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Messiahs and Millennia in Randolph Stow’s Novels

The novels I shall concentrate on in discussing messiahs and millennia in Stow’s work are *To the Islands*, *Tourmaline*, *Visitants*, and *The Girl Green as Elderflower*. *Tourmaline* and *Visitants* are the two which most clearly relate to millenarian themes. *Tourmaline* records the growth, and collapse, of a millenarian cult centred on the messianic or would-be messianic figure of the diviner Michael Random. *Visitants* is a structurally more complex exploration of three millenarian visions and their communal and personal repercussions, although the connotations of the title are not restricted to cargo or flying saucer cults. These two novels are therefore central in any discussion of Stow’s treatment of millenarianism. Underlying all millenarian beliefs, however, and not merely the Judaeo-Christian ones, is the concept of salvation, or deliverance, or redemption, although ideas about the nature of the salvation, the mode of deliverance, and the agent or agents of redemption vary enormously in surface detail. The anthropologist Kenelm Burridge says that in principle the millennium is equivalent to salvation and to redemption itself, a condition of being in which humans become free-movers, in which there are no obligations, in which all earthly desires are satisfied and therefore expunged.¹ *To the Islands* is very much concerned with redemption, on the personal and communal levels, and *The Girl Green as Elderflower*, the most affirmative of Stow’s novels, is a record of the saving of Crispin Clare. The novel was also, literally, the salvation of *Visitants*, in that the writing of it enabled Stow to complete that novel.

It must be stressed from the outset that none of these novels can be reduced to an allegorical scheme or a series of symbols. Stow’s brilliance as a writer lies partly in his ability to suggest and evoke complex spiritual or psychic states through images which accrete, rather than define or circumscribe, meaning. In the Prologue to *A Haunted Land*, for example, Jessie returns to Malin. ‘And suddenly she saw the great red
cliff of Malin Pool rise up in front of her, the wide water and the white gums, and this was true changelessness. The pool and the red cliff are of considerable significance in this early novel, but become far more so as a recurring image in To the Islands, where rocky cliffs and water resonate from the Marston epigraph to Stephen Heriot's final confrontation with the universe. To say this is not to suggest the cerebral imposition of symbolic pattern on descriptive texture. Stow's landscapes are drawn from life, acutely and sensitively observed aspects of a real country as distinct from an imagined one. At the same time Stow's landscapes are more than accurately depicted backdrops in front of which the drama of the human psyche is enacted. For example, the pool images in To the Islands can be seen to link imaginatively in a way which relates them to the thematic motifs of salvation and redemption.

In the second chapter Justin tells the story of the Onmalmeri massacre which Heriot later claims began his second life, his second expiation. Heriot also asserts that in all his expiations there has never been a reconciliation. The massacre was set in process when the white boundary rider Mr George found two old native women in a billabong on the cattle run gathering lily roots. The husband is flogged and his spears broken. He throws one of the broken spears and pierces Mr George's lung. In the following chapter a prelapsarian scene is created:

In the rays of the low sun the petals of lilies shone almost translucent against the shadowed hill, the far bank with its leaning pandanus. In that light the lily pads and the reeds glowed green as malachite, the water glistened, rock burned redly on the hilltop. Smooth as a fish, her wet hair flattened, a brown child turned in the water with her arms full of flowers.

Bob Gunn sits in a 'mind-draining peace ... Then two wet brown arms holding long-stemmed lilies came round his neck. "Ah, brother", a soft seven-year-old voice crooned lovingly' (p. 62). Jenny finds Bob a piece of lily stem. The contrast with the billabong scene in the preceding chapter could not be sharper. Furthermore, this particular scene links with several others. The action of the twining arms has occurred earlier with Rex's mother Djediben and Helen: 'Djediben ... came and embraced her with thin black arms, touching gently with her palms Helen's breasts and shoulders, circling her waist with a spider arm. "Sister", she sighed lovingly, hiding her face against Helen's neck' (p. 19). A similar action occurs later, in chapter six. The scene (somewhat reminiscent of Conrad's Grove of Death in Heart of Darkness) is one of suspended life, where Heriot sits in a trance 'in the petrified attitude of his hosts' (p. 124).
until he becomes conscious of clammy discomfort and grime and swims naked in the pool. Heriot takes a tin of food to an old blind woman:

He fed her until she was satisfied, and then she reached out and touched his shoulder with her hand, and leaned over and rested her forehead there. In that way they sat for what seemed a long time in that timeless place, naked brown woman by naked white man, and he stroked the loose skin of her back with tenderness, wanting to laugh, wanting to weep. (p. 125)

