

THE EXPOSITORY ART OF H. M. TOMLINSON

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A THESIS

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our supervision by Jeannette Cordray Boren  
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be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements for the Degree of  
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## PREFACE

The preparation of a thesis can be enjoyable even while it is difficult. The discovery of the essays of H. M. Tomlinson has been a rewarding experience. I offer my sincere appreciation to Dr. Autrey Nell Wiley, who suggested the essays as a subject for examination and who assumed that this thesis could and would be written. I could not fail when behind me were kindness, understanding, inspiration, encouragement, and belief. Dr. Wiley has been all of these to me.

Others have contributed to the consummation of this experience. My husband believed in me and encouraged me with his love and understanding. My children--Barbara, Alice, and Michael--were patient and loving; they helped more than they will ever know. Dr. Constance Beach, with good humor and much patience, assisted in the final preparation of the manuscript. Dr. Gladys Maddocks served on my committee. Anne Guynes Wear assisted with proofreading. To them I offer my sincere "Thank you."

## The Last of Tomlinson

THE TRUMPET SHALL SOUND. By H.M. Tomlinson. 239 pages. Random House. \$3.50.

This, the author says himself, will be the last novel of Henry Major Tomlinson, 84, the gnarled weathered Londoner who grew up among the city's docks and in 1912 wrote "The Sea and the Jungle," an account of an Atlantic and Amazon voyage which is recognized as a modern English masterpiece. Whether "The Trumpet Shall Sound" proves to be his last novel or not, it has the tone of a last testament, and a moving testament it is.

Tomlinson has often been compared with Conrad, and it is true that both are great writers of the sea. But each, in his own way, is also an illuminated student of the human spirit. Conrad excelled in powerful stories which exhibit the spirit in stress, struggles of conscience, and lonely fortitude. Tomlinson is not an outstanding storyteller (his best works are his travel writings, long or short). But he has an extraordinary capacity to evoke the sensuous beauty of the world and its emanations of mystery, to raise the question, as he puts it, of "first and last things, appearance and reality."

His new novel is about an English family in their lovely Surrey home during the portentous last months of the last war. There is Sir Anthony Gale, an important government figure, his serenely strong wife, his poetic son who wants to enlist but has been injured in bombing rescue work and is medically rejected. There is also a daughter anguished by the wartime world, and a sage, disillusioned uncle with a medical past and a scholarly present.

**Fears:** In a deceptively blithe manner, Tomlinson introduces these people in their pastoral setting, rich with light and leafage and lake water. Then he reveals their fears and questioning under the droning skies of the Nazi blitz. In the course of Gale family events, a passing sailor delivers himself of two significant yarns. Eventually Tomlinson brings the blitz, in the form of a buzz bomb, to the Gales' beloved home. The place is ruined, Lady Gale and Uncle Nick are killed outright, and the son is severely shocked and lies a long time in a coma.

Sir Anthony and his daughter escape the blitz, but after a visit to the war front Sir Anthony dies, and the girl's mind is all but unhinged by the complex events.

Thus scheme of things allows Tomlinson to look squarely at the terror of total war, to ask the fundamental questions about it. His answers are anything but facile or even definite, but he suggests a great working out of the pattern which the Greeks knew as *hubris* ("wanton arrogance... insolent disregard of moral laws") which, so the Greeks thought, was bound to meet with retribution. "We do know that Hitler was seen to caper, when the message was handed to him that France would surrender. Victory!

holding the gilt pocket amplifier out before him. Yet he is like a sprig of green: His blue eyes, his puffing pipe, and his chuckles bring spring into the room. "We'll be down to Dorset soon," he said. "The Thomas Hardy country. We look from the top of a cliff across Lime Bay. To the southwest the first port of call is the Bermudas."

He spoke of his latest journalistic assignment (in his younger days he was a fine World War I correspondent). At 80 he had covered Queen Elizabeth's coronation for a Canadian newspaper group. "I got up at 5:30 that morning," he said. "At 7 that evening I came back and started writing. By 1 a.m. I was finished and the messenger came and collected 3,000 words. All right, I think, for an old man."

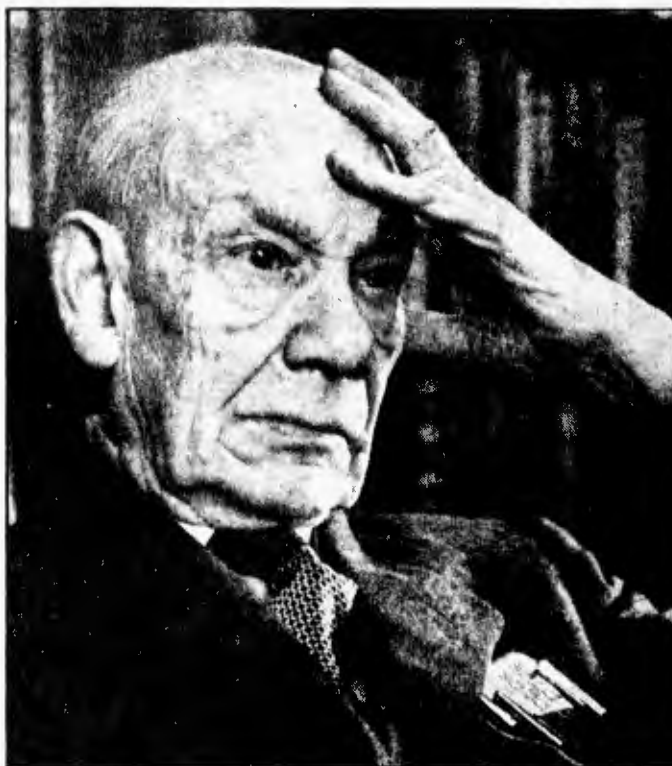
**Author's Job:** "But reporting is direct observation," he went on. "It's a rapid impressionist painting. In a novel, on the other hand, you're looking for exact symbols to portray the idea. 'The Trumpet Shall Sound' [see review] took two years of hard writing, and that doesn't include, of course, the thought beforehand. It was re-written six times during the notebook stage. I was always trying to stay as short as possible. I don't believe in these huge books, in leaving the choice of episodes to the reader—that's the author's job."

He exhibited a red notebook which had a penciled note on its inside cover: "First manuscript of 'The Trumpet Shall Sound' is somewhere in cottage cupboard under the stairs." He explained the note: "Oh, the trumpet will sound for me someday soon, so I stuck that there in case someone wants the manuscript and

I'm not around to tell them where it is." He tapped lightly on the edge of his chair. "What is reality? How can we sort mere appearances from truth? I don't know." His blue eyes watered a bit. He went on: "Reality is beyond us; it's an ephemeral something that's there when we're gone. At best, for the living, it's the understanding that there is no final understanding."

**Rich Boy:** He talked of the sea and of sea books. "There's no book like 'Moby Dick.' It's—as Conrad said—out of all soundings. I was put off by the title of 'The Cruel Sea.' The sea isn't cruel. It's just the sea. You might as well say the air is cruel if it lets you fall down when you

### 'I Was Rich... I Had the Bible'



Camera Press

Tomlinson: Style mixed with old wisdoms

He danced. Nobody noticed that the immediate happy activity of his legs was very like the spasmodic flexions of limbs dangling from a gallows."

►**Summing Up:** Somber statement of a literary elder statesman.

### VISIT WITH THE AUTHOR

Henry Major Tomlinson, the voyager who wrote such masterly sea literature as "Tidemarks" and "The Foreshore of England," now lives with his wife in a tiny third-floor London flat. There he sat last week and looked out on the budding shrubbery of St. Peter's Square. The 84-year-old writer uses a hearing aid, often

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## CHAPTER I

### THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Little is reported about the life of Henry Major Tomlinson beyond the facts of his birth in 1873, in Poplar, a section of the shipping area along London River, and of his death on February 5, 1958. This paucity of biographical information is due, no doubt, to the recency of his death. Because there has not been enough time since his death for a biographer to collect and arrange materials about him, I have culled from his works such autobiographical references as a biographer might use to supplement his factual account. Material for this chapter comes principally from two sources: A Mingled Yarn, a collection in which the first essay, "A Mingled Yarn," is Tomlinson's own account of his early years; and London River, a collection of writings in which "Foreshore" and "A Shipping Parish" depict Poplar as it was in the days of Tomlinson's growing up. All Tomlinson's essays, however, reveal something of the life of their author; so additional information has been taken from them as well.

We can make two observations about Tomlinson: He loved reading and knowledge; he was fascinated by the sea

and far-off places. Encompassing both these attitudes is the quotation from "Exploration": "The right good book is always a book of travel; it is about life's journey."<sup>1</sup> Another, equally inclusive, comes from "Hints for Those About to Travel": "My journeys have all been the fault of books."<sup>2</sup> Although Tomlinson wrote much that is not concerned with travel or books, he wrote much that is. The titles of many of the published essays suggest a world beyond, a world we reach by travel, either actual or imaginary: "Exploration," "South to Cadiz," "Outward Bound," "The Turn of the Tide," "The Wreck," "The African Coast." Other titles indicate his concern with knowledge and writing: "The Art of Writing," "The Road to Concord," "The Modern Mind," "Authors and Soldiers," "Barbellion," "The Power of Books." We know, too, that books and travel fascinated him throughout his life. "The Power of Books" was published in 1947 when he was seventy-four years old; "After Fifty Years," the account of the "Golden Wedding voyage" he took with his wife to Sicily, was published in 1950 when he was seventy-seven. The concern and the dream had neither vanished nor grown dim with age.

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<sup>1</sup>A Mingled Yarn (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1953), p. 118.

<sup>2</sup>The Face of the Earth (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1950), p. 49.

In "Exploration," an essay published in 1927,

Tomlinson says:

First and last a poet may write only of himself. The world exists because he sees it. That can be all he knows about it. What then is he? For the validity of the world depends on the kind of a man he is.<sup>3</sup>

The word "poet," as it is used in this quotation, refers to any writer, for Tomlinson uses it while writing of Melville and Swift and Doughty. He feels the poet is a "seer . . . the consummation and reality."<sup>4</sup> Used thus, "poet" should apply to Tomlinson as it does to any writer. If the poet, then, writes only of himself, his words must reveal himself. In order to know the poet and to respond to him, the reader should know something of him, something of the influences which have acted upon him and of the reactions of the poet to those influences.

It is not my purpose in this paper to discuss at length the influences which worked upon Tomlinson, but it is necessary that we know something of them in order that we may understand the forces at work within him that created the man and moulded the style that is unmistakably H. M. T. The ensuing short biographical sketch is based upon what he reveals in his writings, what seems to be autobiographically significant, for in his writings he revealed the world as he knew it and as it affected him.

<sup>3</sup>A Mingled Yarn, p. 119.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Around Tomlinson as he grew and played were the top-masts of sailing vessels of the East India Company, for his boyhood was in the days before steam had supplanted sail. The tall masts towered above the dark warehouse wall, marking London River, the river that led to the world, the river of which Tomlinson wrote:

The ebb and flow of London River kept all our friends and neighbors meeting its exactions in some way or other, bringing some home again from the foreign at high water, and as the flow turned seaward, taking others away for we seldom knew where, perhaps for years.<sup>5</sup>

Cargoes came up the river from all over the world, and as they moved from ships to warehouses and to the rest of London and England, they told stories of the lands beyond the rim of spars. The names of the ships docked there were as exciting as the clippers which bore the names were beautiful. Many were names of classical ancestry: Oberon, Hermione, Euterpe, Thermopylae; all were rhythmical and musical. The stars by which the ships were steered shone over Poplar, too; and Orion and the Great Bear were guides for those who must stay at home, yet whose thoughts would travel with the wind and the tide. All these--the ships, the stars, the music--surrounded the boy as he grew up. We know this was so because he tells us so, sometimes in a passage of reminiscence, sometimes in a sentence essay that supports a thought far removed from the docks of Poplar.

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<sup>5</sup>"A Mingled Yarn," A Mingled Yarn, p. 2.

Tomlinson's maternal grandmother, who had eloped with a gunner in the Navy, was the daughter of an officer in the East India Company. His mother, the daughter of the master gunner, knew stories of the sea as she knew the sea itself, for she had sailed with her father when he was ordered to new stations. His father worked on the West India docks and had many tales to tell of the cargoes from the ships that sailed from the west to the Port of London. "One day, father told us, he had seen two musk oxen walk ashore from a ship out of the Arctic, and he described the fabulous creatures, and the white land in which they were found, in grim humour; for Poplar, we had to know, was more pleasantly situated."<sup>6</sup> The children knew sailors, and heard stories from the seamen themselves of the lands far away. They wandered along the docks, past the doorways into the great warehouses. They saw "the hillocks of coconuts and hogsheads of sugar on the quays of the docks."<sup>7</sup> They smelled the spices, the wines, the wool, the hides, the molasses which sometimes spilled over the stones from a broken cask, molasses they could smell but which they were forbidden to touch although it had been thrown away. Small wonder that talk for the young Tomlinsons was of "sea commerce, its polity, methods, rewards, and accidents."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.



His paternal grandfather was a cooper, a builder of casks for the trade that passed through the docks. Where he lived in Poplar were small gardens and cottages with grapevines covering their fronts. Each year Tomlinson's grandmother filled a cask with the wine that she made from the grapes there. When Tomlinson was a child, this part of Poplar was not too far from the country, and the children knew of sky and grass and trees and grainfields and cattle as well as of docks and ships. There was the "immensity of trees, the loss of sky, the closed vistas, and silence"<sup>9</sup> to be found in Epping Forest. Tomlinson was aware of nature in his early years.

Quite early, Tomlinson went to a school directed by the London School Board. There was no nonsense in this school, no preoccupation with extra-curricular activities. Boys were eager to learn to read, and did, and passed along the excitement they found in books. The masters were stern men, but just, concerned that the boys learn to read and to write and "even to spell correctly," Tomlinson adds, "when not forgetful in our attempts at what was called English Composition."<sup>10</sup> Geography, botany, and human physiology were also taught, and the masters insisted upon application. No child passed through the London School Board Schools who

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

could not read; no child left school without knowing something of the world and of himself.

There was other education for Tomlinson in those early days, learning not of a formal kind. His father "was a small delicate man, easily moved to laughter, with an inclination to studies he was unable to pursue as he desired."<sup>11</sup> A love of learning and a sense of humor seem to be a heritage from his father. A weekly newspaper, Lloyd's Weekly News, which came to the Tomlinson house, brought to the boy his

. . . earliest doubt that the truth may not be in the appearance of things; that a fellow may be mistaken though he be rejoicing. The victory of Tel-el-Kebir was reported [in that paper] and Sir Garnet Wolsey was the hero of it. I felt, that Sunday morning, wild surmise as from high ground, and was puzzled when father, aside to mother, not only showed no delight, but was sternly critical of something which meant nothing to me. Moonlit charges over the desert, sabres busy, were not in his line. He was one of those who beforehand, and coolly, want to hear the reason why. . . He deferred to authority but not unless he felt like it, for he was as strict over a matter of principle as another would be over the right inherent in property.<sup>12</sup>

The attitudes of his father appear in Tomlinson's writing, particularly in that which treats of moral issues.

There were books and music in the Tomlinson home, not many books, no fine musical instruments for making music, but books and music of quality that remained with Tomlinson

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

all his life. There was "an odd assortment of books," he says, "from Cook's voyages to Artemus Ward, but the Bible comes first and was the most read. It was read of an evening, each of us piping up in turn from the chapters under review."<sup>13</sup> His mother read the Family Herald and Dickens, commending Dickens to her son, and that author he knew at an early age. For music there was his father's old fashioned harmonium. The father, eager for his children to learn music, prepared an instruction book of graduated exercises for Tomlinson and his brother to use. Tomlinson was never able to play the instrument, although his younger brother did, but he never tired of listening as his father or the brother played. He learned Bach, Mozart, Hayden, and Handel because his father "adapted to his old harmonium from the great ones some measures and harmonies that he loved, Handel in particular."<sup>14</sup> Greene's chapel, the church where the Tomlinson family attended, had an organ of full range. Tomlinson remembered his father taking a friend, "of a sect stricter than his own, who thought a musical instrument in God's house was an intrusion of the devil,"<sup>15</sup> to hear the Messiah.

When they came out into the night again, majesty still echoing, the stern die-hard was asked what he thought

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

of it. He had been affected, it appears, yet was grudging. He owned that he had been moved, but quickly recovered himself, and decided that, after all, he would wait till he heard the music of Heaven. "You haven't got to wait," father told him, "you have just heard it."<sup>16</sup>

Another principle of life influenced young Tomlinson, as it did no doubt most of the children of Poplar; it was the

. . . lesson that a fellow must either swim, and keep it up full stroke without pause against the stream, or sink. This, I understood, was what you must face, though you might not have the strength for it. It was not impossible, however, if it was not easy. Some got through and others did not. . . . the elements did not care what happened to you. And there was no alternative. . . . There was in the end, only the Workhouse, a thought so shocking that it was almost bracing. To most of the people in that place it was the last refuge, this side the grave, for such as they were, when down and out, and it was worse, much worse, than the threat of death. Failure we knew, for it was common, then as now, yet one could try again, if alive after downfall; but that other was the penalty for failure absolute, hope gone. It was life's brand of shame, often inflicted on the worthy.<sup>17</sup>

The spectre of the Workhouse and the tenuous hold most of Poplar had upon a living; the acquaintance with the struggle of the workers on the docks and the sailors on the ships to secure improvements in wages and working conditions from the satisfied status-quo minded managers and owners; the questioning by his father of government policies and of the meaning and necessity of war; the burden of rearing the family taken up by his mother without complaint upon the death of the

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

father when Tomlinson was only thirteen--all these formed Tomlinson and Tomlinson's attitude toward life and society. The "Nobodies" of Poplar and other dock areas stirred him; he was part of them. "Yet this is the reef to which I am connected by tissue and bone. Cut the kind of a life you find in Poplar, and I must bleed."<sup>18</sup> He must defend the Nobodies and call down the high and the mighty, the false heroes, who used them for their own materialistic advancement. His political beliefs were Liberal, those of late nineteenth century Liberalism. He believed, or at least hoped, it was possible to fight dehumanizing material progress and greed by opposing to it good.

His father worked on the West India Dock at a wage that by "today's standard would not satisfy the keeper of a dogs' home for the brief care of a nice greyhound. . . . and, as he was excessively conscientious, his work did not take long to kill him."<sup>19</sup> At the death of his father, Tomlinson went to work in an office of manufacturers and traders, a house of Scotsmen, where he learned to know and love Burns and Scottish verse and speech. Some part of his work required the posting of names of ships and of the far-off places which were their destinations. He went on errands down to the

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<sup>18</sup>"A Shipping Parish," London River (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), p. 47.

