor's death in Visitants, Sam's suicide does not negate life but transcends it. While Cawdor dies in exultation, Sam's death is a surrender, his life offered up almost as a ritual sacrifice.

Harry Ufford's death is significant, because with "a heart like a bull", he fights to survive. While the current bears him on, his thoughts drift to "the disappointments of his life, the satisfactions denied, the pledges not honoured" (p.14). But Harry, like Andrew Maguire, Heriot, Rick Maplestead, the inhabitants of Tourmaline and Cawdor, has intimations of the
reality of the unseen world, "the vague something, indefinable, sought in bouts of drunkenness or aggression and never found, always withheld from him" (p. 144). Death for Stow is never an annihilation, but a returning to the 'Source'. In Harry's final surrender to death we are reminded of a verse from Stow's "Variations".

XL

There is no going but returning.
Do not resist; for Tao is a flooded river
and your arms are frail.\(^7\)

In the end, The Suburbs of Hell is concerned less with the fact of death than the affirmation of life. Stow's treatment of death is not grotesque but elegiac. There is a mourning for the poverty of man's spirit but no ultimate spiritual despair. It is enough if through the eyes of one good man left in a universe of evil, we can discern through the "grey mist" that "the stars shine still".

\(^7\) Quoted by Helen Tiffin in Studies in the Recent Australian Novel, p. 95.