Like other moments of peace in *To the Islands* this does not last. After the stoning of Rex the lagoon at the mission turns into a grey sea with all the lilies sunk. After the feeding of the old blind woman Heriot, full of violent and disordered feelings, sings above the corroboree tune verses from 'A Lyke-wake Dirge' (only the verses ending 'And Christ receive thy soul' are quoted). And it is after this that Heriot has his prophetic dream which oscillates wildly from joy to negation. Yet the moments of peace, the moments of reconciliation, have been there, and come again at the end of the novel in the Heriot/Justin farewell (after which Heriot hides his face against the body of the painted god), and in what is specifically termed 'the reconciliation of Heriot' (p. 202) when Rex confronts Justin: 'Yet there was still a strange dream quality in their movements, neither moving his eyes by a fraction from the other's. Until Rex, gently and humbly, bent his head and touched Justin's shoulder with his forehead; and the other man's hand appeared to lay lightly across his back' (p. 201).

When Heriot farewells Justin, who lays his bloody hands lightly on the old man's breast (p. 199), he refers to him again as his 'good deeds', his salvation from himself. This is the second explicit reference to the medieval play *Everyman*. The first occurs in the fourth chapter when Heriot, after initially rejecting Justin, accepts their hunger, their need for each other: 'Behind the uneasy trees rose the hills, and beyond them again the country of the lost, huge wilderness between this last haunt of civilization and the unpeopled sea. "Welcome, my Good Deeds", whispered Heriot. "Now I hear thy voice, I weep for very sweetness of love"' (pp. 82-3). Like other allusions in *To the Islands* this must not be extended out of context, but nor should we ignore the potential richness of implication. *To the Islands* is in a sense an *Ars Moriendi*, suffused as it is with images of, allusions to, and statements about dying. It begins with the repetition of words like 'broken', 'cracked', 'crumbling', 'weariness', 'despair', and 'nothing'. Heriot sees himself as a great red cliff rising from the rocks of his own ruin, although even before he goes into the lost man's
country he feels moments of peace, for example with Father Way who appears fleetingly to Heriot as a figure of hope, fit to take over. As far as the mission is concerned Heriot is dying; the old stockwhip school must give way to the new, and the mission is given new life after Heriot leaves. Heriot’s self-pitying desire to destroy what he has helped create is not realized. He becomes instead himself the agent of reconciliation. What must be stressed, however, is that the journeying together of Heriot and Justin is an analogue of mutual need, the interconnection of black and white. The journey is Heriot’s exploration of that strange country his soul, but it is not a rejection of one kind of belief for another. For example, Heriot learns as much through his encounters with the solitary white figures, Rusty and Sam, as he does through Justin. The reconciliation with Rex begins with the interlocking thoughts of the two, one awake, one asleep, in chapter seven: the ‘dialogue’ begins with Rex ‘crying in his mind: “Ah, brother, where you now, eh? Where you now?”’ and ends with Heriot’s cry ‘Oh, Rex, Rex, Rex. You will never go out of my mind’ (p. 136). In the ‘dialogue’ each confesses to guilt. But the real turning-point in Heriot’s relationship with Rex comes after Rusty’s blunt rejoinder to Heriot’s statement that it makes no difference whether he killed Rex or not. ‘Except to the bloke’, says Rusty. The image which comes immediately after this is interesting in its suggestions of rescue: ‘Then new thoughts moved behind Heriot’s eyes like yachts on an empty sea’ (p. 155). For the first time he remembers Rex alive, and what it must have been to be Rex. Although Heriot has felt momentary compassion before, for the first time Rex’s life presents itself ‘whole’ to him, ‘all the ugly, aspiring, perverse passions of a living man’ (p. 155). This is not a final revelation which makes the country of Heriot’s soul whole and redeemed, but it is part of the movement towards reconciliation and love which is the only way Helen can define heaven. Heriot’s journey is not an allegorically mapped out pilgrim’s progress through sequential illuminations, but a tension of opposites, in landscape, in feeling, in concepts. ‘This earth seduces me’ says Heriot (p. 109). ‘I renounce it’ he says later (p. 167). It is a country of extremes, with peace rising like a wind from the plain and pools to bring a man back to life juxtaposed with bare rocks, stunted trees and withering heat. Heriot declares himself no longer a white man, ‘I’m a blackfellow, son of the sun’ (p. 113), but later with his terrible desolate voice quells the corroboree singers. It is this continual counterbalancing that gives the ending such rich ambivalence. ‘Where is God?’ Heriot has cried (p. 115). ‘You are Wolaro. God’, he says to the cave drawing of the rainbow...
serpent. But then ‘What does it matter what you’re called’ (p. 192). At the very end, in a series of apocalyptic images, Heriot’s finding of the ultimate is depicted but not defined. Is the eagle Dantean and therefore part of the supernatural cycle, or bird of prey and therefore part of the natural cycle? Is the dazzling, blinding light Paradise, or annihilation? Is the gull which flies out from the rock and planes towards the sun until it is hidden in light an image of the spirit? We do not know. Our final image of Heriot, however, is one of acceptance and stillness. He kneels among the symbols of death, the bones, but stares out from the cave at the light. Although his eyes still search sun and sea for the least dark hint of a landfall, they are free of hope and fear.