<sup>19</sup>"A Mingled Yarn," A Mingled Yarn, p. 3.

ships themselves. It was on one of these visits that he found in a cabin, with a smell of teak and cheroots which was foreign, a paper-bound copy of Kipling's stories, printed in Calcutta. Of this experience, he says, "That man's magic had me on the first page. I can still feel it, though he can shock, and even repel."<sup>20</sup> Another errand brought him the offer of a berth on the Mulatto Girl bound for Brazil. He refused the offer, but something happened to him on the day of his refusal, something that became a part of him. In the evening hours, after his submission to the confinement of trade, he studied geology, botany, zoology, even mineralogy. He was once considered as a possible geologist for an expedition to the Arctic. He was not chosen, however, for it was feared he was too frail. Being passed over was a deep disappointment to the young man who "had read nearly all that had been written in English of the magnetic north."<sup>21</sup>

Soon after he was employed in the office of the Scottish manufacturers and traders, he saw the other dutiful young men stand up to the principals of the office, "aristocrats, big men, of a severe and haughty mein,"<sup>22</sup> and refuse to work because Hogmany had not been declared a holiday. He

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

watched one day "a straggling column of rough characters marching west from the east during a dock strike, of 1889 for sixpence an hour, if work was to be had."<sup>23</sup> These incidents and others of revolt against privilege created memories that were "affecting, irrational, sentimental, and decisive."<sup>24</sup> He stayed in this office of commerce longer than he had planned, but all that happened was adding to the shaping of the man and his prose.

After he left the shipping office, by mutual consent, he found a place on the Morning Leader. He had tried Fleet Street,

. . . where all the doors were shut--for I had tried them--thinking of the next move. There can be frustration in practising the art of writing for a public journal if one has not come down from Oxford or Cambridge; and it should be expected. What has one to show of the immediately recognized authentic? I could only claim that I had contributed trifles to a half-penny radical newspaper. Yet what of that? And what did it matter that they were signed, when one's name means nothing?<sup>25</sup>

His writing for the paper brought a freedom of spirit he had not known before. He was soon at sea, literally, with a fleet of trawlers on the Dogger Bank, and soon after with the Navy on maneuvers. His journeys to sea and into the world of writers had begun. As a journalist he travelled to South

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

America, along the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of Africa, and to the Dutch East Indies. From these travels came much of the writing for which he is best known--the colorful, descriptive, reflective essay. As a war correspondent in France during World War I, he wrote often of the Nobodies, of the hypocrisy of the war, of the sacrifice of the little man on the battlefield to the gods of political and economic expediency. His soul was disturbed by the foulness of war which could take from those who had so little--with only their lives to give--to bolster those who already had so much--with all their money and power. He could not forget as he wrote that people are souls alone, all in their singleness of a worth and a value, who must not be debased. In his writing he did not, he could not, and he would not corrupt truth for the sake of a false but popular goal. He was the little man expressing all the hope and despair of the little people, fervently and movingly.

Books, all kinds of books, seem to have been a part of Tomlinson. "I was always glad to lose myself in a good story, yet my closest attention, when a youth, went to natural history and books of travel."<sup>26</sup> He read Alice in Wonderland and Figuier's World Before the Deluge when he was nine years old, and he found nothing in Alice more wonderful

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 20.



than the wonders in World Before the Deluge. Early, too, he read parts of Kinglake's History of the War in the Crimea. The ideas of war he gathered from the History were to change during his stint as a war correspondent in France. Long passages from Shakespeare, the verses of Scott, numbers of the Psalms were his, for he memorized them in the upper elementary school. He read the tales of Stevenson when they appeared serially. He was still a boy when he "was going upward through Sartor Resartus. That was a stiff and exciting climb, giving broad surveys of the familiar as though a new day had come over the scene of life."<sup>27</sup> A few years later, he says, he found "warrent" for his "respect for Carlyle in Emerson and Thoreau, and in Whitman with his 'stars at night and the thought of Carlyle dying.'"<sup>28</sup> In the early days of his employment, he read Aurora Leigh, in a two-penny copy, as he jogged along toward home on the two-horse tram after his work was finished at six o'clock. He felt that the "Seventh Book of it is a better avowal of the purpose of art than all the apologetics I have read of art for the bare sake of it. . . . A common bush is never afire with God, these days, as it used to be for Mrs. Browning, and so is less ridiculous."<sup>29</sup> He wrote a review

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

of one of Conrad's novels, and he felt that Youth was one of the finest short narratives in the language. As a young journalist he discovered Moby Dick, a novel he felt to be superbly written, a novel of which in later years he said, "I have no doubt Moby Dick goes into that small company of extravagant and generative works which make other writers fertile."<sup>30</sup> Something of all of these authors and works --idea, form, or style--touched or influenced him.

The scope of this paper does not permit further exposition of the influence of literary figures upon Tomlinson and his writing, of his relations with contemporary literary figures, of his opinions and evaluations of literary figures and their writings. A fruitful field for further investigation and study seems apparent here.

But Tomlinson's reading was not confined to books. He read and studied maps and sea charts and lithographs of famous sailing ships, the stars and constellations as they sailed over Poplar, and the spars on London River as they rose about and above the docks of his shipping parish. He studied the windows of the shop marked by the picture of a sailing ship, the compasses, patent logs, sounding-machines, signalling gear. He haunted the shelves where books of all kinds "for the eyes of sailors"<sup>31</sup> were sorted by chance:

<sup>30</sup>"On the Chesil Bank," The Face of the Earth, p. 115.

<sup>31</sup>"The Foreshore," London River, p. 14.

Castaway on the Auckland Islands, Typee, Knots and Splices, Know Your Own Ship, the South Pacific Directory. He studied log books of ships home from the sea, journals of trade that posted the names of ships, their cargoes, and their destinations, and Lloyd's Register of Shipping, that fabulous listing of adventure around the world.

Reading and London River all around him, knowledge and far-off places always seeking his attention--these were the influences of Tomlinson's early life that formed the man and shaped his prose.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CRITIC

Although Tomlinson seems to write effortlessly, sometimes almost artlessly, he has expended effort and care in composition. In what we may regard as approximating asides, he comments on the writer, the writer's genres, the writer's craft, the practitioners of the craft, and critics. He notes what must be the basis for sound writing, and what good writing should do. He refers to types of creative writing. He discusses journalism in magazines and newspapers. He becomes the critic with words for and about critics.

Tomlinson believes, first, that the writer of prose must have a talent for words, because words are important. In "The Failure," he presents a scholarly master reminiscing about a revered former headmaster: "The fact is, I suppose, he woke us up to the importance of words, ordinary words. If words didn't fit the facts they were bad. They might lead people astray."<sup>1</sup> He says in another place, however, that "rightness is exempt from the difficulties of intrigue. Though we may be assured that in the beginning was the

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<sup>1</sup>A Mingled Yarn, p. 115.

creative word, even now the value is as baffling to exact description as the innocence of a child, or as faith in moral order."<sup>2</sup> Words which create are

. . . exactly the same as those words which do not. They might be uttered by a child or a seaman . . . A man will be telling his tale when suddenly luck touches him, and then . . . his words take on a meaning that is startling if hard to define; they have another impact and a light which does not belong to them.<sup>3</sup>

This light is "not a trick, so it cannot be learned."<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, too, "the light goes out if you fool with it."<sup>5</sup>

Nor is the secret of good writing in the sentence form: "The effect is not translated by arranging in order a number of sentences."<sup>6</sup> It is the indefinable something, the something we can only call talent that turns words and ideas into creative writing. "The best writing," Tomlinson admonishes the reader, "must come of a gift for making magic out of what are but common commodities to us, and that gift is not distributed by the generous gods from barrows which

<sup>2</sup>"The Power of Books," Atlantic Monthly, CLXXX (December, 1947), 116.

<sup>3</sup>H. M. Tomlinson (ed.), Preface, Great Sea Stories of All Nations (Barden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1930), p. xiv.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>H. M. Tomlinson, "El Greco," South to Cody (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1934), p. 65.

<sup>6</sup>Tomlinson, Preface, Great Sea Stories, p. xiv.

go the rounds of the neighborhoods where babies are born, as are faith, hope, and credulity."<sup>7</sup> It is, moreover, impossible to force this indefinable something; good writing cannot be forced. Best-sellers may be written on an eight-to-four schedule; yet such a schedule alone cannot produce good writing. Good writing has come from those pressed for time and pressed by economic needs, but neither the necessity of production nor the desire to create has alone fashioned the piece. Some other component is needed. The mind, the spirit, must be operative. In "The Art of Writing," Tomlinson tells a story of his own struggle for creation. The compulsion from without--the editor's telegraphed reminder--was there; the subject matter was chosen--again, the editor's telegram; the "lucky" pieces all were arranged; the writing tools--pens, paper--were at hand; but the words were gone. And no amount of searching called them back.

I raised my voice, calling down the hollow, dusty, and unfurnished spaces of my mind, summoning my servants, my carefully chosen but lazy and wilful staff of words, to my immediate aid. But there was no answer; only the cobwebs moved there, though I thought I heard a faint buzzing, which might have been a blow-fly. No doubt my staff--small blame to them--were dreaming somewhere in the sun, dispersed over several seas and continents.<sup>8</sup>

And then something happened, some secret unlocking of the reserves of the mind, and the words began to take their

<sup>7</sup>"Prose Writing," Waiting for Daylight (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1922), p. 42.

<sup>8</sup>"The Art of Writing," Old Junk (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923), p. 94.

ordered places. It is the secret something, the magic of talent, that succeeds where force cannot. Perhaps the magic is imagination, for "as soon as imagination begins to sport with our language, then our words that were familiar seem strange; their import seems different; you cannot quite see through them. They suggest something beyond."<sup>9</sup>

However, this concern for talent does not indicate that talent is the one and all of composition. Tomlinson assumes, and so states in several places, that the good writer is equipped to write good solid prose. The equipment, he feels, should be acquired early in life. "Children, of course, should be taught to express themselves in writing, and simply, lucidly, and with sincerity,"<sup>10</sup> he states in "Prose Writing." He suggests in "A Mingled Yarn" that good form and diction may be the result of reading aloud good writing, particularly the Bible.

They [the Victorians] were slower, reading by ear as well as by sight. A practice not unusual then in households, and I have mentioned it, was that of accustoming the voice to the rhythm and cadence of Biblical prose; and that may account for the dignity even humble readers in the past accepted as proper to English diction.<sup>11</sup>

Not all children could go to school, but in London there were schools under the direction of the London School Board

<sup>9</sup>"On the Chesil Bank," The Face of the Earth, p. 116.

<sup>10</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup>A Mingled Yarn, p. 10.

for the poorer people, to whom Tomlinson belonged, and reading was a treasured accomplishment. Recalling those days, Tomlinson says in "A Mingled Yarn," "I never met another youngster who could not read."<sup>12</sup> Early in life, by the beginning of their teens, schoolboys were reading in the best literature of the language. "Still, by the age of thirteen we knew Julius Caesar and the Merchant of Venice by heart, furlongs of Scott's narrative verse, and a number of the Songs of the Psalmist."<sup>13</sup> Masters were disciplinarians, demanding and accepting only the best. Students learned to read, and to write prose that no doubt was in most instances simple, lucid, and sincere. Upon such a basis a good prose style could be built.

To a talent for creating with words upon a base of simple, lucid and sincere style, Tomlinson adds another matter. In "Prose Writing" we find these words: "The first thing expected of any literary expression is that it should be faithful to what is in the mind."<sup>14</sup> In this passage Tomlinson points to a recurring theme of his--something to say that is worth saying. His use of the word mind is significant, for we associate the mind, the healthy mind, with considered judgments, evaluations, wisdom, if you will. There, then, are two marks by which the writer and his work are judged: mind and integrity.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>14</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p.13.



Tomlinson, who valued Emerson and Emerson's judgments, expresses his appreciation of the quality of Emerson's mind in these lines from "The Road to Concord":

I have come again to the fact that Emerson had power, for he had something of value to say. In recent years I have read a good deal of his Journals, and it has struck me that he had a quality which has always distinguished the superior mind; he had prescience, prevision, divination (call it whatever you like): he easily passes that test of a sound and full intelligence, an ability to see the implication of things, and long before his fellows are aware of a need for second thought.<sup>15</sup>

Sound and full intelligence, an ability to see the implication of things must be at the heart of writing. Thus Tomlinson re-emphasizes his concern for intelligence, an intelligence that must be a part of the writer's equipment. And having "mind," he says, the writer must express what is in "mind" honestly. Honesty he assumes to be an early component of prose writing as shown in his statement concerning the child's writing and in other passages alluding to honesty. One of these confirming statements is found in the foreword to Great Sea Stories of All Nations, "for honesty must be at the back of all literature, whether it concerns ships and the sea or anything else."<sup>16</sup> Honesty implies, too, that the writer must be willing to examine carefully and evaluate honestly all sides of his ideas or

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<sup>15</sup>H. M. Tomlinson, South to Cadiz (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1934), p. 184.

<sup>16</sup>Preface, p. xi.

perceptions. He must know truly what he writes of. A family pet--a brown owl, Joey--illustrated for Tomlinson this idea. The owl "when he sees something quite novel to him has a curious habit of moving his face in a circle . . . I used to think that rotary performance of his head was a foolishness of his . . . Now I know that when Joey plays that caper, he is but obtaining evidence of an object from different angles; he is trying to give it solidarity. He could teach any young writer a point or two at that game."<sup>17</sup> An active mind and honest portrayal are marks by which the writer must be judged.

The core of Tomlinson's feeling about writing is this: There can be no good writing without talent and thought; moreover, the thought must be honest and the author's talent must reflect this integrity. Few are blessed with the ability to convey to readers emotions that have touched souls, sights that have reached deeper than the mind, sounds that have stirred harmonies within the spirit. To show to another that which has moved the writer deeply demands more than polished technique. To possess anything worth showing to another requires more than superficial evaluation, superficial emotionalism. Talent, thought, and integrity are the implements of the writer, and no one of these can create without the others.

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<sup>17</sup>"A Brown Owl," A Mingled Yarn, p. 48.

Although Tomlinson as an essayist is the concern of this study, I can scarcely discuss his views on writing and good writing without touching not only the essay but various other literary genres with which a writer is concerned. He comments upon books, poetry, the novel, travel books, the essay. He was a creator of novels, travel books, and essays. That he was not a creator of poetic form would seem to be accidental, for surely the soul of the poet was in him.

### Genres

Books were always a source of pleasure and inspiration for him. He read so widely that his knowledge was a match for those with university education. He relates, in "A Mingled Yarn," an incident which amused him yet served to give him pleasure.

One day, at the beginning of my liberty in the editorial rooms of a daily newspaper, the chief leader writer met me on the stairs, and stopped me. This was an honour. He was a small but lofty person, and of Oxford; and I was still uneasy, feeling the vagrancy of an intruder. "Aren't you H. M. T.? Tell me. I want to be sure I'm right. You had a classical education?"<sup>18</sup>

Writing in the Atlantic Monthly, in 1947, he says: "Books may be of no use, but they have good in them. There is no use in the happiness of a child, but we like it."<sup>19</sup> In the same essay we find these words: "By books I mean the words

<sup>18</sup>A Mingled Yarn, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup>"The Power of Books," p. 117.

that quicken with the sense that we are in the family of fellowship under the remote and apparently alien stars."<sup>20</sup>

Tomlinson suggests that one function of books is to provide escape, an escape that results from the author's ability to transport the reader out of his own world and into another. The reader moves out of himself. He escapes and travels to another world that is for the time of his reading more real than the life around him. Yet in this new world he may face reality, may awaken to responsibility, may be moved to serve an ideal or to face an evil. He discusses this idea of release at some length in "Sea Light." He suggests that "escape" literature is but another expression of man loosing his bonds. Each year many people go out to sea--or over the sea, we may now say--to get beyond the horizon. We read for the same reason, to see beyond. Failure of critics to recognize that there is something inherent in man's response to "curiosity [that] has again set our minds adrift"<sup>21</sup> leads Tomlinson to comment rather caustically:

Those of us who are in the habit of exploring literature--some long voyages out of soundings may be made that way--know that intellectual critics will describe some excellent reading-stuff, and with hauteur which dismisses it from further notice, as "books of escape." They mean, I suppose, that those books are a form of cowardice; attempts to get away from reality to the Isle of No-Land. On that plea, those critics made

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>South to Cadiz, p. 168.

an attempt to push Stevenson out of our sight. But, if their charge is just, away too goes The Pilgrim's Progress. Is not that a book of escape? It looks as though much depends on what is meant by reality.<sup>22</sup>

He continues with another prick for the critic:

A worthy definition of Reality, honestly attempted, would keep an intellectual critic so long brooding with a wet towel that we might despair of getting so much as a mumbled and indistinct reply from him. For all novels, at least, are means by which we can escape from the insistent present, perhaps only to meet worse trouble. If those novels truly are books, and give the mind a sense of precipitancy and danger, then they must have been done by poets who had freed themselves from whatever has us in bond; books, not so much of escape, as of release.<sup>23</sup>

Books then offer release. Poetry offers this and more as he defines it. Poetry is "that fortunate lighting of an idea which delights us with the belief that we have surprised truth, and have seen that it is beautiful."<sup>24</sup> This we understand, for all acknowledge truth and beauty as a part of poetry. But when we find these words in the essay written after the death of Hardy, "Poetry is an irrelevant solace at leisure, which is pleasant, as is wine, after the dustiness of a harsh and insistent world,"<sup>25</sup> we know by his irony that Tomlinson is telling us what poetry is not. Such writing would be divorced from the world because it would deny to the poet and to poetry the right to admit what is challenging and what might be disturbing; it would deny

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 170-171.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>24</sup>"Prose Writing," Waiting for Daylight, p. 40.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas Hardy (New York: Crosby Gaige, 1929), p. x.

truth. And truth so often is not practical. "Politics can be practical, but not poetry"<sup>26</sup> is the common feeling.

The poet justifies us because he himself is sublimated humanity. He embodies and exalts what is best in men and women, and for that very reason his poetry, because it expresses our better self, gives us the illusion that it is not practical.<sup>27</sup>

But Tomlinson suggests that although poetry may seem not to be practical, it also serves. In a comprehensive and moving statement published in the Atlantic Monthly of December, 1947, two short years after the end of World War II, he tells us this:

Poetry, whatever its uselessness, has never caused a war, if it has never brought about a railroad track. It has never brought down a city, caused a financial crash, raised the rent, nor the price of a loaf. But its irrelevant value has steadied the soul of many a young soldier when beset by foulness brought about by calculated folly, and by the instruments of technology so hard to understand that few of us can make head or tail of it.<sup>28</sup>

To the poet as to poetry Tomlinson gives part of the world's destiny. In a world that submits to the "discipline of bristling . . . tanks, and to the moulding of public opinion in the machinery of the popular newspaper press to the forms of thought which money finds most profitable,"<sup>29</sup> in that world a "great poet is unique and definitely alien. His

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. xxviii.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>"The Power of Books," p. 118.

<sup>29</sup>Thomas Hardy, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

presence is a challenge to its power. He keeps in heart the lesser men who oppose the things of the mind, though with no apparent success, to both the insolence of authority and the noise of the market place."<sup>30</sup>

The novel, a form Tomlinson tried several times, was the form that proved least satisfying to his readers, although Gallions Reach was widely praised when it was first published. Perhaps the smaller measure of success won by his novels was due to his literary predilection for non-fiction prose, such as the essay and travel pieces, which are excellent for the descriptive writing that glows beyond our immediate reading; or perhaps his novels were not fashioned in the currently accepted form of the novel, a form that showed great concern with characterization. The first suggestion is a speculation on my part; the second rests upon an intimation gained from the essay Thomas Hardy. In that essay, Tomlinson discusses the contemporary estimation of Hardy's novels, an estimation which placed them below Russian novels because of a lack of the "virtue" of characterization. Excellent authority would say that Russian novels have characterization while English novels are less likely to exhibit it. Tomlinson's defense of Hardy, which may explain his own conception of the novel, for himself, at least, is this:

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. xxvii.

Yet suddenly we remember that there is more characterization in the last popular novel by a candid young lady than in all Greek drama. Where are we now? There is more particular characterization in Proust than in all Shakespeare. So what of it? Modern novels are full of characterization, and, good and bad together, they all soon die. Their candid revelations of character do not save them. So there is a chance, as the story called Macbeth still lives on, that we are deceived by what the fashion of the hour declares to be chiefly good in a story.<sup>31</sup>

It was the inability of--or at any rate the failure of--Tomlinson "to create characters interesting to us for their own sakes, irrespective of their political, social, and moral significance"<sup>32</sup> that brought adverse criticism of his later novels. Tomlinson would seem here to be both justifying his own manner of writing and stating his attitude toward the novel.

In "Mirage from the Escorial," a part of the long essay, South to Cadiz, Tomlinson discusses at greater length his thoughts about the novel. Through a dialogue with Tobian, a novelist, Tomlinson reveals his conception of the novel and his feeling as to what the modern reader is seeking in a novel. He says first that no one knows exactly what a novel is.

How should I know? I fancy nobody knows. But it is supposed, worse luck, to tell a story. For further guidance, there are Pilgrim's Progress, Robinson Crusoe, Tristram Shandy, Pickwick Papers, Vanity Fair, Moby Dick.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. xxi.

<sup>32</sup>Frank Swinnerton, The Georgian Literary Scene (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1949), p. 136.



War and Peace, The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, Tess, Crime and Punishment, Penguin Island, Mr. Jeeves, Ulysses, and Mrs. Dalloway; and perhaps the Book of Job. When you've struck a formula out of that lot, let me see it.<sup>33</sup>

He disposes of criticism sometimes leveled at his novels, charging him with wandering about at leisure in expository style. He feels that because of the demands of modern readers, the author loses his place as "host" in his novel and his right to make leisurely transitions to his philosophy because "all that would grow tedious to the readers who have been quickened by the revealing of indirectness of symbols."<sup>34</sup> In the film presentations of modern novels, "chapters can be as abrupt as a flash. An episode is no more than a symbol. People are getting used to the economy of the allegory and the parable."<sup>35</sup> Fabian comments:

I believe the novel of plot and action is obsolete. . . . It ought to be easy enough to see that form is governed by the unexpressed implication of a work. It arises; that is, it arises if a novelist is not dodging life. Not many people see that, though. Yet everybody is sure that the quality of the writing does not come from the impersonal gravity of the subject. They see it arises from many personal factors, all well known. All well known; but ah! if only the magic of their coincidence could be caught like a bus.<sup>36</sup>

Tomlinson replies:

It's no good trying to catch it. You may, if you don't try. Otherwise, the only virtue for a novel these

<sup>33</sup>Pp. 68-69.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

days, for it to do well, is a mystical something which is called vitality . . . What's that? I don't know what it is, but I hear one ought to have it. Certainly it exists, this vitality, for I've had a novel thrust into my hand with the joyous cry, "You must read this," only to find that it had the consistency and attraction of yesterday's porridge, pale and lumpy. Nourishing stuff, too, with treacle, for those who can manage it. Not every novelist who is sure he needn't bother about his transitional passages and draughty areas, in which the urge of his spirit is feeble, has the disarming gusto, the comic spirit sparkling in him from unflagging and uncanny power, of improvident Dickens. That fellow went on talking without a stop while adding to the people we know by shaking his sleeves over the floor.<sup>37</sup>

Again Fabian speaks:

I think sometimes, that the adverturing of the mind in the novel has ceased. The urge of our spirit is only for strolling about. So much of the writing of fiction seems little more than the designing of labels for seductive confections. They stand in rows on the shelves, and stir no emotions, but only a hesitating desire.<sup>38</sup>

Then Tomlinson suggests that "it is almost forgotten that the novel is a form of letter. Do you know," he asks, "of a character in modern fiction, all of it, who is as notable as Mrs. Battle, and will live as long? She was portrayed, too by an essayist."<sup>39</sup> He reminds us that the novel is narration. "A novel," he says, "should tell a story; but what a very rum story it could be, with reality as it is!"<sup>40</sup> He feels that there should be some room in the novel for the discipline of intelligence. But, he observes, novel writing has become a

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 70-71.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

trade rather than an art, a "profitable medicine for the multitude which suffers from speed, noise, and anxiety. Readers need soothing and the novel is for that. . . . The novel, like the drama, has become solace chiefly."<sup>41</sup> Such quotations reveal Tomlinson's theories about novels and about his reactions to modern novels.

Two comments on the essay conclude this discussion of Tomlinson's thinking about various literary genres. We have noted his remarks upon prose and writers of prose. Basically, the points that he made apply directly to the essay. In any good essay, for example, there must be a concern for words, for thought sincerely expressed, and for a sincere style of writing. To these requirements of all prose, we may add specifically for the essay these comments:

Yet all editors know the delusion is common with beginners in journalism that the essay, a form in which perhaps only six writers have been successful in the history of English letters, is but a prelude to serious work, a holiday before the realities have begun. They all attempt it. Every editorial letter box is loaded with essays every morning. Yet the love of learning, and wisdom, and humour, are not usual, and the gods still more rarely give with these gifts the ability to express them in the written word; and how often may we count on learning, wisdom, and humour being not only reflected through a delightful and original character, but miraculously condensed into the controlled display of a bright and revealing beam? It is no wonder we have but six essayists.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>42</sup>"Prose Writing," Waiting for Daylight, p. 41.

"Learning, wisdom, humour, reflected through a delightful and original character" are surely the marks of Tomlinson's own essays. We add one more quotation: "The novel is narration. So is the essay, and I'd say that both are autobiography, the critical relation of selected experience, that should have that significance for others."<sup>43</sup> We see the whole of this philosophy reflected in the works of Tomlinson.

#### Journalism and the Journalist

Although Tomlinson was himself a journalist, he was never addicted to what we call "journalese." He recognized it, though, and was most critical of it. He felt that much journalistic writing was unsound, unsound as writing, unsound as responsible reporting and discussion. Newspapers and magazines had sold their birthright and had substituted "slick" writing for forthrightly honest reporting. Words ran too glibly from the pen; phrases were too neatly composed, promising much but telling nothing; sentences combined to convert unthinking minds to valueless ideas. His quarrel with journalism was, then, on two counts, style and content, criteria which he used often.

Tomlinson would not have subscribed to the popular cant that newspapers and magazines, radio and television give

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<sup>43</sup>"Mirage from Escorial," South to Cadiz, p. 73.

their readers and hearers what they want, not what is necessarily good. He believed that people read what they did because often they had no choice. In "Magazines" he suggests this idea and says that readers are forced "to stuff their literature behind them so that ownership of it shall not openly shame them."<sup>44</sup> "With several exceptions," he says, "the mass of English magazines and reviews may be dismissed in a few seconds. The exceptions usually are not out yet, or one has seen them."<sup>45</sup> Those words were written in 1918; it is not likely that he would find much changed in 1959, when much popular journalism is comment upon the commentator and the comment. In 1918 he did approve of two magazines, neither of which was English: La Vie Parisienne and the New York Life. Both were humorous magazines with humor too broad for the family circle. Both were magazines popular with troops at the front. But Tomlinson believed their popularity lay not with their usual risque humor but with a certain quality of production. About La Vie he said:

What makes it popular with young Englishmen in France is not the audacity of its abbreviated under-clothing, for there are English prints which specialize in those in a more leering way, and they are not widely popular like the French print. But La Vie is produced by intelligent men. It is not a heavy lump of stupid or snobbish photographs. It does not leer. There is nothing clownish or furtive about it. It is the gay and frank expression of artists whose

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<sup>44</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 49.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

humour is too broad for the general, but, as a rule, there is no doubt about the fine quality of their drawings and the deftness of their wit. That is what makes the French print so liked by our men.<sup>46</sup>

His evaluation of the New York Life is similar:

. . . Its usual survey of the world's affairs has a merry expansiveness which would make the conventional editorial mind as giddy as grandma in an aeroplane. It is not written in a walled enclosure of ideas. It is not darkened and circumscribed by the dusty notions of the clubs. It does not draw poor people as sub-species of the human. It does not recognize class distinctions at all, except for comic purposes. It is brighter, better-informed, bolder, and more humane than anything on this side, and our men in France find its spirit in accord with theirs.<sup>47</sup>

In the latter we see what should and should not be guidelines for a magazine for intelligent people. The magazine should be bright and bold, well informed, and humane. It should not be conventional, should not be contained by calcified ideas.

Tomlinson was critical of newspapers and newspaper writing. Much of the style of journalism annoyed him greatly. In "Bed Books and Night Lights" he suggests that newspaper writing is debilitating to the reader:

A long course of the ordinary facile stuff, such as one gets in the Press every day, thinking it is English, sends one thoughtless and headlong among the bitter herbs and stark boulders of Doughty's burning and spacious expanse; only to get bewildered, and the shins broken, and a great fatigue at first.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 51-52.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Old Junk, pp. 72-73.

An even harsher indictment is found in "An Autumn Morning":

Consider the newspapers as they are now! A casual inspection of the mixture of their hard and congested sentences is enough to show that what is wanted by our writers famous for their virility, their power of "graphic description" as their outpour is called by their disciples, and their knowledge of what everybody ought to be doing, is perhaps no more than an occasional bromide. They would feel better for a long sleep.<sup>49</sup>

Harsh as were his comments upon the journalist and his practice, he was even more caustic in his evaluation of the newspapers themselves. It was the use to which newspapers had been put that troubled him deeply. He felt the newspapers of 1918 had been reduced to leading cheers for "Great Men of Action," for enveloping and stifling government, for heartless materialistic progress. Correspondence--war correspondence--was deceitful and actually criminal. He felt newspapers had been filled with "romantic nonsense during the event [World War I]."<sup>50</sup>

The War was 'written up' for the benefit of readers who made a luxury of the sigh, and who were told and no doubt preferred to believe that the young soldier went into battle with the look we so admire in the picture called The Soul's Awakening. He was going to glory. There are no dead. There are only memorial crosses for heroes and the Last Post. The opinions of most civilians on the War were as agreeable as stained-glass windows. The thought of a tangle of a boy's inside festooned on rusty wire would naturally have spoiled the soul's awakening and the luxury of the sigh. I heard of a civilian official, on his way to Paris after the

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<sup>49</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 72.

<sup>50</sup>"The South Downs," Waiting for Daylight, p. 195.

Armistice, who was just saved by rapid explanations from the drastic attention of a crowd of Tommies who mistook him for a War Correspondent.<sup>51</sup>

The death of Thomas Hardy occasioned another comment upon journalistic behavior:

Then again, the London daily papers, by their various placards on the morning after Thomas Hardy's death, betrayed the fact that not every one of them was prepared on the instant to estimate the importance of the news. Some of them did not consider his passing to be more important than some other subjects, which surprise compelled us to note. One paper was anxious that we should "Read our new serial: 'Frail Wives'." Another asked: "Who will give Jix £100,000?" . . . And later in the day one afternoon paper of the capital of the British Empire, a paper once famous for its liberal outlook on the world, gave a bare half column to the news that the greatest figure in European literature, who happened to be English, had died, apparently because its editorial staff was too astonished by Mrs. Snyder's New Lease of Life.<sup>52</sup>

Near the beginning of The Sea and the Jungle he relates with irony this memory:

I have a clear memory of the newspapers as they were that morning. I had a sheaf of them, for it is my melancholy business to know what each is saying. I learned there were dark and portentous matters, not actually with us, but looming, each already rather larger than a man's hand. If certain things happened, said one half the papers, ruin stared us in the face. If those things did not happen, said the other half, ruin stared us in the face. No way appeared out of it. You paid your half-penny and were damned either way. If you paid a penny you got more for your money. Boding gloom, full-orbed, could be had for that. There was your extra value for you.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 195-196.

<sup>52</sup>Thomas Hardy, p. xxi.

<sup>53</sup>The Sea and the Jungle (New York: Random House, n.d.), pp. 3-4.



Thomlinson made perhaps the most vitriolic of his comments about the products of journalism when he described his reaction to "a week's bound numbers of the Daily Photograph,"<sup>54</sup> opened after he had just finished six months' travel through the Malay Islands:

. . . But by the China Sea I felt a sudden despair for England as I turned those pages, and saw the home life reflected only in such pictures, unqualified anywhere by a word that was not addressed to the mentally deficient. To open those popular sheets seemed to let fly an insane and fatuous blare. There was no sense in the packet. It was only a silly noise. Without a single humorous or serious comment to correct them, those photographs and idiotic paragraphs gave me the first real scare I had had in nearly six months' travel among the Malay Islands.<sup>55</sup>

He is little kinder to editors and journalists who exhibit lurid style in similar false endeavors. Practitioners of journalism have grown to love themselves and the power that they wield. It is the newspaper men who shepherd the oftentimes unprotesting human race into the path that it should like, the path to dulled mediocrity. Editors, he says, have raised themselves to Olympian heights. Only when they are in their heaven can things be right with the world. In the "Art of Writing" he refers to a telegram which he had received from his editor. The telegram "finished with a studied insult after the manner of the editor-kind, whose assurance that the function of the universe is only fulfilled

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<sup>54</sup>Tidemarks (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924), p. 277.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 278-279.

when they have published the fact makes them behave as would Jove with a thick-headed mortal."<sup>56</sup> Of journalistic reporters, Tomlinson speaks bitterly. In "News from the Front" he condemns the leader writer of the daily paper which he ironically entitles the Daily Dustpan. He had just finished reading a letter from France, a letter from a friend who had been killed after the letter was mailed. The dead friend had "alluded in contempt to his noble profession and task,"<sup>57</sup> killing. But clearly "the leader-writer of the Dustpan was a bolder and more martial man. It is but fair to assume, however, that as that journalist in the normal routine of a day devoted to his country had not had the good fortune to run up against the machine guns of the Hindenburg trenches, naturally he was better able to speak than a soldier who was idly swinging there. . . . Journalists have the hard fate merely to indicate the duty of others."<sup>58</sup> It is not with journalism, its purposes, or its practitioners in the abstract that Tomlinson is critical, but with journals and journalists who have prostituted their responsibilities and their talents.

#### Critics and Criticism

Tomlinson the writer was often annoyed by "bookworms" and critics. Both, he felt, were almost unnecessary appendages to the writer's craft. Bookworms often exhibited minute

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<sup>56</sup>Old Junk, p. 93.

<sup>57</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 81.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 82-83.

knowledge of the infinitesimal details of a work to the neglect of the major concern. Critics were enamored of their own virtues.

Bookworms, he thought, were too much concerned with minutiae. They must find in books tiny unanswered questions while the problem of the whole remained unrecognized. "But bookworming has the same relation to literature, even when it is done by a learned doctor in the Bodleian, as flies in a dairy with our milk supply."<sup>59</sup> As an accompaniment to literature it is almost a match for jig saw puzzles.

In many places in his works Tomlinson shows an annoyance with critics. He does not seem to be answering critics, for his own works were all well received. He simply believes them to be trying to make an intangible tangible. "The canons of criticism," he says, "are no more than the apology for our personal preference, no matter how gravely we back them."<sup>60</sup> The critic relies upon his own likes and dislikes. Beyond the criteria of good solid prose--unity, emphasis, coherence--there is little in the process of judging that is measurable, and the process is not measurable because it is not always the same.

The means by which we are able to separate what is precious in books from the matrix is not a process, and is nothing measurable. It is instinctive, and not only

<sup>59</sup>"Bookworms," Waiting for Daylight, p. 124.

<sup>60</sup>"Literary Critics," Waiting for Daylight, p. 190.

differs from age to age, but changes in the life of each of us. It is as indefinable as beauty itself. An artist may know how to create a beautiful thing, but he cannot communicate his knowledge except by that creation. That is all he can tell us of beauty, and, indeed, he may be innocent of the measure of his effort.<sup>61</sup>

The critic may examine and analyze and postulate; but when he has finished, he will still find it hard to explain satisfactorily just why one piece of writing is to be preferred to another. He must carry his ideas to another mind, and there is a difference in minds, "a difference, we see at once, [that] is even deeper than that of language. It is a difference in nature; and we may set up any criterion of literature we like, but it will never carry across such a chasm."<sup>62</sup>

Many of his statements about critics are ironic in tone. Tomlinson is not resentful of critics, but he wonders whence comes their certainty. He felt himself unequipped to be a critic.

I will confess that I have no handy rule, not one I can describe which can be run over new work in poetry or prose with unfailing confidence. My credentials as a literary critic would not, I fear, bear five minutes' scrutiny: but I never cease to look for that defined and adequate equipment, such as even a carpenter calls his tool chest, each designed for a particular task and every implement named. It is sad to have to admit it, but I know I possess only a home-made gimlet to test for dry rot, and another implement, a very ancient heirloom, snatched at only on blind instinct, a stone axe. But these are poor tools, and sooner or later I shall be found out.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

There is gentle modesty here, a simple modesty that made him hesitate to judge others. Because of this modesty he looked to find that certainty of decision which others seemed to find:

There was a time when I was very hopeful about discovering a book on literary criticism which would make the rough places plain for me, and encourage me to feel less embarrassed when present where literary folk were estimating poetry and prose. I am such a simple on these occasions. If one could only discover the means to attain to that rather easy assurance and emphasis when making literary comparisons.<sup>64</sup>

He looked within the writings of designated critics for standards, but he felt that although he had looked for standards, he remembered only a few--the standards of "Aristotle, Longinus, Tolstoy, and Anatole France--probably because it is easy for the innocent to agree with dominating men."<sup>65</sup> He did enjoy one contemporary critic, "Q", but the pleasure that he experienced came because of "'Q's' full, friendly, ironic, and humourous mind."<sup>66</sup> It is difficult at times, he says, to determine just what it is that critics are trying to say. In South to Cadiz, he discusses the painter El Greco. Commenting upon art critics he uses the literary critic as the comparison point of his simile: "It is as hard at times to learn what critics are talking about as to get the meaning

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

of the noise when literary critics are rattling school desks."<sup>67</sup> Again he uses literary criticism as a point for comparison when in "Travel Books" he remarks that he fears Eothen as a travel book has been over-praised. "Compare it as a travel book, for substance and style, with A Week on the Concord, though that is a silly thing to ask, if no sillier than literary criticism usually is."<sup>68</sup> The best criticism, he feels, may be incidental. "I begin to fear that most of the good things said about literature are said in casual asides."<sup>69</sup>

He does not reserve all his goads for literary criticism as a process. Some of his sharpest barbs are reserved for literary critics. "As for literary pundits," he says in "Bed Books and Night Lights," "the high priests of the Temple of Letters, it is interesting and helpful occasionally for an acolyte to swing them a hard one with an incense burner, and cut and run, for a change to something outside the rubrics."<sup>70</sup> In "On Being Out of Date" he says he may have realized he was out of date on the day

. . . when the post-mortem critics discovered that Stevenson, once greatly admired, was no good, for he had nothing to say; or when D. H. Lawrence became a

<sup>67</sup>"El Greco," p. 64.

<sup>68</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 30.

<sup>69</sup>"Literary Critics," Waiting for Daylight, p. 188.