The name Heriot signifies, as the O.E.D. puts it, a feudal service restored to a lord on the death of his tenant. This does suggest a strongly Christian element, linked with the concept of ‘reckoning’ in Everyman and the notion that life is lent, not given. We can see the red rock which Heriot throws into the sea as his free gift of himself to whatever the sea is, a redemption freely acquiesced in of what was lent. But John Beston, who has recorded Stow’s own comment on the significance of the name, states ‘Stephen’s heriot is the return of his body to the Lord, thought of in Taoist rather than in Christian terms’. Rather than, but not excluding. Stow’s religious ideas like his allusions are eclectic. Rock and water are powerfully evocative images in more than one series of wisdoms. What is clear in To the Islands is that reconciliation, poor though Heriot might feel it, has been achieved. I have already quoted from the Rex/Justin scene, the penultimate in the novel. As Stephen and Gunn look down, Gunn, who has earlier decided to stay on at the mission, says ‘Hard to believe it’s over. Hard to believe. Nothing will be the same again’. Stephen bends his head. "No", he said quietly. "Nothing going to be the same", he promised’ (p. 202). The promise is to Heriot.

To the Islands is a very good example of what I have referred to as Stow’s eclecticism. Heriot might sing a wild corroboree song about himself just before he reaches the top of the cliff, but the final images are unassigned to a particular form of belief. The novel suggests, rather, that beliefs need not be in opposition, need not be exclusive. Tourmaline seems to negate that statement, and the Christian/Taoist opposition in the novel, has been argued cogently and sensitively. The very fact, however, of Stow’s return to messianic and millenarian subject matter in Visitors suggests that Tourmaline may be part of a pattern of exploration into the landscape of spiritual existence rather than a clear assent to the rightness of a particular discovery.
Tourmaline is, in more than landscape, reminiscent of the earlier poetry of T.S. Eliot. This is not to suggest that Stow's novel is a representation of any of Eliot's poetic worlds but that both writers at times participate in a shared universe. The same writers have attracted them, though not necessarily for the same reasons: Dante, the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists (the Visitants epigraphs are from Shakespeare and Ford), the metaphysical poets, Baudelaire, Pound, Conrad, St-John Perse. The use of literary allusions, most noticeably in To the Islands, could owe something to The Waste Land. Stow has found the concept of the objective correlative a useful one to have, particularly as a way of avoiding over-emotionalism, of keeping the subject-matter as well as the characters of his novels at a distance. Stow is a practising Anglican, although he admits to being a rather heterodox one in that he interprets some of the Anglican dogma in a Taoist way, and has been influenced by Eastern mysticism, particularly Taoism, since the age of sixteen.

Tourmaline is the red rock of To the Islands crumbled to dust, the life-restoring pools dried out. It is related to the dying land of The Hollow Men, and of the opening section of The Waste Land.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. (ll. 19-14)

Another Eliot poem which comes to mind when one reads Tourmaline is Gerontion, with its old man in a dry month waiting for rain. The Law is not blind (in fact the book focusses intensely on the visual nature of things) but then blindness in Eliot's old men is spiritual rather than physical, and the very clarity of the Law's vision of Tourmaline and its sons, whether that vision is remembered or imagined, counterpoints the moments when the Law's spiritual vision is blurred or blinded. And the Law is not being read to by a boy, but writing the testament of Tourmaline. Yet the Law's house is a decayed house (an image which also reverberates powerfully through Visitants), one that is merely tenanted, not owned. Gerontion's concluding lines are 'Tenants of the house,/
Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season'. Tourmaline's second sentence is 'More truly we are tenants; tenants of shanties rented from the wind, tenants of the sunstruck miles'. The Law is history, memory, 'What's not believed in, or if still believed,/ In memory only, reconsidered passion'
(ll. 40-1). And the Law, like most of Tourmaline, cries 'We would see a sign!' (l. 17).