<sup>70</sup>Old Junk, p. 69.

master, with so much to say that nobody could be sure of its importance, or when a learned don disposed of Milton, a poet too long offensive for our comfort with his classical dignity. Or it may have been the year when the more alert and better informed, who had heard the timbrels sounding the advent of another and better age, advised us that Anatole France was worse than dead, for he had never been more than a miserable mistake. I recall also the shocks of an occasion when Charles Lamb, from being a hero as well as gentle, was turned into so sad a subject under a newly discovered analytical probe for the soul that he had to be put where he could do no further harm to confiding innocents.<sup>71</sup>

More bitter even than that is another statement from "A Mingled Yarn." Through Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman he had found justification for his respect for Carlyle. Then he discovered that he had only imagined Carlyle and Stevenson were good reading:

. . . So today I learn with grief where the sage is in the opinion of later and better judges; I was misled. I read Stevenson with a relish, as an uninformed youth, to learn only this year, from critics who are known as serious that this was because of my vulgar taste.

The world of letters has improved and I have grown to be aware of it with the better light for reading given by electricity; but the most powerful electric light bulb has no effect on taste, the worse the luck of some of us.<sup>72</sup>

In yet another caustic comment made in the essay Thomas Hardy, he discusses the criticism which some of Hardy's novels evoked and the attacks which his poetry suffered. One critic in particular enraged him.

Hardy gave us many values of verse; and yet, exclaimed a damaging critic recently, it is doubtful whether he

<sup>71</sup>A Mingled Yarn, p. 147.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., pp. 6-7.

wrote more than thirty poems. We are constrained to put the humble question "when is a poet not a poet?" It might help us to understand the reason for poetry if we knew how often the poet must perform the miraculous before we confess the miracle.<sup>73</sup>

The last of that quotation can suggest that critics may stultify the creative writer. In "The Road to Concord," discussing Thoreau and the meaning of a particular passage which some critics had decried because the meaning was not clear, Tomlinson tells of another who had damned Thoreau because his writings were all "moonshine." He replies that there is a place for moonshine. "I am all for freedom in moonshine."<sup>74</sup> As to the first charge, he says he is not sure he knows [the meaning], but "I think I recognize good writing, at least, and that must mean something."<sup>75</sup> He continues:

But as a severely intellectual critic once expostulated: "Take the poetry out of Shakespeare, and what's left?" Doubtless Thoreau would have told us that if we did not catch his meaning, then he would not catch it for us. He had got as near as he could to a difficulty. And surely it is sufficiently difficult in writing to throw a net of words around the intangible, around the very ghost of a thought, without afterward making an effort to empty out the ghost so that it may be handed about for inspection, together with a plan of Spaulding's farm where it was caught, and a photograph of a pine tree as evidence! If we scrutinize any piece of poetry for too long, and are too curiously skeptical through a belief that earth is more accurately surveyed by the rules of trigonometry, then that net of words will be empty enough. Take the poetry out of it and what is left? All moonshine!<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Thomas Hardy, p. xxvii.

<sup>74</sup>South to Cadiz, p. 179.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., pp. 188-189.



But although he is critical of criticism and critics and their concern with impossible intangibles, Tomlinson does have some words to say about evaluating literature. Guides to understanding and evaluating writing occur in his "casual asides." In his judgment the critic must see himself as a part of the judgment. "When we criticize others the instant penalty is that we unwittingly confess what we are ourselves."<sup>77</sup> There are other gleanings about critics and criticism, some of them almost epigrammatic. In "Cote d'Or," for example, he says, "In all aspects created beauty is our chief justification before Heaven, and so its care is the charge of any man upon whom the light has fallen as a sign."<sup>78</sup> In "Barbellion" he asks, "Is there any doubt still of the superiority of imagination over hard-headedness?"<sup>79</sup> In "Outward Bound," he points at over-analysis: "Still all the analysis cannot remove the instant impression of the beauty of the earth and the glory of the skies, as the sun rises on a first approach to a tropical land of the rains; or when night falls there for that matter."<sup>80</sup>

One of the principal complaints which Tomlinson brings against critics is that they forget the purpose of their own writing. "In time, they forget they are serving letters and

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<sup>77</sup>"News from the Front," Waiting for Daylight, p. 82.

<sup>78</sup>A Mingled Yarn, p. 96.

<sup>79</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 216.

<sup>80</sup>A Mingled Yarn, p. 35.

not the trade."<sup>81</sup> As a result, he says, "There is almost as much clotted nonsense written about literature as about theology."<sup>82</sup> He discusses a fellow writer's comments upon criticism. The critic had come to the end with this statement, casually made: "'It seems to me you can bring all art down to one test.' He gave me the test, which is a passage beginning, 'Consider the lilies of the field'."<sup>83</sup>

Perhaps we had better not. Perhaps a consideration which began with a lily might tarnish, if it were allowed more than the glory of wise kings. To begin with such a challenge to one's opinions is unwise, because it might not allow the consequent argument a chance to find approval for the things we most admire. But evidently those lilies of the field were of importance to the commentator who once begged his fellow men to consider them, or objects so common by the wayside could not have been marked by him with favour. He so exalted those common weeds that they diminished, though that was not their aim, the cherished national condition of a great monarch. Is that an approach to a just criticism of art? It may be so. . . . I am almost prepared to believe there may be something in it. It is possible that scientific critics, who judge by fixed criteria of analysis and comparison, and who are annoyed as much by a show of life in a book as an anatomist would be if the corpse moved under his knife, had better regard it; unless, like the girl in melodrama, they would prefer to take the wrong turning.<sup>84</sup>

A summation of Tomlinson's observations about critics and their products would seem to say that critics have preferred "to take the wrong turning."

<sup>81</sup>"Mirage from Escorial," South to Cadiz, p. 72.

<sup>82</sup>"Bed Books and Night Lights," Old Junk, p. 69.

<sup>83</sup>"On the Chesil Bank," The Face of the Earth, p. 126.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER III

### THE STYLIST

If style be, as Swift says, "proper words in proper places," it would seem proper in analyzing the essays of Henry Major Tomlinson to look for words and places. Therefore, we must examine words, word patterns, and words combined into sentences. We must see how the words chosen and the word patterns fit together to construct the sentences. Beyond these manifestations of style, we must seek to find the idea or ideas which the author wants to share with us. We shall not be able to separate the man from his thought or his thought from his style, for "as a man thinketh in his heart," and as he thinketh, so must he write. We shall draw some general conclusions about Tomlinson's writings and shall attempt in a detailed analysis to show the basis for these conclusions.

#### Aesthetics

The precise words that make Tomlinson's essays entrancing do not result from accidental choice. In "Sailor Language" Tomlinson tells of a friend who could write easily and popularly about any event, one who had made fun of Tomlinson's Roget. "I envy him. I wish I could do it, but

there are times when every word I try is opaque."<sup>1</sup> The results of Tomlinson's efforts, however, are seldom, if ever, opaque. We see clearly what he would have us see by a series of pictures so sharply focused that we feel we know the place or the idea or the mood he has exhibited.

Even a cursory reading of the essays awakens the reader to Tomlinson's mastery of words. Yet the words seem so particularly right that we are not conscious of his diction until after we have read his works extensively. Then we suddenly become aware of how right the words are, and only then do we begin to examine them more closely. We discover the vocabulary to be extensive, far beyond the speaking and writing, but not understanding, range of most of his readers, yet the vocabulary seems the familiar one of daily converse. It may be that a lack of self-consciousness on his part lets him dare to handle words unconsciously. Words have business to do and pleasure to give. Where we might hesitate to use the vocabulary which he uses because of our fear lest we be markedly ostentatious or dramatic, Tomlinson assumes the words to be good for talk and does use them for his conversations with us. We find words such as "penumbra" in "The penumbra of the unfathomed deeps of his mind";<sup>2</sup> "tumulus" in "the man who unwittingly lies down to sleep on

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<sup>1</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, p. 66.

the tumulus where the little people dance on midsummer night";<sup>3</sup> "littoral" in "he was said to go mad, and to roll trampling and trumpeting through the squalid littoral of the world";<sup>4</sup> "integument" in "grimey raiment which by the look of it, was an integument never cast after we left port";<sup>5</sup> "fuliginous" in "He was a solitary in the sky, monstrous and fuliginous under his lovely canopy";<sup>6</sup> "sibilation" in "the faint sibilation of insects was only as if in the silence you heard the sharp rays of the sun impinge on the earth."<sup>7</sup> These words are not unusual but are for the dignified but friendly type of writing we expect in the essay. The vocabulary does not, however, call attention to itself. It is when we examine the fabric of the essays that we become conscious of it. We are drawn out of our own pattern of speech and writing, and we feel impelled to widen our sensitivity and our responses. We recognize in the vocabulary the thread for the fabric of the essays. Tomlinson may have felt so about vocabulary, for he says of Donkey, a seaman on the Capella of The Sea and the Jungle voyage, "For now Donkey is convinced it is very bad to

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Tide Marks, p. 203.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

sleep outside his curtain [mosquito bar], and when he tries to tell us how unwholesome such sleeping can be, just at the point when he gets most entertaining his vocabulary wears into holes and tatters."<sup>8</sup>

### Color

The reader is always conscious of color as he reads Tomlinson's prose. Often the color seems to be present merely because of the mood or atmosphere, but there is much use of color. Gray and brown and half lights are often suggested. Chromatic colors--red, green, purple, brown, pink--simple colors are frequent. These plus those designated as psychological primaries--red, yellow, green, blue, black, and white--serve for many of his descriptive passages.

We are very conscious of these unmodified colors in The Sea and the Jungle, as in the following:

. . . And here, at last, was Itacoatiara or Serpa. From one of the infrequent, low, ferruginous cliffs of the river the jungle had been cleared, and on the short range of modest undulating heights which displace the green palisade with soft glowings of rose, cherry, and orange rock, the sight escaped to a disorder of arboured houses, like a disarray of little white cubes; Serpa was, in appearance, half a basketful of white bricks shot into a portico of the forest.<sup>9</sup>

The variation of hue is here in rose and cherry, but green, white and orange make more lasting impressions. We find further examples in this same work, such as "We got to a

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

steep bank of red clay, fissured by the heat, and as hard as brickwork. Green and brown lizards whisked before us as we broke the quiet."<sup>10</sup> Near the end of the same paragraph are these words: "Cloudland low down over the forest to the south, a far disorder of violet [purple] heights, waiting to fill the sky and sunset and to shock our unimportance then with convulsions of blue flames, did not seem more aloof and inaccessible to me than our immediate surroundings."<sup>11</sup> The colors are here named almost as they appear in a child's first color box. There are variations, of course, such as this one in the paragraph just cited: "The Amazon was an immensity of water, a plain of burnished silver, where headlands, islands, and lines of cliffs were all cut in one level mass of emerald veined with white."<sup>12</sup> We find this variation in The Sea and the Jungle, too: Another [tree] which I supposed to be of the leguminous order had a silvery bole, and a texture of pale green leafage, open and light."<sup>13</sup> Thus, we see there are modifications. Yet there are more of the simple color words than of the modified.

It is possible that such use of simple color appears because this writing is reporting the elemental jungle. We

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

find, however, the same use of primary color in other writings, in reflective writings, such as "Transfiguration": "On a clear day, at sundown, the island behaves so much like a lump of separated earth, a piece of the black world we know, that I can believe it is land, something to be found on the map, a place where I could get ashore, after toil and adventures. At sundown a low yellow planet marks its hiding place."<sup>14</sup> In "The Voyage of the Mona" we find the seaman Yeo wore a "blue jersey," not a navy blue jersey as we might expect, and "the sea was blue and white."<sup>15</sup>

But not all color words are single or uncombined. There are variations in forms, variations in tone names, variation in combinations of colors. The essays which treat of visits to the tropics or subtropics are, of course, full of variations as well as of chromatic color words, while color words used in the essays about the northern lands are less varied. This is as one would expect, for there seems to be more quantity of color in the tropics, although there is color to be found in all parts of the lands and seas where man may travel. The Sea and the Jungle is the display board for many examples of color patterns. As a part of imagery, color recurs in another section of this paper, but color requires treatment of itself.

<sup>14</sup>Old Junk, pp. 75-76.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 120.



There is color in all the faces of nature, and Tomlinson is eager and able to show that color to us. In many places we find the play of primary color with that of hues and tones. He tells of taking aboard ship a

. . . coryphene, the dolphin of sailors. It gave us in its death agony the famous display, beautiful but rather painful to watch, for the wonderful hues, as they changed to the eye, and sent to the mind only a message of a creature in a violent death struggle.

So there the dolphin was, glowing and fading with the hues of faery. Its life really illuminating it from within. As its life ebbed, or stove convulsively, its colors waned and pulsed. It was gold when it came on board, and darkened to ultramarine as it thrashed the deck, and its broad dorsal fin showed violet eyes. Its body changed to a pale metallic green; and then its light went out.<sup>16</sup>

Combination of simple color concept is shown in : "A moderate north-east wind and sea, and a bright morning; but far out a dark cloud formed, and drew, and driving toward us, covered us presently with a blue-black canopy."<sup>17</sup> Blue-black is used also in "The sea ran in broad heavy mounds, blue-black and vitreous, which hardly moved our bulk."<sup>18</sup>

The primary colors yellow and red seem to have been a part of the Amazon jungle visited by the Capella. In the following quotation we find red with two variations: "More rarely the river cuts a section through some undulating heights of red conglomerate . . . and again the bank may be

<sup>16</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, p. 97.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

of cherry and saffron clay which gives a name to Itacoatiara."<sup>19</sup> Poised against this study in red is one in yellow: "The plane of the dingy yellow flood was variegated with transient areas of bright sulphur and chocolate."<sup>20</sup> Variations of hue complete the pattern.

An exotic image is shown by the detailing of color in this example: "Suddenly the sunrise ran a long band of glowing saffron over the shadow to port, and the vague summit became remarkable with a parapet of black filigree, crown and fronds of palms and strange trees showing in rigid patterns of ebony."<sup>21</sup> There are two other forms of this image to be found in the same book. One employs simple colors; one makes use of variation. The first is this: "The orange sunrise behind a forest was topped by a black design of palm fronds."<sup>22</sup> The second is this: "Where the luminous sky was behind an island, groups of diminutive palms showed, as tiny and distinct as the forms of mildew under a magnifying glass, delicate black pencillings along the foot of the sky wall."<sup>23</sup>

Another exotic image created by a few color words is this one found in "The African Coast": "The grove of palms

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 180-181.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

holding their plumes above a white village might be delicate pencillings on the yellow sheet of the desert. The heat is a balm. The shadows are stains of indigo on the roads and pale walls."<sup>24</sup> The repetition of the figure "delicate pencillings" we note. Another of like tone is this: "They might have been Dryads, those slender and motionless forms in robes of scarlet, orange, and emerald, who were intent on some ritual among the trees."<sup>25</sup>

His travels to the islands of the East Indies resulted in pleasure for us. The colors are as pure and as intense there as they are in the Amazon pictures, although the colors met are different. Crabs along the beach of one of these far-off islands are the source of this grouping: "I sat on a stump and watched the glistening mud. It was riddled with the burrows of little crabs. Some were vermilion, others were white and one sort was violet with legs of blue."<sup>26</sup> The colors of the interior of a volcano on Ternate, one of the Malay islands, suggests brooding danger as well as gives us a clear line sketch of the scene: "The crags were calcined red and black, and they were blotched with sulphur and verdigris."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Old Junk, p. 35.

<sup>25</sup>Tide Marks, p. 69.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

Memories called back from far away places during a winter of war are clear and are a break in the gloom of an expected enemy attack. The first example is very brief, a memory of an island "on a floor of malachite which had stains of orange drift-weed."<sup>28</sup> The second memory remained so vivid that he doubted his memory: "Yet even now, as I shall not have that landfall again, I have a doubt that waters could be of the colors which were radiant about that island, that rock could be of rose and white, that trees could be so green and aromatic."<sup>29</sup>

Another example shows color hues that seem particularly fitted for the presented idea:

A fitful display of ruby and emerald light in which the shape of palm trees waved attracted me outside, for it was fairly reminiscent of the bright illustrations to youth's newly expurgated edition of the "Thousand and One Nights."<sup>30</sup>

Although the tropics are the source of many expressions of color, the lands of the temperate zones, too, are expressive in color. A simple effective figure appears in these few words: "A cascade of rose, purple, yellow, white and green was held narrowly by those converging slopes of bracken and oak scrub."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup>"Islands," Waiting for Daylight, p. 27.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>30</sup>Tide Marks, p. 95.

<sup>31</sup>"A North Devon Estuary," The Face of the Earth, p. 9.

We are not surprised to find many of our examples drawn from the sea, for much of English life is touched by the sea. Blue and green are, of course, colors associated with water. The following quotation contains both colors: "The sea was blue and white. The frail coast now far away was green and gold."<sup>32</sup> Another green and white figure is found in "The Derelict": "The sea whirling and leaping past was far below our wall side. It was like peering dizzily over a precipice when watching those green and white cataracts."<sup>33</sup> The same essay has this picture: "Looking seawards, I saw receding the broad green hill, snow-capped, which had lifted us and let us down. The sea was getting up."<sup>34</sup> Another representation of green is this: "Her green hull has the sheer of a sea hollow."<sup>35</sup> The color and the form are suggestive of the sea itself.

White--and white may be called a color--is a part of the color pattern of the northern skies. It is combined with blue or black or gray to suggest the everlastingness of the breaking sea. We find it used with blue in this selection: "Across that patch of blue, which was a look into eternity, I saw a bird drift as white as sanctity."<sup>36</sup> Again we find

<sup>32</sup>"Voyage of the Mona," Old Junk, p. 125.

<sup>33</sup>Old Junk, pp. 113-114.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>35</sup>"Off Shore," London River, p. 219.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

white and blue: "The vault was turquoise, and the moving floor was cobalt. The white islands of the Olympians were in the sky."<sup>37</sup> White with another hue appears in a most effective picture:

The triumphant waters shouted over her, and occupied her with every breaker, then left her for a minute, with her deck a deep clear amethystine bath, through which all her white paint glimmered till the instant when another wall of water from the ocean burst over all but her upper works.<sup>38</sup>

But there were land colors to be recorded as well as sea colors: "I came to a tree at the bottom of the street. . . . The tree never had anything to say to me. But on that morning it had. It must have had a touch of the sun. It was a bird-cherry, and at that movement was an astonishing mixture of snowy white and pale translucent green, with rosy chaffinches darting among its pendulous flowers."<sup>39</sup> There are colors on the moors, too, and the color words permit us to share the pleasure Tomlinson found there. Two of these patterns will suffice to show his artistry in words: "The furze made vivid islands of new green and gold in wide lakes of purple for the heather was in bloom."<sup>40</sup> The second is this: ". . . those cushions of rosy heath pendent in half

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>38</sup>"The Wreck," A Mingled Yarn, p. 107.

<sup>39</sup>"The Little Things," The Face of the Earth, pp. 243-244.

<sup>40</sup>"On the Chesil Bank," The Face of the Earth, p. 122.

circles over a scar in the ground where white flints were set in buff colored earth which seemed self-luminous."<sup>41</sup>

Two more examples, these of autumn, and then we are done. Each is poetic in feeling: "The branches of the tamarisk, usually troubled, for they face the Atlantic, were in complete repose. Their green feathers were on young stems of shining coral."<sup>42</sup> The final example is this:

And there was that blade of grass under the tamarisk. There are many blades of grass there, of course, but this one stood out. It topped the rest. It was arched above its fellows. Its blade, of bluish-green--was set with minute beads of dew, and the angle of the sunlight was lucky. The blade was iridescent. It glittered with many minute suns. It flashed at times in a way to which grass has no right, and the flashes were of ruby and emerald.<sup>43</sup>

We note in the quoted passages no complicated flights of description, no unusual hues or tones. The effectiveness comes because we are convinced that Tomlinson's observation is precise, that his color sense is true, that his color words are right for the picture he exhibits. We notice a difference between the color scenes from the tropics and the color patterns of the temperate zones. This coincides with our own experience, either real or vicarious, and we acknowledge the validity of his observations because they reinforce our own. We are willing, then, to accept his color pictures

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

and to compose our images with his paints. We are conscious of his word mastery.

### Imagery

For Tomlinson, words served to reveal the impressions of life around him. He was acutely sensitive to all that is-- people, places, ideas. Words were tools to create images by which others could share his impressions. He combined words to produce images that are finely focused. The images are definite, although some pictures, particularly in images of the sea, may have a vague limit of definition. This form seems to expand the scope of the image. He uses no one method of developing his images, although many of his most effective efforts are developed merely by cataloging. Yet cataloging in Tomlinson's hands is creative, for from his own experience the reader synthesizes with Tomlinson's image-bearing words a new whole.

It is evident from the previous section that the use of color is one of the chief components of images that Tomlinson shares with us. As we examine the selections to note his choice of color, we realize that images are developing. Fleeting images may occur in numbers, particularly in relation to color, when the mind responds to suggestions. The author makes his suggestion by words, the carefully chosen words. Our response to his suggestions defines the image. ". . . It is by means of imagery drawn from experience and



combined by imagination that an author creates; and it is by imagery drawn from his own differing experience that a reader reads."<sup>44</sup>

A careful examination of the images used by Tomlinson and of the composition of those images should lead to some conclusions about his style. We have seen that Tomlinson objected to post-mortem dissection of literature, believing that the beauty of a piece could be destroyed by over-examination. It seems reasonable, however, that anything which we can do to intensify our awareness of beauty should prove worthwhile. "Literature is the interpretation of life through the medium of words," Rickert tells us in New Methods for the Study of Literature. "Externally it is nothing more than the arrangement of words."<sup>45</sup> In this study of imagery and figures, I do not propose to examine by counting syllables or content words, or by a detailed analysis of thought, tone, or rhythm patterns; I do propose to examine images and figures with the hope of determining why the images Tomlinson created are effective and how they contribute to the total effect of his writings.

Although much of his most effective imagery lies in his portrayal of the sea, Tomlinson was not a seaman. He was

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<sup>44</sup>Edith Rickert, New Methods for the Study of Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), p. 25.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

fascinated by the sea and was ever drawn toward it, but he feared it. He did not like the sea. In "Hints for Those About to Travel," he says this:

I'm a little bit afraid of the sea. . . . That is one thing, at least I have learned in travel. I do not love the sea. The look of it is disquieting. There is something in the very sound of it that stirs the premonition felt while we listen to noble music; we become inexplicably troubled.<sup>46</sup>

Tomlinson was attracted to the sea, however. He says: "I should not enjoy an English holiday away from the coast, and I should be glad if some wise person could explain exactly why."<sup>47</sup> He tries to explain why he, and others, may be attracted to the sea:

It is not the sea itself, not all that salt water, which we find attractive. Most of us, I suppose, are a little nervous of the sea. No matter what its smiles may be, we doubt its friendliness. It is about as friendly as the volcano which is benign while it does not feel like blowing up. What draws us to the sea is the light breaking over it. Try listening, in perfect safety, to combers breaking among the reefs on a dark night, and then say whether you enjoy the voice of great waters. I think it must be the wonder of light without bounds which draws us to the docks to overcome the distractions and discomforts of departure. We see there is liberty in the world, after all, if only we had the will to take it. And unfailingly we make strange landfalls during an escape, coasts of illusion if you like, and under incredible skies, but sufficient to shake our old faith in those realities we had supposed we were obliged to accept. There are other worlds.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup>"Hints for Those About to Travel," The Face of the Earth, p. 36.

<sup>47</sup>"On the Chesil Bank," The Face of the Earth, p. 111.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

He had travelled in most of the sea waters of the world, and his ability to recreate for us his own views and feelings in regard to those waters is responsible for the association of his name with the sea and writings of the sea.

Particularly effective, certainly for the traveler who is content to travel by book, is the account of the storm at sea as the Capella crossed the Atlantic to the Amazon. Swinnerton says about that passage: "[Tomlinson shows us the storm] not as a sailor sees it, but as we ourselves (who are not sailors) would see it and feel afraid and not very comfortable."<sup>49</sup> The experience is created for us in a series of images that follow one after another. The first image is of the sea in storm. The second directs attention to the ship. The third is one of sound:

These western ocean waves had a different character. They were the sea. We did not have a multitude of waves in sight, but the sea floor itself might have been undulation. The ocean was profoundly convulsed. Our outlook was confined to a few heights and hollows, and the moving heights were swift, but unhurried and stately. Your alarm, as you saw a greater hill appear ahead, tower, and bear down, had no time to get more than just out of the stage of surprise and wonder when the "Capella's" bows were pointing skyward on a long upslope of water, the broken summit of which was too quick for the "Capella"--the bows disappeared in a white explosion, a volley of spray, as hard as shot raked the bridge, the foredeck filled with raging water, and the wave swept along our run, dark, severe, and immense; with so little noise too; with but a faint hissing of foam, as in deliberate silence. The "Capella" then began to run down a valley.

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<sup>49</sup>Frank Swinnerton, The Georgian Literary Scene (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1934), p. 158.

The engines were reduced to half speed; it would have been dangerous to drive her at such seas. Our wet and slippery decks were bleak, wind-swept and deserted. The mirror of water on the iron surfaces, constantly renewed, reflected and flashed the wild lights in the sky as she rolled and pitched, and somehow those reflections from her polish made the steamer seem more desolate and forlorn. Not a man showed anywhere on the vessel's length, except merely to hurry from one vantage to another--darting out of the ship's interior, and scurrying to another hole and vanishing abruptly, like a rabbit.

The gale was dumb till it met and was torn in our harsh opposition, shouting and moaning then in anger and torment as we steadily pressed our iron into its ponderable body. You could imagine the flawless flood of air pouring silently express till it met our pillars and pinnacles, and then flying past rift, the thousand punctures instantly spreading into long shrieking lacerations. The wounds and mouths were so many, loud and poignant, that you wondered you could not see them. Our structure was full of voices, but the weighty body which drove against our shrouds and funnel guys, and kept them strongly vibrating were curiously invisible. The hard jets of air spurted hissing through the winches. The sound in the shrouds and stays began like that of something tearing, and rose to a high keening. The deeper notes were amidships, in the alleyways and round the engine-room casing; but the ship itself contributed a note, a metallic murmur so profound that it was felt as a tremor rather than heard. It was almost below human hearing. It was the hollow ship resonant, the steel walls, decks, and bulkheads quivering under the drumming of the seas, and the regular throws of the crankshaft far below.<sup>50</sup>

The image of the shrieking air has something of Greek tragedy in it.

A simpler and more quiet impression of sound from the sea is found in "Off-Shore":

There was the monody, confidant but subdued, the most ancient song in the world, of invisible waters. Sometimes there was a shock when she dropped into a hollow,

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<sup>50</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, pp. 34-35.

and a vicious shower whipped across the glass of the wheel-house. I then got the sad feeling, much too soon, that the inhospitable North was greeting us. It is after sundown at sea, when looking through the dark to the stars, listening to sounds that are as though ancient waters were still wandering under a sky in which day has not been kindled, seeking coasts not yet formed.<sup>51</sup>

Images created by reference to taste and smell are not so common, in any writing, as are those which are built upon sight and sound. There are two of these in "Off-Shore." The images are concomitant, individual, yet combined:

When I left the wheel-house to go below, it was near midnight. As I opened the heavy door of the house the night howled aloud at my appearance. The night smelt pungently of salt and seaweed. The wind was like ice to my nose and it tasted like iron. Sometimes the next step was at a correct distance below my feet; and then all that was under me would be swept away. I descended into the muffled saloon, which was a little box enclosing light and warmth partially submerged in the waters. There it smelt of hot engine-oil and stale clothes.<sup>52</sup>

A simple image drawing but very effective is the picture of the trawler Susie: "She was poised askew, in that arrested instant, on a glassy slope of water, with its crest foaming above her."<sup>53</sup> Surely there are few who could read these paragraphs, about sea power, without an emotional response of some sort, a thankfulness for having missed such turmoil, an appreciation of those who must make their living in such danger, a wish that one might have experienced such wild danger.

<sup>51</sup>London River, pp. 199-200.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 200-201.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

Vivid, too, are the pictures of storms over land, nature's storms or man's war-made storms. The pictures of nature's storms are the recreation of the experience. Those which describe man's blasphemy, however, induce Tomlinson's horror at the acts that come to pass within civilization and through material progress.

We find this account of a storm which fell upon the Capella when she was many miles inland from the sea, sailing up the Amazon river. Exactness comes from the use of the figurative "canopy" and "curtain," the "yellow light . . . traced shapes," "the inverted black bowl," and "Night contracted and expanded":

There was one sunset when the overspreading of violet clouds would have shut out the day quite, but that the canopy was not closely adjusted to the low barrier of forest to the westward. Through that narrow chink a yellow light streamed, and traced shapes on the lurid walls and roof which narrowly enclosed us. This was the beginning of the most alarming of our daily electrical storms. There was no wind. Serpa and all the coast facing that rift where the light entered our prison, stood prominent and strange, and surprised us as much as if we had not looked in that direction till then. The curtain dropped behind the forest, and all the light was shut out. We could not see across the ship. Knowing how strong and bright could be the electrical discharges (though they were rarely accompanied by thunder) when not heralded in so portentous a way, we waited with some anxiety for this display to begin. It began over the trees behind Serpa. Blue fire flickered low down, and was quickly doused. Then a crack of light sprang across the inverted black bowl from east to west in three quick movements. Its instant ramifications fractured all the roof in a network of dazzling blue lines. The reticulations of light were fleeting, but never gone. Night contracted and expanded, and the sharp sounds, which were not like thunder, might have been the tumbling flinders

of night's roof. We saw not only the river, and the shapes of the trees and the village, as in wavering daylight, but their colours. One flash sheeted the heavens, and its overbright glare extinguished everything. It came with an explosion, like the firing of a great gun close to our ears, and for a time we thought the ship was struck. In this effort the storm exhausted itself.<sup>54</sup>

Another inland storm is shown in this image:

At four in the afternoon the sky grew ominous. We had just time to notice the trees astern suddenly convulsed, writhing where they stood, and the storm sprang at us, roaring, ripping away awnings and loose gear. The noise in the forest round us was that of cataclysm. The rain was an obscurity of falling water, and the trees turned to shadows in a grey fog. The ship became full of waterspouts, large streams and jets curving away from every prominence. This lasted for but twenty minutes.<sup>55</sup>

A creation of a different sort is drawn in "A Raid Night." Here is a man-made storm, more frightening than the others because over the "obscure and unimportant street," we see "a celestial portent illuminate briefly a little of the future of mankind":

The sky was suspect, and we watched it, but saw only vacuity till one long beam shot into it, searching slowly and deliberately the whole mysterious ceiling, yet hesitating sometimes, and going back on its path as though intelligently suspicious of a matter it had passed over too quickly. It peered into the immense caverns of a cloud to which it had returned, illuminating to us unsuspected and horrifying possibilities of hiding-places above us. We expected to see the discovered enemy boldly emerge then. Other beams by now had joined the pioneer, and the night became bewildering with a dazzling mesh of light. Shells joined the wandering beams, those sparks of orange and red. A world of fantastic chimney-pots leaped into being

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<sup>54</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, pp. 156-157.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 204-205.

between us and the sudden expansion of a fan of yellow flame. A bomb! We just felt, but hardly heard, the shock of it. A furious succession of such bursts of light followed, a convulsive opening and shutting of night. We saw that when midnight is cleft asunder it has a fiery inside.<sup>56</sup>

We note the "convulsive opening and shutting of night; is comparable to the "Night contracted and expanded" of the image of nature's upheaval previously quoted.

But not all images are of storm and violence. The following, found in The Sea and the Jungle, is a continuation of the paragraph of storm. We recognize in it the poet's clear vision and his sensitiveness to impression:

But the impending clouds remained to hasten night when we were in a place which, more than anything I have seen, was the world before the coming of man. The river had broadened and shallowed. The forest enclosed us. There were islands, and the rank growth of swamps. We could see, through breaks in the igapo, extensive lagoons beyond, with the high jungle brooding over empty silver areas. Herons, storks, and egrets were white and still about the tangle of aqueous roots. It was all as silent and other world as a picture.<sup>57</sup>

This one, too, suggests quietness, relaxation:

In the easy swell of the bay our movements became rhythmic, and we settled down quietly in a long reach. A vault of blue had shaped over us. The Foreland was born into the world. It looked towards the new day, and was of amber; but over the moors to the north-east the rain clouds, a gathering of sullen battalions, challenged the dawn with an entrenched region of gloom. Yet when the sun rose and looked straight at them, they went. It was a good morning. Now we could see all the bay coloured and defined in every hanging field, steep, and combe. The waters danced.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup>Waiting for Daylight, pp. 22-23.

<sup>57</sup>p. 205.

<sup>58</sup>"A North Devon Estuary," The Face of the Earth, p. 22.



Another image of quietness, this one of night, is here:

Before me then should have been the Thames, at the top of flood tide. It was not seen. There was only a black void dividing some clusters of brilliant but remote and diminished lights. There were odd stars which detached themselves from the fixed clusters, and moved in the void, sounding the profundity of the chasm beneath them with lines of trembling fire. Such a wandering comet drifted near where I stood on the verge of nothing, and then it was plain that its trail of quivering light did not sound, but floated and undulated on a travelling road--that chasm before me was black because it was filled with fluid night.<sup>59</sup>

A delightful example of poetic imagery is this:

". . . the fireflies which flit about the dark ship at night in myriads, tiny blue and yellow glow-lamps which burn with puzzling inconstancy as though being switched on and off."<sup>60</sup>

Another is this:

It was evening before we were abreast of that most picturesque town I saw on the river. Obydos rests on one of the rare Amazon cliffs of rufous clay and sandstone. The forest mounts the hill above it, and the scattered red roofs of the town show in a surf of foliage. The cliffs glowed in cream and cherry tints, with a cascade of vines falling over them, though not reaching the shore. The dainty little houses sit high in a loop of the cliffs. We left the city behind, with a huge cumulus cloud resting over it, and the evening light on all.<sup>61</sup>

One more example belongs with these selections of poetic phrasing: "We have such days, without a breath of air, and two vivid walls of still jungle, and between them a yellow

<sup>59</sup>"A Midnight Voyage," London River, pp. 34-35.

<sup>60</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, p. 136.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

river serpentining under the torrid sun, and a silence which is like deafness."<sup>62</sup>

The sensitivity of an artist is shown in the cataloging of details to construct this image, in which the arrangement and presentation of detail are not pedestrian, but artistic:

There is an avenue of old trees leading up to the house, in which the full day is but a greenish twilight. When the house is seen in sunlight beyond the framing end of the avenue, its front, of Caen limestone, looking to the south, seems self-luminous, and of the placid shine and colour of a newly-risen harvest moon. The ridge of the steeply pitched tiles of the roof is as casual along the blue of the sky as an outcrop of coral rock, which frost has moulded, and the tiles too precipitous for verdure are immemorial with lichens.<sup>63</sup>

A like approach occurs in this selection from "Morning in Madrid":

The lane below had more sunlight than it could hold. A team of mules trampling slowly through were not sleek but brightly polished, and their resigned ears worked loose as they hauled two hogsheads of wine, on which maroon stains marked the staves of new oak. A man whose head and breast showed he got as much sunlight as the vines sang an outlandish song to his team.<sup>64</sup>

The simple images are effective, too, in showing the artist's feeling for center of focus. Three examples will serve to show the beauty of simplicity. The first is found in "A North Devon Estuary": "Our craft still moved in, projected forward on vehement billows, past bleak jags in

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>63</sup>"Cote d 'Or," A Mingled Yarn, p. 97.

<sup>64</sup>South to Cadiz, p. 40.

blisters of foam, and then anchored."<sup>65</sup> The second is from the same essay: "The ocean outside was exploding on steeples and tables of rock."<sup>66</sup> The third is taken from The Sea and the Jungle: "In the west was a steep range of cloudland, rising from the sea, and against it was inclined the flame of a rainbow."<sup>67</sup>

The following paragraph demonstrates several of the features of imagery that are a part of Tomlinson's prose: his sensitivity to light and color--grey, ultimate blue, blue-black, milky blue, purple; his sensitivity to proportion--the high dome with its circular floor; the limitless frame of his universe:

Then it was August. The sea ran in broad heavy mounds, blue-black and vitreous, which hardly moved our bulk. In the afternoon the ocean, a short distance from the ship, grew filmed and opaque, heaving, was smooth and flawless. No light entered its deeps, but the radiant heat was mirrored on it as on the pallor of fluid lava. The water ploughed up by the bows did not break, but rolled over viscidly. The sun dropped behind the sea about a point west of our course. Night was near. Yet still the high dome with its circular floor the sea was magically illuminated, as by the proximity of a wonderful presence. We, solitary and privileged in the theatre, waited expectant. The doors of glory were somewhere ajar. The western wall was clear, shining and empty, enclosed by a proscenium of amber flames. In the north-east, astern of us were some high fair-weather clouds, like a faint host of little cherubs, and from their superior galleries they watched a light invisible to us; it made their faces bright. Even our own prosaic iron gear was sublimated;

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<sup>65</sup>The Face of the Earth, p. 23.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>p. 89.

our ship became lustrous and strange. We were the Argonauts, and our world was bright with the veritable self-radiance of a world of romance where the things that would happen were undreamed of, and we watched for them from our argosy's side calm and expectant; my fellows were transfigured, looked huge, were rosy and awful, immortals in that light no mortal is given to see.<sup>68</sup>

The paragraph also demonstrates an effective use of metaphor in the construction of the image. The image of the world as a theater with men waiting for the play to begin heightens particularly the author's feeling of his place in the world. The simile completes one metaphoric image. The second metaphor, the identification with the Argonauts, is interesting because by identifying the seamen with the sailors of the legendary Argonauts he explains the change in their appearance, their apparent increase in size.

I present a final selection without comment:

Day returned briefly at sunset. It was an astonishing gift. The clouds rapidly lifted and the sky cleared, till the sea extended far to a bright horizon, hard and polished, a clear separation of our planet and heaven. The waves were still ponderous. The Windhover laboured heavily. We rolled over the bright slopes aimlessly. She would rear till the forward deck stuck up in front of us, then drop over, flinging us against the dodger, and the shock would surround her with foam that was an eruption of greenish light.