Tourmaline, like the Waste Land, is infertile; there are no children. Also, like the Waste Land, it is a place of imprisonment of a curiously self-imposed kind. When the Law says 'Yet I live on, prisoner of my ruined tower; my keys turned on myself now all the locks are gone' one remembers the lines from the fifth section of The Waste Land:

I have heard the key  
Turn in the door once and turn once only  
We think of the key, each in his prison  
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison (ll. 411-14)

The Law forgets Bill Byrne's mother when he says no-one ever leaves Tourmaline, and of course Kestrel comes back, but it is strongly suggested, or believed, that the world beyond the deep blue hills is one of terrible danger. And that those who come out of that world, or back from that world, are dangerous. One of the Law's last statements, so reminiscent of Yeats's poem 'The Second Coming' is 'Wild beasts were loose on the world. Terrors would come. But wonders, too, as in the past. Terrors and wonders, as always' (p. 221). Tourmaline, in coma, a place most people think has been dead for years, dead, but not yet buried like Lacey's Find, is safe in its sterility, but what would happen if Tourmaline found itself capable of the awful daring of a moment's surrender?

I have stressed the Eliot connection with Tourmaline because its very pervasiveness suggests that Stow's imaginative starting point is the Eliot landscape, spiritual landscape. It also suggests that Stow is not setting up straw men, empty men, men of little weight (to allude to the St-John Perse epigraph) merely in order to blow them down.

The novel is an imaginative record of a future second coming, a third testament of man's covenant with God. The need of the town for new life, a new covenant, to replace, for example, the meaningless masses of paper in the Law's gaol, thrown there in despair after years and years of waiting, fuses with the need of the stranger, the diviner to 'make good and go home' (p. 21). These needs emerge slowly; out of their fusion comes the messianic figure. When the diviner is brought to Tourmaline he is burnt, terribly disfigured, deformed. The town, with its ritual washing, anointing, and keeping watch, creates out of this deformity a thing of beauty, and the diviner, seeing himself reflected in the pool of the town's eyes, comes to believe himself beautiful, like the hideous
negress in the French picture-book. Neither the illusion nor the breaking of it is 'funny' (p. 105). The diviner, like Lucifer, is a tragic figure. The Law glimpses the spiritual deformity of the diviner, just as he perceives the marred beauty under the ruined, scarred face of Byrnie. But the Law remembers with compassion.

It is true that there are other ways represented in the book, other religions, and that these remain as a potential answer to Tourmaline's deprivation. Structurally, however, the religions of Dave Speed and Tom Spring are peripheral. The central figure is the diviner and what he symbolizes. Furthermore, the relationship between the diviner and Dave and Tom is a complex one. For example, both the diviner and Dave talk of becoming authentic. 'We're coming true, mate', says Dave to Tom (p. 86). 'I want to be myself. To come true', says the diviner. The diviner remains inauthentic because his life has already been taken over. The fate of Dave Speed is unknown, although he and the diviner are linked again at the end: '[Dust] silted up the stock route well at Dave Speed's camp. It heaped in the sockets of the diviner's eyes' (p. 221).

Tom Spring begins as the diviner's mentor. To the Law's surprise Tom breaks his deep Quaker quiet and talks at length to the young man. Even after setting up his own domain the diviner reads a book lent to him by Tom. At first then there seems to be genuine communication between the two: Tom's luminous smile transfigures his lean face and Random's equally. The first break in this discipleship comes when Tom asks 'What if the Word was only "Barleys", after all?' (p. 46). It is clear that the belief that the Word is more than a child's convention enables the diviner to live. To face the possibility of nothingness, which, Tom suggests, is the first gate that has to be jumped (our last image of the diviner is his jumping the broken barbed wire of the fence which is literally the end of the road) is something the diviner cannot do. As the town creates him for its salvation, so he creates his God for his own. Tom at this stage when asked what his belief is, says: 'I'm still waiting. Who'd dare say before the end of the road?' (p. 46). Tom at first does not share Dave Speed's views but in chapter eleven the two achieve an impersonal, wordless understanding. It is here that Tom makes his first specifically Taoist statement, elaborated later in chapter thirteen. The Law has a glimmer of understanding, but lets his mind wander away to the familiar God. Tom too, then, 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.

Tourmaline's then is a bitter heritage, but the novel is, finally, celebratory. Despite the return of Kestrel to take over the diviner's role there
is to be new life, Deborah's child. Despite the failure of Gloria Day's prayer for rain and the diviner's quest for water, as God's sign to him and to Tourmaline that he has come home, there is a kind of millennium after all, although it may never manifest itself apocalyptically on earth. The real garden of Tourmaline is the sky.

The much-praised, the inexhaustible stars above me. Islands, ice-cold and burning. The burning ice-cold purity of God.

Love inexpressible, inexhaustible. My love for him, it, them. No matter if such love is not returned. In the contemplation of stars, in the remembrance of oceans and flowers, in the voice of the lone crow and the jacaranda-blue of far ranges, I have all I need of requital.

When I think that before the world began to die I did not know this love, I can praise the manner of its dying. On the tomb of the world, ice-cold, burning, I reach out with every nerve to the ultimate purity.