The sun was a cold rayless ball halved by the dark sea. The wall of heaven above it was flushed and translucent marble. There was a silver paring of moon in a tincture of rose. When the sun had gone, the place it had left was luminous with saffron and mauve, and for a brief while we might have been alone in a vast hall with its crystalline dome penetrated by a glow that was without. The purple waters took the light from above and the

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<sup>68</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, pp. 76-77.

waves turned to flames. The fountains that mounted at the bows and fell inboard came as showers of gems. . . . And now, having made all I can of sunset and ocean, and a spray of amethysts, jacinths, emeralds, zircons, rubies, peridots, and sapphires, it is no longer possible for me to avoid the saloon, the thought of which, for an obscure reason, my mind loathed.<sup>69</sup>

### Figurative Imagery

Tomlinson often uses figurative imagery to give clarity and emphasis or to intensify emotional appeal. Because of his early association with things of the sea, and because of his many trips over the sea, we would expect many figures to be drawn from the sea. This does not seem to be so. Rather he uses land figures to more clearly explain or exhibit sea images. We find two figures only that are built upon a base of the sea. One is used in variation several times. In Tide Marks we find this: "At sunset one day the sea was a fathomless mirror because the hulls of the cumulous clouds had sunk in it beneath the inverted violet peaks of the Celebes."<sup>70</sup> The same metaphor appears in "Transfiguration": "Below the high moors which enclose the bay, those distant sleepy uplands where the keels of the cumulous clouds are grounded."<sup>71</sup> A third form is found in "The African Coast": "I was a stranger there but I knew the language of those dark clouds driving into the bay. The northern sky was full of their gloomy hulls."<sup>72</sup> The

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<sup>69</sup>"Off-Shore," London River, pp. 206-207.

<sup>70</sup>Pp. 142-143.

<sup>71</sup>Old Junk, p. 97.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

second figure is a familiar one: the ship of state of society. We find it used in "Great Statesmen":

All went well until the War. Now the propeller-shaft of industrial society is fractured, our ship is wallowing in the trough of the seas, and the men who should put things right for us do not even know that it is the main shaft on which they should concentrate. They are irritating the passengers by changing the cabins, confiscating luggage, insisting on higher fares, cutting down the rations, and instructing the sailors in the goose-step; but the ship has no way on her, and the soul of breakers grows louder from a sombre, precipitous, and unknown coast.<sup>73</sup>

As we would expect, we find figures drawn with color from the experiences of his travels. A collection of these figures from The Sea and the Jungle and Tide Marks indicates something of the stylistic effectiveness Tomlinson makes of figurative form. For example, "Dragon flies were suspended invisibly over our awning, jewels in shimmering enamels."<sup>74</sup> The figure is brilliant because the three figurative words, "shimmering," "jewels," and "enamel" have brilliance inherent in them. The second example also describes insects: ". . . and the fireflies which flit about the dark ship at night in myriads, tiny blue and yellow glow-lamps which burn with puzzling inconstancy as though being switched on and off."<sup>75</sup> This metaphor is particularly striking, for it picks up color our untrained eyes usually do not see, the "blue" of

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<sup>73</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 165.

<sup>74</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, p. 113.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

the "glow-lamps." Another metaphor employs the base "lamp": "They were hung with fruit, pendant lamps lit with a pale greenish light."<sup>76</sup> Still another example of a figure of color which uses "lamp" as a base is this: "There were cuttlefish that day looking like opalescent lamps in which the light was hardly yet extinct."<sup>77</sup> These figures are effective because, as we notice, the colors applied insure their effectiveness.

A very interesting group of figures combines color and weapons. The first example comes from The Sea and the Jungle: "Tangers shot among the bushes like blue projectiles."<sup>78</sup> The second employs another modern weapon, the torpedo, for its base: "A red gurnard, with its staring eyes of violet, and the violet margin to its pectorals, never suggests anything for the pot. Those steady eyes look at you with disconcerting interest. There are red mullet and grey, garfish like green snakes, horse mackerel, herring, plaice and dabs, and fry that might be leaping shavings of bright metal. The other afternoon a salmon came in with the rest, a very king, a resplendent silver torpedo of a fellow."<sup>79</sup> Two figures of metallic hue are set off by the colorful grouping of the other fish. Still another figure combines

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>77</sup>Tide Marks, p. 132.

<sup>78</sup>P. 154.

<sup>79</sup>"On the Chesil Bank," The Face of the Earth, p. 105.

color and weapons: "Between the planks I could see the tide under our feet, but if a swarm of fish had not passed below like blue arrows and like globes of yellow light, the water would not have been there."<sup>80</sup> Thus the image of the lamp joins the figure of color and weapon. A final example also shows three components--lamp, color, weapon--plus others.

It is an extended figure, brilliant and delightful:

The coral was tall and branched . . . It appeared to be not much below the surface of the glass, but bonitos like torpedoes of blue light glanced over it in midspace and changed the illusion, and other fish, like oscillating silver coins, like tinted glow lamps intermittently charged, like swooping black and yellow butterflies, like the petals of flowers quivering in a zephyr, deepened and extended the sight.<sup>81</sup>

The building of the image by the accumulation of similes gives us a remarkable picture of undersea life.

The interpretation of hue is difficult to gather from words. Tomlinson uses figures to suggest a depth of black, as in "The noon shadows of the hut, and the trees, were deep as the stains of ink."<sup>82</sup> Another example tells of a jungle friend: "[The monkey] with a sooty and hairless face, and black hair parted in the middle of a frail forehead, was a pal of ours, and knew it. . . . He made friendly twitterings . . . and perfectly self-possessed, his pure soul giving him quietude, examined us in a friendly way with an ebon paw which was as

<sup>80</sup>Tide Marks, p. 168.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>82</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, p. 148.



small and fragile as a black fairy's."<sup>83</sup> Although the simile is not based upon black but upon size, we appreciate the depth of color tone from the construction of the simile.

A figure of a different kind is found in "A Raid Night." Tomlinson stands with his neighbors watching the sky, looking for a Zeppelin. The Zeppelin becomes plainly visible, caught in the cross work of search lights. He writes:

There it was, at first a wraith, a suggestion on the point of vanishing, and then illuminated and embodied, a celestial maggot stuck to the round of a cloud like a caterpillar to the edge of a leaf. We gazed at it silently, I cannot say for how long. The beam of light might have pinned the bright larva to the sky for the inspection of interested Londoners.<sup>84</sup>

The metaphor appears again near the end of the essay: "The very heavens had been fouled by the obscene and pallid worm, crawling around over those eternal verities to which eyes had been lifted for light when night and trouble were over-dark."<sup>85</sup>

Because figures of speech are very frequent and important in the artistic style of Tomlinson, it is impossible to exhibit in detail all of the figures that I have found. I have shown examples of similes and metaphors. Tomlinson uses other figures as well, principally personification, as in "A Midnight Voyage": "Below us a swirl of water broke into mirth, instantly suppressed. We could see the Lizzie now. The

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., pp. 149-150.

<sup>84</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 16.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

ripples slipped round her to the tune of they-'avn't-found-'im-yet, they-'avn't-found-'im-yet-they 'avn't."<sup>86</sup> The personification is heightened by the excellence of onomatopoeia. In another example we learn that "The boat and the tide were murmuring to each other secretly."<sup>87</sup> Two interesting examples of personification center about trees. The first is in Tide Marks. A storm comes suddenly upon Tomlinson and his party: "The trees suddenly shouted and turned white, and then vanished in the falling water."<sup>88</sup> The second example is from The Sea and the Jungle: "There were some mantis which commenced to run on the tree while I was examining its bark. They were like flakes of the bark. For a moment the tree seemed to quiver its hide at my irritating touch."<sup>89</sup>

A final example of personification, which is likewise from Tide Marks, describes the fish market at Macassar and Tomlinson's reflections upon the scene and the process of creation with the sea as the director of creation:

Yet each morning the display in Macassar's fish market is differently ordered. The program is never repeated. I could never think of it as a market place, or that I was looking at mere provender. It was manifest the sea was still experimenting with its work each day as soon as the designs were finished, and so threw them out to us as waste. Then it began on other effects. That place in Macassar, therefore, was hardly a market. . . . Macassar

<sup>86</sup>London River, p. 37.

<sup>87</sup>"The Dunes," Old Junk, p. 166.

<sup>88</sup>p. 258.

<sup>89</sup>p. 143.

was merely getting daily what the rich and vast workshop outside considered was not quite what it meant to do. And that workshop has, of course, plenty of time and light in which to satisfy itself. The sun and the warm seas have all eternity in which to play with life, to shape and color it to the likeness of whatever perfection was once hinted. The Italian jeweler of the Renaissance never approached the easy opulence, the merry variety of ideas, and the wild ornamentation, which can be seen any bright morning on the slabs of that fish market of Celebes. There I saw the ocean's last hilarious but puzzling jokes. Fun was being poked at us--derision made of our own dull and monotonous efforts at creation.<sup>90</sup>

Not all figures employed by Tomlinson are serious or dramatic. In a figure that is touched with gentle humor he describes a trip from Singapore to Java. His cabin, he says, was "filled with flies like devils, and moths like jewels."<sup>91</sup> From such a statement we understand something of the problems of his travels. Another figure with humorous connotations is this one which concerns an American who came aboard the Capella when it was far up the Amazon: "He was a tall youngster, an American, and his slow body itself was but a thin sallow drawl."<sup>92</sup> Tomlinson's comment reveals the almost classic English conception of American speech.

With examples of dramatic writing revealing awesome sights, I conclude this section of my study. Both are symbolic, suggesting an eventual violent end to the world. Tomlinson does not predict such an end, but the experiences he had had are revealed to us through the eyes of a man who was familiar

<sup>90</sup>P. 132.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>92</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, p. 209.

with the Book of Revelation. Both examples are from Tide

Marks. The first is this:

By such chance aids I would learn where in the world I was. There was no other way. All without warning one day our steamer, our placid and practical Dutch steamer, steered toward what I could see plainly enough was the sack and ruin of Mount Zion. We were approaching a celestial war. Battlements were tumbled and in flames, smoke rolled from those streets of jasper, and the banners of its defeated hosts were sinking to final confusion and the last night. A native ship was flying from there. Its urgent sails were spread like wings too big for its body; perhaps it was bearing away survivors. Nothing else was in sight.<sup>93</sup>

The second image follows the first almost as though it had been written as a sequence:

At sunset one day the sea was a fathomless mirror because the hulls of the cumulous clouds had sunk in it beneath the inverted violet peaks of Celebes. Celebes floated athwart two heavens. Over Borneo, where the sun vanished, the basaltic horizon clouds were the broken ramparts of a world wrecked and lost. The fires of the final calamity were nearly out. Only from the base of that wall did the last day of earth burst in one thin explosion of scarlet. It spread no distance. Night quenched it at once. I stood at the ship's rail, watching the place where the forlorn hope had failed.<sup>94</sup>

Only a man of talent, a man sensitive to sight, sound, and atmosphere, a man with a mind possessing treasures of memory and experience, a man who cared for words and word patterns could create such prose.

The universe as a sphere is a recurring image. Usually combined with something of the sea, as in this example: "Night was near. Yet still the high dome with its circular floor the

<sup>93</sup>P. 86.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

sea was magically illuminated, as by the proximity of a wonderful presence."<sup>95</sup> The same suggestion appears in a description of the sensation felt by Tomlinson when he was asked to take the bridge of the Capella<sup>96</sup> for a brief relief: "There was me, and there were the stars. They were my nearest neighbors. I stood for you among them alone. When the last man hears but does not see the deep waters of this dark sphere in that night to which there will be no morning sun, he shall know what was my sensation aloft in the saddle of the 'Capella.'"<sup>97</sup> Another example is taken from The Sea and the Jungle: "This 'Capella,' always under the height of a blue dome, always the centre of a circular floor of waters, waters to be seen beating against the steep and luminous walls encompassing us, though nowhere finding an outlet, was all my experience."<sup>98</sup> A final example is from "Hotel Balcony," a description of Granada at which the sphere image appears again:

Beyond that lamp, and the black ravines about it, the spread of Granada was the inversion of the lighted heavens. It was a lower density of stars, unwinking and

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<sup>95</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, p. 76.

<sup>96</sup>The apparent inconsistency in the form of designating names of ships, e. g., Capella, "Capella," is due to the use in The Sea and the Jungle of quotation marks to indicate names of ships. In the writings published later underlining is used. In quotation I have followed the form used by the author. In all other writing I have used the form common today.

<sup>97</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, p. 92.

<sup>98</sup>Pp. 93-94.

glacial. The universe was a hollow sphere, and the constellations continued below me uninterrupted. Granada was part of the Galaxy.<sup>99</sup>

Many of the images which relate to the sea and the sky have a vague limit of definition, a form which extends the scope of the image. The resulting images, paradoxically, are both clear and uncertain. They suggest ideas and ideals beyond the confines of present human intelligence. The images suggest the "sublime" of Longinus, the elevation of thought with an intensity of emotion that moves the reader to noble thoughts. Thus, the sea, the universe, and man's future are often interlaced in the mind of Tomlinson.

"The Dunes," a reflective and descriptive essay, contains two examples of indefinite extension. The first is this:

The dunes are nothing. They are the horizon. They are only seen in idleness, or when the weather is scanned, or an incoming ship is marked. The dunes are but a pallid phantom of land so delicately golden that it is surprising to find it constant. The faint glow of that dilated shore, quavering just above the sea, the sea intensively blue and positive, might wreath and vanish at any moment in the pour of wind from the Atlantic, whose endless strength easily bears in and over us vast involuted continents of white cloud. The dunes tremble in the broad flood of wind, light, and sea, diaphanous and fading, always on the limit of vision, the point of disappearing, but are established. They are soundless, immaterial, and far, like a pleasing and personal illusion, a luminous dream of lasting tranquillity in a better but an unapproachable place, and the thought of crossing to them never suggests anything so obvious as a boat. They look like no coast that can be reached.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>99</sup>"Hotel Balcony," South to Cadiz, p. 157.

<sup>100</sup>Old Junk, pp. 165-166.

The instability or tenuousness of this image depends much upon the choice of words. "Pallid phantom," "delicately golden," "faint glow," "quavering," "vanish," "tremble," "diaphanous and fading," "limit of vision," "point of disappearing," "soundless," "immaterial," "illusion," and "luminous dream of lasting tranquility" demonstrate very clearly that the effectiveness of an image is dependent on many factors such as color, imagination, vision, sensitivity, and words which must be woven in correct proportions for the creation of the perfect tapestry. The completed image has the paradoxical quality, clarity of meaning but uncertainty of outline.

A figure that well exemplifies the suggestion of indistinct form and focus appears in "The Extra Hand":

Old George Galsworthy and I sat on the headland above the estuary, looking into the vacancy which was the Atlantic on an entranced silver evening. The sky was overcast. There was no wind, and no direct sun. The light was refined and diffused through a thin veiling of pearl. Sea and sky were one. As though they were suspended in space we saw a tug, having a barque in tow, far but distinct, in the light of the bay, tiny models of ebony set in a vast brightness. They were poised in the illumination, and seemed to be motionless, but we knew they were moving down on us.<sup>101</sup>

The second example suggests eternity--timelessness:

The green mounds of water were flawless, with shadows of mysteries in their clear deeps. . . . The boats thwarts were hot and dry in the sun. The serene immensity of the sky, the warmth and dryness of the boat's timbers, the deep and translucent waters, and

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

the coast so low and indistinct that the silent flashing of the combers there might have been on nothing substantial, were all timeless, and could have been but a thought and a desire.<sup>102</sup>

Poised against these examples of unlimited projection are two which show magnitude and definition. The first is in The Sea and the Jungle:

Here on the Madeira I had a vision instead of the earth as a great and shining sphere. There were no fences and private bounds. I saw for the first time an horizon as an arc suggesting how wide is our ambit. The bare shoulder of the world effaced regions and constellations in the sky. Our earth had celestial magnitude.<sup>103</sup>

There is magnitude of space suggested here, but it has shape; there are limits but they are not private limits set apart for only the few. Thus the elimination of the boundaries has increased the proportion of the image. Another image that suggests magnitude, this one in time, is in "A North Devon Estuary":

The range of sand hills across the Estuary is not land, nothing that could be called soil, but is a promise, faint but golden, far in the future. You know someday that you will land there. But there is plenty of time. There is no need to hurry. One may rest.<sup>104</sup>

Color and beauty mark the figure from "Off Shore" which suggests time and space:

A new time was beginning in such a world. There was a massive purple battlement on the sea, at a great distance, the last entrenchment of night; but a multitude of

<sup>102</sup>"The Dunes," Old Junk, p. 144.

<sup>103</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, p. 171.

<sup>104</sup>The Face of the Earth, p. 13.



rays had stormed it, poured through clefts and chasms in the wall, and escaped to the Windhover on a broad road that was newly laid from the sky to this planet. The sun was at one end of the road, and we were at the other. There were only the two of us on that road.<sup>105</sup>

Impermanence and unearthlike space abound in the concluding example:

And certainly it was strange and a little fearful, all that air and light to seaward. It was vast and bright and without sound . . . Out beyond our foothold the world did not seem real or safe, so much space, and so shimmering a brightness. Even the sands were shining, and shivered in a breeze, like the skin of a bubble. If we trod on it, that bubble might burst, and down we should go to the clouds, which we could see floated below the beach as well as above it. Out there the air quivered. The world was too far and radiant to be safe. It did not look like the earth at all, but only the wide silence beyond the earth. If a wave moved in, it was only a brief shadow; it broke, and you could not hear it. It only glittered for a second. If we went down into that light, we might be like that white gull, which was soaring there for a moment, and then turned with a flash, and was not there.<sup>106</sup>

### Humor

The writing of Tomlinson is not without humor. Much of the humor is gentle humor, sometimes almost sly. Such humor is often hidden, and we discover it with pleasure, finding another delight in his writing. Some humor is expressed ironically, revealing both tolerant amusement and impassioned bitterness. Much of the bitter humor appears in his comments upon men and governments. Examples of that will be shown in the discussion of his thought and philosophy.

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<sup>105</sup>London River, pp. 197-198.

<sup>106</sup>"The Turn of the Tide," A Mingled Yarn, pp. 69-70.

A delightful example of humor is in "Off-Shore."

Here the fun is directed at himself, for Tomlinson believed everyone should be able to laugh at himself. He had shipped on a trawler sailing to the Dogger Bank. It was his first voyage; and when the trawler was unable to rendezvous with the rest of the fleet, all eyes were turned toward him as the possible focus of the ship's bad luck. "My companions, I believe," he says, "regretted I had not been omitted. I tried, therefore, to be inconspicuous, and went up to seclude myself at the back of the boat on the poop, there to understudy a dog which is sorry it did it."<sup>107</sup> This same voyage presents a most vivid picture of incipient seasickness, a condition that is not amusing to one in the depths of it, but one that is a source of merriment to those who are not stricken. Tomlinson is not too certain of his own status, but he is able in recollection to furnish us with amusement:

Did I want my tea? I noticed there were two men between me and the exit, and no room to pass. The room was hot. The bench was rising and falling. My soul felt pale and faintly apprehensive, compelling me, now I was beset, to take hold of it firmly, and to tell it that this was not the time to be a miserable martyr, but a coarse brute; and that whether I liked it or not, I was going to feed at once on fish, ham, and sickly liquor, and heaven help us if it failed me before these sailors. It made no response, being a nonconformist soul, so I had to leave it, and alone I advanced on the food.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>"Off Shore," London River, pp. 213-214.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

He laughs at his own mishaps. Another selection from "Off-Shore" describes his troubles with his berth at sea:

It was my bench which properly woke me. It fell away from me, and I, of course, went after it, and my impression is that I met it halfway on its return journey, for then came the swooning sensation one feels in the immediate ascent of a lift. When the bench was as high as it could go it overbalanced, canting acutely, and, grabbing my blanket, I left diagonally for a corner of the saloon, accompanied by some sea-boots I met under the table. As I was slowly and carefully climbing back, the floor reversed, and I stopped falling when my head struck a panel. The panel slid gently along, and the mate's severe countenance regarded me from inside the bunk. I expected some remonstrance from a tired man who had been unfairly awakened too soon. "Hurt yourself?" he asked. "It's getting up outside. Dirty weather. Take things easy."<sup>109</sup>

There is also humor in his experience with a mule far up the Amazon River:

The mule stood deep in thought till I was mounted again; then instantly bolted back along the path which led to the ravine. The idle hombre had mishandled the reins, and I could get no pull. I went across that clearing like (so Hill said afterwards) Tod Sloan up. The beast, his ears back, was in a frenzy, and the convulsions of his powerful body made my thoughts pallid and ghastly. Nothing but disaster could stop him, and the black mouth of that steep tunnel in the forest yawned before us, and grew larger, though not large enough. He took the opening as clean as a lucky shot; but I was laid carefully along his back. Why we missed the tangle of woods and the rock in that precipitate descent is known only to my lucky stars. I had my feet from my stirrups, my toes hooked on his rump, one arm round the horn of the saddle, and the other stretched along his sawing neck. I saw the roots and stones leap up and by us, close to my face. Several things occurred to me, and one was that some methods of dire fate were fatuous and undignified. I wondered also whether I should be taken back to the ship, or buried there. The impetus of the brute, which I expected would send us somersaulting among the rocks of

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<sup>109</sup>Ibid., pp. 201-203.

the bottom, took him partly up the hither slope, and soon he had to gather his haunches for the upward leaps. I slipped off. He swung around at the length of the reins, and eyed me, cocking his ears derisively. A horse's nerves are humanlike, and a horse would have been in a muck, but this murderous mule was calm and mocking. I watched him, and listened for an obscene and confident guffaw.<sup>110</sup>

He becomes almost playful in a soliloquy on daytime sleep:

As you know where I had come from we do not dare to sleep during daylight without first arguing with the conscience, which we usually fail to convince. This comes of our mental trick which takes a pleasure we wholly desire and puts on it a prohibitive label. Self-indulgence, you understand; softening of the character; courage, brothers, do not stumble. The solemn forefinger wags gravely in our faces. . . . Remembering that I was secure in a sunnier world I cried out with ribald mockery across the abyss I had safely crossed, knowing my old self could not follow, and shut my eyes happily.<sup>111</sup>

We smile as we read, and wish we could join him.

His sympathy and deep understanding for those around him enable him to see weakness as well as strength and to find humor in both. He reveals this ability in an account of the stoker's mishap with gin:

There was one of our stokers, and one night he was drunk on stolen gin, and latitudinous, and so attempted a curious answer to the second engineer, who sought him out in the forecastle concerning work. Now the second engineer is a young man who had a number of photographs of himself which display him clad in vanity and shorts, back, front, and profile, arms folded tightly to swell his very large muscles. He has really a model figure, and he knows it. The cut over the stoker's nose was a bad one.

<sup>110</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, p. 272.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

To the surgeon the stoker went, early next morning, actually for a hair of the dog, but with a story that he was then to go on duty, and so would miss his ration of quinine, which is not served till eleven o'clock. The quinine, as you know, is given in gin. The surgeon complimented the man on such proper attention to his health, and willingly gave him the quinine--in water. He also stood at the door of the alleyway to watch the man retain the quinine as far as the engine-room entrance.<sup>112</sup>

Tomlinson also enjoys a pun. In The Sea and the Jungle, he discusses the change in the mental equilibrium of the voyagers since they have been at sea. "When we left England we were tense, and sometimes white (though there were others who went red) about a Great Crisis in our Country's History."<sup>113</sup> Another pun is found in "The Road to Concord": "I fancy I know why Thoreau went off to his pond to watch the chipmunks. There was too much concord in Concord."<sup>114</sup>

The use of humor in his writing reveals two important facts about Tomlinson, facts that react upon his style. First, there is genuine sympathetic understanding of people, for unless he possessed understanding he could not have seen clearly people as they are with all their weaknesses. Second, his ability to see clearly is reflected in his ability to choose from what he sees that which will create the picture, and in his ability to select words and word patterns to show to us what he sees and selects.

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., pp. 73-74.

<sup>114</sup>South to Cadiz, p. 190.

## Rhythm

We are all conscious of rhythm when we find it in poetry. We are less conscious of it in prose. Formal metrical patterns are usually absent, but in word combinations and arrangements of sentences there is a rhythm that creates an emotional response in the reader. It is not my purpose to examine at length the expository writings of Tomlinson for such rhythm, although that should prove a fertile field of study; but there are some examples of rhythm and rhythm-patterns taken from his writings which show rhythm as another component of his style.

The English language, which falls easily into metrical patterns because of accent, may also create metrical patterns in prose that are not strained but are precisely fitting. We recognize simple rhythm in groups of words, such as these: "western ocean,"<sup>115</sup> "in that wind and exposure,"<sup>116</sup> "Except the distant hills there was no shore."<sup>117</sup> More involved groups also exhibit a rhythmic movement. For example, we find this selection in "Signs of Spring": "The edge of the spade was like silver with use, and the big hand which grasped it was brown with dry earth."<sup>118</sup> Rearranged this becomes a stanza:

<sup>115</sup>"The Wreck," A Mingled Yarn, p. 104.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>"Voyage of the Mona," Old Junk, p. 126.

<sup>118</sup>"Signs of Spring," Waiting for Daylight, p. 37.

The edge of the spade  
 was like silver with use,  
 and the big hand that grasped it  
 was brown with dry earth.

Even the punctuation reinforces the form. A second quotation will suffice to demonstrate that metrical passages in Tomlinson's prose are a component of style. The image-quotation is taken from The Sea and The Jungle. In the prose sentence it stands thus: "We have such days, without a breath of air, and two vivid walls of still jungle, and between them a yellow river serpentine under the torrid sun, and a silence which is like deafness."<sup>119</sup> With a rearrangement by line-length we have this:

We have such days,  
 without a breath of air,  
 and two vivid walls of still jungle,  
 and between them a yellow river  
 serpentine under the torrid sun,  
 and a silence  
 which is like deafness.

A different kind of rhythmic pattern exists in sentences whose composition reinforces both thought and image. These occur frequently when Tomlinson is describing movements of the sea. The effect secured is appropriate, for the building and the breaking of the waves seem to be rhythmic as we watch them in their endless movements. For example, we find this grouping: ". . . ponderous glassy billows ceaselessly arose, projected wonderful curves of translucent

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<sup>119</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, p. 137.

parapets which threw shadows ahead of their deliberate advance, lost their delicate poise, and became plunging fields of blinding and hissing snow."<sup>120</sup> The image is clear and effective. The structure of the sentence reinforces the image; it grows like a wave, building and piling water until the mound must break of its own weight and come swiftly down. The sentence begins to rise with "ponderous glassy billows," acquires more height and substance with "wonderful curves of translucent parapets," begins to reach the point of inevitable breaking with "shadows ahead" and "deliberate advance," breaks with the foam of "delicate poise," and falls quickly in "plunging fields of blinding and hissing snow." Twenty-three words create the wave; nine words bring it down, and three of these words--"plunging," "blinding," and "hissing"--are words which must move quickly.

A very short sentence exhibits the same wave rhythm through eleven syllables to produce action and four staccato words to bring it down: "But the forlorn object lifted high again, and sank once more."<sup>121</sup> An interesting point to be noted is that the pronunciation of the word "high," if the sentence is read aloud, will have a pitch above all other words, including "again," which is the last word before the comma, and will thus mark both the high point of the wave-

<sup>120</sup>"The Voyage of the Mona," Old Junk, p. 127.

<sup>121</sup>"The Derelict," Old Junk, p. 115.



figure and the rhythm. Furthermore, "again," which is the last word before the comma, standing in the place of the wave beginning to break to initiate the imperceptible descent, has a pitch that also is beginning the fall; and "sank once more" not only moves quickly to the bottom of the figure, to the end of the sentence, but also moves to the lowest tone pitch.

A final example of wave movement occurs in "The Wreck":

In the north-west, over the waters of the bay which opens to all the western ocean, we could see a low buff cloud, which was really an island. The gyrations of the Hawk made this landmark inconstant. We were lifted up, quivering in the wind, to see it far away, and then swashed into a cold hollow with a near view of a glassy wall falling past us. Down those faintly shadowy declivities we went, and then up again for another short glance around the horizon.<sup>122</sup>

The marked rhythm-thought-image of the paragraph begins with "We were lifted up." This beginning has only five syllables for the rising movement, but "lifted" has more counted time extending the time of rising motion. The moment of pitch is held, as the wave prepares to break, with "quivering in the wind, to see it far away." The break comes with "and then," which is followed by the downward movement in "swashed into a cold hollow with a near view of a glassy wall falling past us." The rolling of the wave is accomplished with the end of the sentence and the beginning of the next until it reaches a holding peak again at "up again for another short glance," with the breaking of the wave beginning then and continuing

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<sup>122</sup>A Mingled Yarn, p. 104.

to the end of the sentence. The first two sentences of this paragraph do not belong with the image proper, yet by reading them aloud we discover that they too have the same wave movement. There are two peaks in the first sentence: "north-west" and "sea." "Over the waters of the bay" begins the descent of pitch; "ocean" marks the trough of the wave; the rise begins again with "we could see a low buff cloud"; the folding of the wave starts with "cloud." The downward action and the sound follow with "gyrations" marking the crest of a wave of rhythm and with "of the Hawk" beginning the descent. Thus we see that such a movement can carry through more than one sentence and can be the basis of a paragraph form.

Rhythm is used in another way to reinforce an idea. The movement is not obvious; it is more the perfect accompaniment which is not heard but which is missed if it is not there. An example of this is found in "The Marne." I begin the quotation with the preceding paragraph in order that the figure may be established:

And that very same night I stood at the outer gate with one who asked me why, when there were stacks of jam in our grocer's shop, we could not buy any because the Food Controller had omitted to put up the price. I had no time to reason this out, because at that moment we heard a loud buzzing in the sky. We gazed up into the velvet black night, that was like a skull cap over the world. The buzzing continued. "Perhaps," said my companion, "what we can hear is our great big Bee."

That buzzing overhead did not develop. It merely waned and increased. It was remarkable but inconsequential. It alarmed while giving no good cause for

alarm. In the invisible heavens there might have been One who was playing Bogie to frighten poor mortals for fun. I went in to continue my reading of Charles le Goffic's book, General Foch at the Marne. This was all in accord with the Book of Daniel, and the jam that was uneatable because it was not dear enough. My reading continued, as it were, the mysterious buzzing.<sup>123</sup>

The sentences of the second paragraph are short, and the accented, unaccented syllables have an interesting pattern which serves to emphasize an idea implanted--the senselessness of war--and the inability of the mind to blot out the unending speculations upon war. The sentence patterns, because of the slight variation in pitch and a rather marked monotonous pattern of accent, resemble the buzzing that is the background of Tomlinson's thinking. Sentences two, three, and four of the second paragraph are particularly responsive to the accent pattern.

Rhythm is thus exhibited in several forms--in word-accent patterns, in phrase-patterns that suggest the possibility of metrical form, in phrase-and-sentence groupings that suggest the rhythm of nature (the sea), and in accent-patterns and sentence structures that are an accompaniment to thought. The presence of these patterns is another stylistic mark of Tomlinson's writing.

#### Thought

We have noted that his early years spent in Poplar were the formative years for Tomlinson. It was then that his

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<sup>123</sup>"The Marne," Waiting for Daylight, pp. 53-54.

sympathies for his fellows, the Nobodies as he called them later, began to crystallize. It was then that he learned from his father's attitudes that what was written and spoken in The City was not necessarily gospel, that it might, indeed, be false doctrine. It was then that his attitudes toward government, economics, and privilege developed. Toward government and privilege and toward laissez-faire capitalism he was antagonistic. His remarks about them are often tinged with irony; sometimes they are contemptuously sarcastic. He can speak about government with some humor but seldom without irony.

From his writings we feel that Tomlinson thought government to be a faceless set of decrees promulgated by men concerned only with power and position, the Great Men of Action; that he castigated those who demanded privilege for themselves while denying it to others; that he believed the world is a good world if man does not destroy it in his attempts to tamper with it.

His suggestion for the elimination of potential Great Men reveals his feelings, as expressed in "An Autumn Morning":

Ah! the Great Men of Action! What the world has suffered from their inspired efforts to shepherd humanity into worried flocks hurrying nobody knew whither, every schoolboy reads; and our strong men to-day, without whose names and portraits no periodical is considered attractive, would surely have been of greater benefit to us if they had remained absorbed in their earlier skittles. . . . Boys should be warned against and protected from Great Careers. Better still if embryologists could discover

something which would enable midwives unfailingly to recognize Strong Men at birth. It would be easy then to issue to these ladies secret but specific instructions.<sup>124</sup>

He feels Great Men of Action love war and the power they derive from it. Later he comments that these same Great Men have put up "those heroic dummies which are not soldiers but idols set up in a glorious battlefield that never existed except as a romance among the unimaginative."<sup>125</sup> A very bitter estimation of such men lies in this excerpt from "The Nobodies":

Yet their august governors and popular guides, frantic and afraid through the dire retribution which had fallen on that monstrous European society which so many of us had thought eternal, abjured and abused the common sort whose efforts were all that could save us. What did they call the Nobodies? Slackers, cowards, rabbits, and field vermen; mean creatures unable to leave their football and their drink.<sup>126</sup>

In another comment, taken from a discussion of books, he again points the finger at the ineptness of those who were leaders.

He says:

The publishers may send out what advice they choose to authors concerning the unpopularity of books about the War--always excepting, of course, the important reminiscences, the soft and heavy masses of words of the great leaders of the nations in the War which merely reveal that they never knew what they were doing.<sup>127</sup>

Ironical humor is in evidence there. In a discussion of the thought and writings of two young idealists, Keeling and

<sup>124</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 73.

<sup>125</sup>"Authors and Soldiers," Waiting for Daylight, p. 90.

<sup>126</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 112.

<sup>127</sup>"The South Downs," Waiting for Daylight, p. 193.

Barbellion, he compares the leaders with the young protestors to the disadvantage of the leaders:

When we know that in the elderly, the shrewd, and the practical, the desire for material power and safety, qualified only by fear, served as their substitute for the City of God during the War, it is heartening to remember that there were select though unknown young men, mere subjects for "combing" like Barbellion, who made articulate and immense rebellious protest that was in the best of our boys; who showed a mocking intuition into us and our motives . . . a scorn of the world we had made for them, a cruel knowledge of the cowardice and meanness at the back of our warlike minds, and a yearning for that world of beauty which might have been, but which the acts of the clever and the practical have turned into carrion among the ruins.<sup>128</sup>

In a quotation, taken from "Lent, 1918," we see his condemnation of those who wielded power over their fellows to the destruction of all. Tomlinson had believed that there would be no "great offensive." He had thought that "The old and indurated Importances in authority, safe far behind the lines, would shrink from squandering humanity's remaining gold of its life, even though their ignoble ends were yet unachieved."<sup>129</sup> But the offensive had come.

But it had been ordered. Age, its blind jealousy for control now stark mad, impotent in all but the will and the power to command and punish, ignoring every obvious lesson of the past, the appeal of the tortured for the sun again and leisure even to weep, and the untimely bones of the young as usual now as flints in the earth of Europe, had deliberately put out the glimmer of dawn.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>128</sup>"Barbellion," Waiting for Daylight, pp. 216-217.

<sup>129</sup>Old Junk, p. 202.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., pp. 202-203.

In his dislike for encroaching government Tomlinson does find amusement. In Tide Marks he tells of a Dutch citizen who called his attention, during a train trip across Java, to a curiosity of nature. He writes:

Black monkeys dwell on one side of the line, and gray on the other. The black monkeys never leave their palms to cross the metals to mix with the grays in the opposite palms. The grays carefully observe the same etiquette. . . . My train had not gone far when a Dutch traveler drew my attention again to the curiosity. . . . I was going to ask him whether they would forfeit the government subsidy if they broke the contract and spoiled the story; but the Dutchman looked so kindly, and so plainly wished to save a foreigner from boredom, that the question would have been a rank crime.<sup>131</sup>

The prerogatives of privilege were ever an object of his scorn. Tomlinson admired Kipling at his best, but Kipling's "deplorable view of human society"<sup>132</sup> and his intimation of a caste system among even those who were the bearers of "the white man's burden" were anathemas in Tomlinson's soul. He did not blame Kipling for the promulgation of such an idea of caste, for the conception was a common one, but he abhorred its presence in writing that should otherwise be enjoyable. His bitterness toward "proper place" and the "privilege of privilege" is inseparable from much of his exposition. He refers to the snobs thus:

I mean that amusing gravity of the snob who is sure of the exclusive superiority of his caste mark, with not the trace of a smile on his face, and at a time when all Europe is awakening to the fact that it sentenced itself

<sup>131</sup>Pp. 90-91.

<sup>132</sup>"Authors and Soldiers," Waiting for Daylight, p. 93.

to ruin when it gave great privileges to his kind of folk in return for the guidance of what it thought was a finer culture, but was no more than a different accent. It was, we are now aware, the mere Nobodies who won the War for us; and yet we still meekly accept as the artistic representation of the British soldier or sailor an embarrassing guy that would disgrace pantomime.<sup>133</sup>

Thus we see that it was those who were the possessors of privilege by birth who angered him. "The well-born, the clever, the haughty, and the greedy, in their fear, pride, and willfulness, and the perplexity of their scheming, make a general mess of the world."<sup>134</sup> In a statement bitterly ironic, in "Barbellion," we find these words:

Our descendants may learn from these innocent revelations [memoirs of General French, Mrs. Asquith's book, Colonel Pepington's Diary] what quality of knowledge and temper, to be found only in a superior caste, guided the poor and lowly, and shaped our fate for us. They will know why wars and famines were inevitable for us, and why nothing could avert doom from the youth of our Europe.<sup>135</sup>

In "Old Junk" we see further his annoyance with those who exhibit the airs of superiority:

He, that modest old man, can create such a being as that [a boat, beautiful and seaworthy]; and I have heard visitors to this village, leisured and cultured folk, whose own creative abilities amount to no more than the arranging of some decorative art in strata of merit, talk down to the old fellow who can think out a vessel like that after supper, and go out after breakfast to direct the laying of her keel--talk down to him, kindly enough of course, and smilingly, as a "working man."<sup>136</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>134</sup> "Holly-Ho," Old Junk, p. 187.

<sup>135</sup> Waiting for Daylight, p. 213.

<sup>136</sup> Old Junk, pp. 60-61.



He includes in his scorn those who held privilege through commerce. Of fellow passengers on an ocean voyage he observes: "I think my fellow-travellers were men of commerce, for they were familiar with the habits of our line and of many other lines; they could judge the hour when we should be home; and they were assured that to relieve human-kind of poverty and of war would be to invite God's punishment for unfaithfulness."<sup>137</sup> There is no doubt of Tomlinson's feelings there. In "Binding a Spell" he notes:

Look at old Brown, for example, whose only emotions are evoked by being late for dinner, the price of building materials, the scandalous incapacity of workmen, and the restriction of the liberty of the subject by trade unions! He will sit, everybody knows, while wearing plaid trousers and sidewhiskers, on the right hand of a peer, in full view of thousands, at a political meeting, untroubled, bland, conscious of his worth, and will rise at a word, thumbs carelessly thrust into his waistcoat pockets, begin with a jest (the same one), and for an hour make aspirates as uncommon as are bathrooms in his many houses. He has nothing to say, and could not say it if he had; but he can speak in public.<sup>138</sup>

This feeling of disgust in the presence of feelings of superiority shows in another light--in his sorrow because of man's tearing at the earth for profit. In "Hints for Those About to Travel," however, he is critical rather than bitter. In this essay, Tomlinson discusses the conversion of lands to uses other than those indigenous to an area. In the process, many times, those people who were native were displaced. Such

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<sup>137</sup>"Hints for Those About to Travel," The Face of the Earth, p. 55.