Lord, fill me with your sap and make me grow.

Make me tall as karri, broad as a Moreton Bay fig. Let me shelter all Tourmaline in my shade.

Birds in the air; sheep in the far green distance.

Love, love, love; like an ache, like an emptiness. Dear God, my gold, my darling.

(p. 102)

Many of those phrases are echoed or repeated on the concluding page of the novel.

Tourmaline is a complex and rich novel. Like To the Islands it gives no answers but many possibilities. What it does give us, among many other things, is a compelling account of the landscape of the human spirit. 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 failure of the millennium to manifest itself on earth, in Tourmaline, leaves a bitter heritage, but that is not to run it down. The Law endures, the tower waits. 'Terrors would come, but wonders too, as in the past.'

The central character of Visitants, Alistair Cawdor, is in some ways reminiscent of Michael Random, and it is significant that although the narrative techniques are different, the earlier novel, a first person narrative which reconstructs a two month period, the later one a series of monologues reconstructing a period half as long, the modes of establishing the central character in each novel are similar. Neither the diviner nor Cawdor is seen, as it were, from the inside. The Law specifically draws attention to this when he refuses to imagine what the diviner looked like when he was alone or what he thought. 'He was too confusing', the Law says. 'I will not try to pin him down' (p. 80). Again,
it is made clear that the Law reconstructs from later accounts two crucial scenes, the church scene with Agnus Day, and the scene of Deborah's conversion through shame. In *Visitants* our direct contact with Cawdor is restricted to notes from his patrol-book, hardly the most personal of documents, except for the first extract. For the most part Cawdor is seen through the eyes of others, sometimes even through the eyes of others seeing through others' eyes. For example Dalwood records: 'And although it was all baloney, although he didn't even know what they were thinking, it was funny too how they suggested, just by their attitudes, two devoted old parents making the most, while they had him, of their brave doomed bomber-pilot son.' And Osana watches Dalwood watching Cawdor. The effect of this in *Visitants* is extremely powerful: the more distanced Cawdor is by the technique the more sharply focussed he is for us, as though he is ringed by watching eyes. The extraordinarily public nature of his life is of course one of the stresses which fragments Cawdor. In both novels, too, the method of oblique characterization leaves us, as readers, free to give or withhold our assent. No character, no single character, is the interpreter or the spokesman. Stow's interest is not in arguing a case for or against particular beliefs, but in recording in as objective a way as possible how beliefs affect people and how they relate to each other. And for all the intensity of observation both the diviner and Cawdor retain a necessary element of mystery.

The two are similar in other ways. Both are outsiders, lone, lost men, suffering men. Both seek salvation, salvation from outside, and salvation from themselves. The diviner has, it is suggested, twice tried to kill himself and ends by running laughing into the red dust of the desert. Cawdor kills himself by starting on his wrists and finally cutting his throat. The motif of suicide, also present of course in *To the Islands*, is finally resolved in *The Girl Green as Elderflower*.

The title *Visitants*, as suggested earlier, has many connotations, and the skill with which Stow develops and interconnects these is admirable. The prologue itself, which is not fictitious, sets the range and the pattern. The range is from terrestrial visitants, colonists, missionaries, the whole clash of indigenous and outside cultures, to non-terrestrial visitants (in the Prologue flying saucer beings). The pattern is the shared experience, native and outsider, of the second type of visitants. The theme of the shared experience, the linking of the beliefs of the two cultures, is of course present in *Tourmaline* with the acceptance (qualified in Gloria Day) of the diviner as Mongga.

In its range of reference Stow's novel is not restricted to contemporary
visitants. The first time we see Cawdor, through Osana’s eyes, he is lying on a bench in the belly of the workboat ‘Igau’, a corruption of ‘Eagle’, reading a book. Dalwood, the young Cadet P.O., has to call him three times before he gets any real response. The first call is ‘Batman’, the second ‘Misa Kodo’ (the islander pronunciation), the third the Christian name Alistair. Osana narrates: ‘It was as if he thought someone else might be behind Mister Cawdor’s book’ (p. 15). The book is Prescott’s *Conquest of Mexico*, and Cawdor’s absorption in it becomes increasingly significant. At this stage Cawdor merely alludes to the *chinampa*: ‘those wandering islands of verdure ... teeming with flowers and vegetables, and moving like rafts over the water’. Although this clearly links with the island and voyaging motifs in the novel it is not until Cawdor is ‘taken over’ by the Trobrianders’ accounts of the star-machine, that he slashes in the margin of Prescott’s account with a thick blue pencil, and eventually reads a passage to Dalton, his voice ‘rising, growing sharper, as he read’ (p. 110). This sequence, broken into by Browne’s reading of the passage at the inquiry, culminates in Dalwood’s memory of the night: ‘And he shouted, in the roaring dark, while the rain came faster and the palms thrashed. “We’re not alone”’, he shouted. “Ah, you thick lump, can’t you see it? We’re not alone”’ (p. 112). Dalwood has asked him ‘Whose side are you on — the Martians?’ and returns to the notion of Martians later in the cave sequence:

“You were talking Martian because you are a Mai-tian. That’s what I always thought. That’s why the excitement over the saucer. It’s got your people on board. People like you’, I said, laughing at the idea, and yet it wasn’t a joke, but something I’d seriously imagined, just before, in the dark. ‘Your folks’, I said, thinking of his wife and what it must have been like for her, trying to talk to that, to love that, that visitant.’ (p. 131)

Dalwood is right when he suggests that Cawdor is obsessed by the star-machine, which he comes to see, in a very complex way, as his only salvation. Cawdor has obviously been fascinated by the account he has read in someone else’s patrol book records of cargo-cult visitation in the remote island Kaga, which is visited in the first section of the book. He is so interested that he uncharacteristically goes on with his questions even when the islanders show signs of acute embarrassment and shame. *Shame*, an important aspect of pseudo-salvation in *Tourmaline*, is an insistent and complexly developed motif in *Visitants*. It is not until the second section of the novel, called ‘Visitants’, however, that Cawdor becomes deeply, personally, involved. The section is remarkable for its economic but
powerful building-up of psychic tension which explodes on the island of Kailuana in the third part of the novel, called ‘Cargo’. There is the mystery of Metusela, the madman, the deformity, himself a visitant although he claims to have come home. There is the propeller of the plane at the apex of the chief Dipapa’s house, and the pilot’s seat on the veranda. There is the extraordinary church which Dalwood comes across. Again he sees it at first as a joke, but ends by asking ‘Is this what they mean by horror?’ (p. 93). There is the black Jesus/white Jesus motif. The black ebony Jesus is crucified on his ebony plane in the place in the church where the altar should have been. The white Jesus is pointedly referred to in the census taking and the three good men reference. Benoni makes the real link: "Taubada", I said, "there was a star. Taubada, is that true? There was a star!” (p. 96). It is Benoni who persists in bringing up the star-machine stories despite Cawdor’s statement that there are no people in the stars. It is only when Benoni comes with six other witnesses that Cawdor really reacts: ‘It was very extraordinary to see Misa Kodo’s face. What was in his face was like joy’ (p. 105). Benoni’s monologue, which immediately precedes Dalwood’s account of the reading of The Conquest of Mexico, ends ‘He stood by the table looking down at us, with his eyes wide and his face moved and dark, and he said those words as if he believed what he said. "My very great thanks"’ (p. 107).

Cawdor’s joy is in part the sudden flash of connection which draws together fragments of perception. In his first patrol book entry, significantly the only one which is personal and introspective in style, Cawdor thinks about the whole history of the island, geographical and human. He thinks of the island as simply digesting people. ‘So many visitants coming, none that anyone knows of ever driven away’ (p. 30). ‘It was all in the scheme of things’, he thinks later, and concludes ‘Keep thinking about time, vast stretches of time, so as not to think: "What about me?" Where was I when the mountains came out of the sea. Seize hold of that moment, concentrate on it, meditate on it. Then I know where I stand with time and it doesn’t matter’ (pp. 31-2). The passage from The Conquest of Mexico gives Cawdor the sense of the cyclic nature of things, time endlessly repeating itself, and so ravelling out into no-time. The passage itself refers to prophesies about the second coming of Quetzalcoatl, the Aztec god of the air. In his first incarnation he was tall in stature, with a white skin, long dark hair and a slowing beard, although his representation in the great temple gives him ebon features. Quetzalcoatl was a great benefactor, instructing the natives in the use of metals,
agriculture, and the arts of government. Under him the earth teemed with fruits and flowers, without the pain of culture. The air was filled with intoxicating perfumes and the sweet melody of birds. This, says Prescott, was the golden age. The actual passage Cawdor marks refers to strange apparitions in the heavens, particularly an extraordinary light which 'seemed thickly powdered with stars' (p. 110).

The millennium of the Aztecs and the millennium of the islanders fuse in Cawdor's mind. Cawdor is not involved in the cargo-cult uprising in a physical sense, but he can be seen to be guilty, as the catechism of Osana at the end of the novel suggests. He too has felt the power of that longing. He too has been 'taken over' as the concluding passage of the novel, translated from Kiriwinian, suggests: "My house is echoing with the footsteps of the visitor, and the person who lived there before is dying. That person is bleeding. My house is bleeding to death" (p. 189). It is a terrible ending, yet the last words Cawdor writes are on the fly-leaf of *The Conquest of Mexico*. They include a Kiriwinian version of Julian of Norwich's 'Al shal be wel and a! shal be wel and al manner of thyng shal be wele'. The preceding phrase is 'Synne is behovabil' ('behovely' in Eliot's 'Little Gidding' section of *Four Quartets*), i.e. 'able to be made use of or benefit'.

The Julian of Norwich words can be seen as terrible irony, but they can also imply acceptance. Cawdor is breaking, fragmenting, throughout the novel. The final disintegration comes with the news of the death of his friend Manson, presumably taken by sharks. "It's the watch I can't get over", Alistair said. "The watch ticking away on the beach, when Jack was — all in bits" (p. 181). Time goes on while the individual life has stopped. It is this which finally makes Cawdor feel he is going mad. But there is one rescue or salvation left, to become one with the universe.

The machine did not come from the stars to rescue Cawdor, so he became the stars, part of the cosmic dance. While his last written words, as translated by Osana, are 'every kind of thing will be good' (p. 188), his last spoken words are 'I saw, Timi, I saw. Down the tunnel. My body. Atoms. Stars' (p. 185). And, at the very end, 'I can never die' (p. 186).

In *To the Islands* Heriot has a magnificently apocalyptic image of destruction as he talks to Rusty in the seventh chapter. He says that if he had the strength he would break the cliffs down to boulders, stones, pebbles, molecules, atoms; and even the atoms, which mirror the solar system, he would break. 'Well go on', says Rusty, 'finish your bloody breaking.' 'And what if that should be God? ... The stone I killed him with was full of God', replies Heriot (pp. 148-9).

In *Tourmaline* the Law has a sudden vision of man's being a disease of God; man's very existence has wounded God and will perhaps kill him. Tom Spring replies: 'Everything [is sacred]. Because nothing exists that
isn't part of his body' (p. 151) and a little later affirms 'Dying's not serious. Everything's indestructible. If God can die, he'll die in glory. Watch out for the flowers on his grave' (p. 152).

Cawdor's last statements can be taken as a reconciliation of the pain and guilt Heriot and the Law sometimes feel, and the affirmation of Tom Spring. But acceptance of one's simultaneous insignificance and indestructibility is one thing. To will the process of finally belonging is another. It is only in death that Cawdor belongs; as Sayam says, looking at his body 'so covered with dried blood that it was unrecognizable as the body of a European': 'Now he is a black man true' (p. 187).

Crispin Clare, in The Girl Green as Elderflower, is the resurrection of Cawdor, in fictional and mystical forms. In Visitants, whose very form reflects the fragmentation of the central character, the personal shame, humiliation, anguish, and loss experienced by Cawdor are analogous to the communal disintegration of the islanders, on Kaga many years before and on Kailuana in the time present of the novel. Both movements of disintegration are countered, at the last, by personal and communal integration. The personal comes out most clearly in the relationship between Macdonnell and Naibusi, and in the transformation, the initiation into manhood, of Dalwood. The communal is apparent in the restoration of law, order and harmony in the villages effected by Benoni, the rightful heir to Dipapa. Benoni in fact says to Saliba in the midst of the cargo cult turbulence: 'O all will be well' (p. 152). Death (of Cawdor, Metusela, Dipapa) makes new life possible, as Heriot's departure revitalizes the mission in To the Islands.

With The Girl Green as Elderflower form also reflects meaning, but here the process is integration, regeneration. Clare does not go down the tunnel to become atoms, stars, but emerges from 'his hole, his pit, his wolf-pit' from which he has seen the face of the green god, formed out of intertwining leaves, 'invulnerably amused'. In form the novel is a marvellous intertwining and fusion of pagan and Christian, folk-lore, past and Suffolk present, as characters from Clare's world weave themselves into the three tales which are not so much interpolations as natural (or perhaps mystical) growths from Clare's healing process. Clare (although this is putting it very simplistically) becomes at one with the Suffolk community (past and present) and landscape. He faces his own immediate personal past, so like Cawdor's, and goes back in time to the medieval roots of his heritage, his psychic past. By recreating that heritage and fusing it with the present, he does not destroy time, but assents to eternal recurrence. He becomes himself the principle of
creativity as the time present of the novel moves from winter to summer. If *Visitants* is a sky novel, this is an earth one, with its wonderfully evocative images of the seasonally changing Suffolk landscape. In *Visitants* the underworld sequence, significant though it is, is not developed. In *The Girl Green as Elderflower*, 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. When the Alsatian eats the magnificent pheasant Clare can now take this with calm (unlike Heriot): 'It was the way of the green God' (p. 68). Green becomes white. The green buds of the elder break into white blossom. That moment, when life is poised between edenic freshness and innocence and the white flowering which implicitly presages maturity and death has no permanence, except in art, and except in the fact that out of the white will come again the green.

Early in the novel Clare looks at the marks of the glasses on the bar '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). That everlasting terror becomes joyous acceptance. The green girl of the third story Clare writes grows old and dies, having become elder-white, but as she dies into her eyes 'there seemed to come the paradox of a green flush' (p. 136). The paradox of the green flush is given imaginative representation in the three green girls of the present: the elfin, sprite-like child Amabel, the unnamed young woman of mysterious origins who re-enacts the honouring of St Martin (himself a fusion of pagan Celtic and early Christian) and the mature Alicia whose eyes, at the very end of the novel, are flecked with green. (Alicia too is an artist, and the painting of hers described at the beginning of the novel is an emblem not only of seasonal promise but of the significance of art as creation.)

The transformation motifs are rich and suggestively intertwined. There is, for example, the use of the Tarot pack, itself, like the stories, medieval in origin and containing both pagan and Christian associations. When Clare goes up to Martlets from his cottage early in the novel Amabel has five Tarot cards arranged in a cross to predict his future. On the left is the Hanging, or (in Stow's novel as in the English version of Marseille pack) Hanged Man. The card at this stage represents only terror to Clare's subconscious mind which manifests itself in the Ouija board communication which is in Kiriwinian and includes words from the concluding passage of *Visitants* (A katoulu, 'I am sick' and kaliga 'to die or faint', here the latter sense). Clare collapses, but the
Tarot card will not go away. The others scattered on the floor are face down except for the twelfth.

In the April section Clare finds the card of the Fool or Wild Man, the zero card in his pocket. It is claimed by one of this novel’s visitants, Matthew Perry (a chameleon like figure in the Clare story and in the tales, at times the wild man from the country under the sea, at times the Wandering Jew, another of the names of the zero card). Perry says to Clare ‘You also have a card. I’ll tell you some day what it is’ (p. 72). In the May section Perry posts the Hanging Man card to Clare, whose first reaction is horror. But when he turns the card over on the back is written ‘Your card = Resurrection’ (p. 108).

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 this 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. Clare has already imaginatively incorporated the hanging man motif in the tale ‘Concerning a wild man caught in the sea’. Now he accepts his personal past, the tarot card with its own ‘paradox of a green flush’.

Acceptance and faith are variously depicted in the novel. The Christian affirmation comes through the priest figure who actually assumes his contemporary name at the very end of the last of the three stories ‘Concerning a boy and a girl emerging from the earth’.

'I, even I, have known a prodigy and a marvel, and I have wept for two children, and feared in their flight to see an image of my own. Nevertheless I did not despair, for them or for myself, knowing that even in their wandering they rested still in reach of God’s hand. 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... This I believe and must', said Jacques Maunoir. 'I believe, and must.' (p. 136)

Clare’s affirmation is in the short concluding section ‘June’, and it is tripartite. He dreams of three of the green girl manifestations, the last of whom, from St Martin’s land, speaks in Kiriwini. Clare does not metaphorically turn away his face but is about to approach her. Next he tells Alicia of the marvellous thing he saw: eight white doves ‘going crazy over the big elder. Ice-white against yellowish-white’ (p. 141). (Alicia says she’ll think about painting it, and refers to the elder as a favourite of Constable’s.) Clare’s last act is to toast ‘seely’, that is blessed and holy, Suffolk.
The new life for Clare comes not through death, nor through the coming of the millennium. He does not need to be rescued because Suffolk and its visitants from other worlds have, through his own creative and recreative efforts, brought him home. The Green god, pagan and Christian, has manifested himself in and around Clare. Heriot saw Tourmaline's garden as the sky. Clare sees god's garden here, now, on this earth, continually recreating itself in the vision of white doves against elder-blossom. So the rescue, withheld from Tourmaline, denied in life to Cawdor, does finally take place. The 'Cosmic Symbolical Desert'\(^{10}\) has blossomed at last.

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\begin{array}{c|c}
\text{Island} & 58 \\
\text{Monyackland} & 65 \\
\text{Tourmaline} & 73 \\
\text{Visitants} & 79 \\
\text{Elderflower} & 80 \\
\end{array}
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NOTES
5. Two comparatively recent publications are: Helen Tiffin, 'Tourmaline and the *Tao Te Ching*', in *Studies in the Recent Australian Novel*, edited by K.G. Hamilton (St Lucia, Queensland, 1978); and Paul D. Higginbotham, "Honour the Single Soul": Randolph Stow and His Novels', *Southerly*, 39 (1979), 378-92.