<sup>138</sup>Old Junk, pp. 175-176.

"beneficent" development had led to a saying of the Murato Indians: "When the white man comes with wings we are going to die."<sup>139</sup> The white man assumes that he is all-wise. "We shall never doubt that what has been revealed only to the superior race of whites--or, as Mr. E. M. Forster describes us, the 'pinko-greys'--is better than any idea of an inferior colour."<sup>140</sup> He continues by examining some of civilization's advances:

When the mountain is a mass of slag on which a community crowds into back-to-back hovels, living there in the sure and certain hope of the Poor Law as the crown to its labours, the man of Western culture looks at the figures in a Blue Book, and knows that he has fulfilled the divine injunction. He never suspects that he may be wrong in that. Impossible that the Murato Indians in their forest may be as pleasing as his flying machines and alcohol! Yet perhaps the firs and pines of Newfoundland are not necessarily worse than the rolls of paper into which they are converted. The conversion of a forest into a popular Press may be inevitable, like war, but we should not deride the trees which help us to our enlightenment by calling them savage. That seems hardly fair. Let the Murato and all other Indians perish, if there is no other way of getting our alcohol, but to say they are uncivilized as we extinguish them seems a little priggish.<sup>141</sup>

The weakness of men which led them to accept injustice to themselves and to others without protest pained Tomlinson and is the occasion of comment constantly recurrent in his writings. In "Old Sunlight" he sees a continuity of action--or inaction--reaching back into the seventeen hundreds and

<sup>139</sup>The Face of the Earth, p. 80.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., pp. 80-81.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

following through to the present. He says this:

Looking back at those times, of all the thunderous events which then loosened excited tongues, caused by high-minded men of action expertly conjuring crisis after crisis while their docile followers scrambled out of one sublime trouble into another, heated and exhausted, but still gaping with obedience and respect, we can see that nothing remains but the burial parties, whose work is yet uncomplete in France.<sup>142</sup>

The "Reward of Virtue" carries the same theme:

On the chill and overcast spring morning when the Treaty was published, it was significant that those very few men to whom we could go for courage a year ago were the only people dismayed by the terms of the Peace Treaty. And the timid, who once went to those stout hearts for assurance . . . were the bright and cheerful souls. It was ominous. Yet those careless and happy hearts are not so trying to me as the amiable but otherwise sensible men who were sure our statesmen would not betray the dead, and who are incredulous over the Treaty now they see what it clearly intends to convey. They cannot believe that the War, which they thought began as a way of liberation, a struggle of Europe to free itself from the intolerable bonds of its past, continues in the Peace Treaty as a force malignantly deflected to the support of the very evils out of which August, 1914, arose. Then did they imagine the well-meaning leopard would oblige by changing his spots if spoken to kindly while he was eating the baby?<sup>143</sup>

In this selection we find united thought and word. His concern for the world in sorrow, his dismay at the heedlessness of some, and his despair over the continuation of the malignancy of the past are bound by the precise word and the phrasal units into a whole that although written almost exactly forty years ago could have been taken from today's newspaper. The same feeling is expressed in "A Raid Night." After describing

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<sup>142</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 151.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., pp. 161-162.

an air attack he says this: "It filled me, not with wrath at the work of Kaisers and Kings, for we know what is possible with them, but with dismay at the discovery that one's fellows are so docile and credulous that they will obey any order, however abominable."<sup>144</sup> Again in "The Cathedral" he writes of the apathy of those who are willing to accept without question the state of the world. This long quotation cries out against both leaders and followers in their following:

And it is easy today to lose faith in the crowd, and to cease to expect resolute intelligence and intrepid fellowship to come from that. The appearance of our docile neighbour in a dutiful gas-mask will do the trick . . . We must find the courage to admit it. Brains have turned to blowflies if, in the common routine of the home, we must be sure we get our anti-vesicant and chloride of lime with the bread and butter, and beside the infant's cot at night leave with our blessing and the doll the babe's dear little gas mask. The Magi never thought of that gift. . . . Our present casual indifference to corruption lying at the very brink of the fount of life; our acceptance of diabolism as a natural stink and infection in the commune, no more avoidable than rain or Christmas Day, would show that mind has ceased its aspiration to light and loveliness, being foul.<sup>145</sup>

In another statement which deplored both the apathy of the multitude and the encroachment of government, he has this to say, which suggests, somewhat, Brave New World:

The surrender of the multitude everywhere, disheartened and apathetic, to governance which announces its purpose to refine from knowledge and intelligence all surprises till there issues only a uniform and reliable drive for national machinery, and to throw mercy to the dogs, has made many of us wonder whether in future democracy will

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>145</sup>South to Cadiz, pp. 115-116.

have more power to will its orientation than sheep have in the choice of a slaughter-house.<sup>146</sup>

Tomlinson believes, however, that the hope of reclaiming the world lies in the common people who seem apathetic. "To lose faith in our fellows," he says, "is to empty the earth of meaning. If it is without meaning, then it is absurd to maintain hope for civilization, because there is no value in a social virtue which is inapplicable to society."<sup>147</sup> Democracy can be the answer. Statesmen may have failed. "Democracy, however, has never yet been tried; it has only been fooled."<sup>148</sup> Those who are the strength of a democracy are ordinary folk, common men. Of them, he says:

Luckily, we know that the good nature of ordinary folk, who are in the majority, readily respond to the simple and magnanimous appeal, if it comes. They are the last to be corrupted. The common man, nearly always, is a kindly and helpful fellow. The power of a government is never complete without his corruption or subjection, for power has no continuance but in the credulity and obedience of the simple.<sup>149</sup>

Thus he suggests both the strength of the people and the balance of power which they hold.

The futility of war sickened his very soul. As a war correspondent Tomlinson saw war as it was and not as the people of England knew it from the romantic effusiveness of some

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., pp. 114-115.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid.

correspondents. His views on war were not popular, even with some of his friends. He remembers an incident in his early life: "To make matters worse, just as I married, a Boer War began. It was then that some of my friends advised me, quite genially, yet with heartfelt conviction, that though I would not improve a lamppost if hanging to it, that was a proper place for me."<sup>150</sup> Yet he expressed himself without fear of unpopularity. He attempted to waken those at home by his factual reporting of battlefield conditions. An example of this reporting is found in "The Nobodies":

I recall one sombre winter's day of the first November of the War, when a column of wounded Belgian soldiers shambled by me, coming out of the Yser line, on the way to succour which I knew they would not find. The doctors and the hospitals were few. These fellows were in rags which were plastered to their limbs with mud. Their eyes had the vacant look of men who had returned from the grave and who had forgotten this world. The bare feet of some of them left bloody trails on the road. Others clutched their bodies, and the blood drained between their fingers. One dropped dead at my feet.<sup>151</sup>

He has much to say about war and about those who are involved, the Great Ones, the soldiers, the correspondents. Of the last he reports a soldier saying, "'I knew so little about the war then that I'm sorry I never tried to be a military expert.'"<sup>152</sup> The same soldier also had this pertinent remark recorded: "'Don't tell me, sir, war teaches you a lot. It only shows fools what they didn't know but might 'ave

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<sup>150</sup>"On Being Out of Date," A Mingled Yarn, p. 143.

<sup>151</sup>Waiting for Daylight, p. 113.

<sup>152</sup>"In Ypres," Waiting for Daylight, p. 6.

guessed."<sup>153</sup> Tomlinson says, "War as a means of deciding our luck is no more scientific than dicing for it."<sup>154</sup>

He endeavors to show that war in all its horror comes to be accepted by some as a natural phenomenon. In a selection dated November 11, 1918, we find this:

Yet "The War" has become a lethargic state of mind for us. We accepted it from the beginning with green-fly, influenza, margarine, calling-up notices, and death. It is as much outside our control as the death procession of the equinoxes. We believed confidently in the tumultuous first weeks of the affair that mankind could not stand that strain for more than a few months; but we have learned it is possible to habituate humanity to the long elaboration of any folly, and for men to endure uncomplainingly racked by any cruelty that is devised by society, and for women to support any grief, however senselessly caused. Folly and cruelty become accepted as normal conditions of human existence.<sup>155</sup>

Thus the poisonous thought seeps into daily activity and eats away at our sensitivity. He reports upon his visit to an office in Fleet Street upon his return from France. He had hoped to find some security in familiarity. Instead, he found that the newspaper office was in a state of tension:

I had not expected it, and it came with a shock. Not only the compulsion, but the bewildering inconsequence of war was suggested by its activities. Reason was not there. It was ruled by a blind and fixed idea. . . . I realized in that moment of surprise that this office was an essential feature of the War; without it, the War might become Peace. It provoked the emotions which assembled civilians in ecstatic support of the sacrifices just as the staff of a corps headquarters, at

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>154</sup>"The Maine," Waiting for Daylight, p. 56.

<sup>155</sup>"The Nobodies," Waiting for Daylight, pp. 104-105.

some comfortable leagues behind the trenches, maintains its fighting men in the place where gas and shells tend to engender common sense and irresolution.<sup>156</sup>

Writing in 1915 in the early years of the war, he shows us the progressive movement of the scope of war, a modern improvement that reached its full development in World War II:

That is the way with us; never to be concerned with the newest clever trick of our enterprising fellow-men till a sudden turn of affairs shows us, by the immediate threat to our own existence, that that cleverness has added to the peril of civilized society, whose house has been built on the verge of the pit. War now would be not only between soldiers. In future wars the place of honour would be occupied by infants, in their cradles. For war is not murder. What treacherous lying is all the heroic poetry of battle! Men will now creep up after dark, ambushed in safety behind the celestial curtains, and drop bombs on sleepers beneath for the greater glory of some fine figment or other.<sup>157</sup>

Patriotism and nationalism, Tonlinson felt, were expressions of the worst that is in nations rather than the best. He expresses his sentiments on patriotism in these words:

The truth, I fear, is that ardent patriotism anywhere is shown in a pride which expresses itself, for the most part, in but an ugly, loud, continuous, and nonsensical noise; nations care less for their best achievements and traditions, which belong to all the world, than they do for their Sunday newspapers and chickens.<sup>158</sup>

In discussing his own pacifism, he includes a remark on nationalism: "I think Nationalism has become a name for an

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<sup>156</sup>"A Raid Tonight," Waiting for Daylight, pp. 11-13.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>158</sup>"Cote d'Or," A Mingled Yarn, p. 97.



affection in the head."<sup>159</sup>

This quotation comes from "The Rajah." Tomlinson had been traveling by rail across the Malay States. A fellow traveller, a young, stout, communicative Englishman, commented as they traveled along. He felt trade was reviving, that everything would be all right if only those who knew what to do were left alone. The natives were lazy and had to be made to work, but they liked it that way. The selection, without comment by Tomlinson, epitomizes the whole of imperialism:

We ran into our last station. I looked from my carriage window on the strangest figure of a Malay I had seen. He was an old man, but as stout as my English fellow-traveller. He wore a yellow sarong, and yellow is the royal colour; but his tunic was the old scarlet affair, with yellow facings, of an English infantryman. Instead of the hat of a Mohammedan he wore a white regimental helmet. He had a blue sash. On his breast were displayed a number of ornate decorations, brass regimental badges, and medals won by other people in the past for the most diverse things--for swimming at Plymouth and running at Stamford Bridge. And central on his breast, hanging by a cord, was a conspicuous red reflector from the rear-lamp of a bicycle.

My English friend knew him well. He greeted the Malay cheerfully, and bestowed on him another decoration, a silverplated monogram he had found. The old man was so delighted that he regarded my contribution of a dollar with no joy whatever. He continued his conversation with my friend, in Malay, while he crumpled my currency note in his hand.

The Englishman turned to me, as we left the ancient, and chuckled. "See his battle honours and decorations, and all that? Quite mad, you know. He used to be a rajah till we turned him out. He thinks he's a rajah now. Just as well to humor the poor old thing."<sup>160</sup>

<sup>159</sup>"On Being Out of Date," A Mingled Yarn, p. 143.

<sup>160</sup>A Mingled Yarn, p. 136.

Tomlinson was fundamentally a socialist. The roots of his economic beliefs went back to Poplar and the dock areas. His concern for the Nobodies and their use as whipping boys by the Great Ones and the Press in explanations of economic lag was rooted in the memories of early days. Hearing that the workers were not working but were drinking, he went to an engineer who would know the truth. He reports thus:

I found him asleep in his overalls, where he had dropped after thirty-six hours of continuous duty. Afterwards, when his blasphemous indignation over profiteers, politicians, and newspapers had worn itself out, he told me. His men, using dimmed lights while working on the decks of urgent ships, often forced to work in cramped positions and in all weathers, and while the ship was underway to loading berth, with no refreshments provided aboard, and dropped at any hour long distances from home, were still regarded by employers in the old way, not as defenders of their country's life, but as a means to quick profits, against whom the usual debasing tricks of economy could be devised. . . . And again we might have remembered, as a corrective, how many grave speeches, which have surprised, shocked, and directed the nation, have been made by Great Men too soon after a noble dinner, words winged by the Press without an accompanying and explanatory wine list.<sup>161</sup>

In that quotation are found his economic ideas and his love for the Nobodies whom he defended. Some of this same feeling is in a selection from "The Real Thing." He had been talking to "an ardent student of life and letters" whose professional career had come to an end because of war and a wound. Tomlinson had remarked that Torhaven seemed unchanged. The young man

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<sup>161</sup>"The Nobodies," Waiting for Daylight, pp. 116-117.

suggested that Tomlinson was wrong in supposing that things were as they had been. Tomlinson reports:

Motor-cars were now as commonly owned as bicycles used to be, though he admitted that it did not seem that the queue waiting to buy books, was in need of control by the police. But farmers who had been tenants when Germany violated the independence of Belgium were now freeholders. Men who were in essential industries, and so could not be spared for the guns, were now ship-owners. We could see for ourselves how free and encouraging was the new wealth in this new world; true, the size of his pension did not fairly reflect the new and more liberal ideas of a better world, but we must admit he had no need to travel to Bond Street to spend it. "Why fear," he asked me, pointing with his crutch up the busy High Street behind us, "that what our pals in France learned was wrong with that old Europe which made the War, will not be known there? . . .

Near us was waiting a resplendent motor-car, in which reposed a young lady whose face decorated the covers of the popular magazines every month, and as the wounded soldier finished speaking it moved away with a raucous hoot.<sup>162</sup>

Again, we see that what Tomlinson has to say is shown to us in pertinent detail, and in this case the effect is intensified by the dramatic juxtaposition of the final observation.

His comments upon economic conferences are something less than mild:

In such a grateful leisure, with the mountains so lucid, odd thoughts afflict you. Why suppose the sun, being innocent, ripens corn merely for food, and not for any other profit? I wondered whether the London Conference had thought of that, in its unanimous opinion that goods are not good unless profitably scarce; that good is bad when it is plentiful; that good should be destroyed when there is enough of it for all, and it is therefore unsuitable. Could not conferences give notice to the sun? Less fertility, if you please! Not so much of your impartial generosity; it needs control! This

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<sup>162</sup>Waiting for Daylight, pp. 183-184.

fecundity is contrary to the science of economics--look at the way you upset the rate of exchange!

Since we control nature, cannot we choke off a little heat [of] the heat of the sun, and adulterate the merit of rain? Why not try? That problem ought not to be beyond the combined wit of Wall and Threadneedle Streets, of Downing Street and Washington. If reducing the earth nearer to the stoniness of a barren, where prices would be high and helpful, is the way of political sagacity, then plainly the armament contractors are right in their devices; for the enlargement of lyddite on the communications of mankind, to quicken the slow and meagre effects of quotas, embargoes, and other judicious hindrances to commerce, would bring the barren about us, and high prices, much sooner than we could dare hope for in the present rate of our drop towards the New Jerusalem.<sup>163</sup>

He remembered Poplar, too, when he first met primitive man, and he compares that poor native of the Amazon with the poor man in merry England.

I had never seen primitive man in his native place . . . and I saw with a new respect from what a splendid creature we are derived. It was, I am glad to say, to cheer the existence of these people that I had put money in a church plate at Poplar. Poplar, you may have heard, is a parish in civilisation where an organized community is able, through its heritage of the best of two thousand years of religion, science, commerce, and politics, to eke out to a finish the lives of its members (warped as they so often are by the arid dispensations of Providence) with the humane Poor Law. The Poor Law is the civilised man's ironic rebuke to a parsimonious Creator. It is a jest which will ruin the solemnity of the Judgment Day. Only the man of long culture could think of such a shattering insult to the All Wise who made this earth too small for the children He continues to send to it, trailing their clouds of glory which prove a sad hindrance and get so fouled in the fight for standing room on their arrival.<sup>164</sup>

He later considers thrift and Lord Rosebery, with no kind words for either:

<sup>163</sup>"Outlook on the Sierra Morena," South to Cadiz, p. 96.

<sup>164</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, pp. 146-147.

There in merry England the poor wretch is, where the riches of earth are not broadcast largess as I see they are here, but are stacked on each side of the road, and guarded by police, leaving to him but the inclement highway, with nothing but Lord Rosebery's advice and benediction to help him keep the wind out of the holes in his trousers; that benefit, and the bleak consideration that he may swink all day for a handful of beans, or go without. What is prudence in that man? It is his goodwill for the police. To be blue nosed and meek at heart, and to hoard half the crust of your stinted bread, is to blaspheme the King of Glory. Some men will touch their crowns to Carnegie in heaven.<sup>165</sup>

Mechanism and the corrosion of man and the world by materialism also receive attention in this thought. We examine this selection from "Exploration":

We have been forced of late to develop theories explaining this age of machines, and to see omens of its impending doom. When our machines stop, so shall we. Civilized man, it appears, has passed out of the phase of imaginative exploration and experiment; he has created engines to do his work for him, but his soul has lost its daring, and he is now a subdued captive, chained to the wheels, a helpless slave in the mechanical establishment he created. . . . The machine stops. The subservience of men to the despotism of the polished steel rods and the ordained revolutions of the wheels may weary. The boy may tire of his engine.<sup>166</sup>

Tomlinson has doubts that the age of machines has brought any greater happiness to the world. The "happy multitude" has become no more aware of beauty because of them. But the machines are not perturbed by those who recognize them for what they are, compulsive forces without soul. He expresses some of this in "The Road to Concord":

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>166</sup>A Mingled Yarn, pp. 125-126.

It would be an awful mistake to assume that the concrete base of the age of machines suffers in the least because we have learned to recognize it and heartily to hate it. On the contrary it appears to extend, as much like living matter as a coral reef. The Persian rose-garden becomes an oil-field, and even Buddhist temples, by the look of it, are used by the Chinese for the manufacture of machine guns; they got the pattern of that automatic slayer from us because we had perfected its virtue, and we have taught them the right application of that virtue.<sup>167</sup>

What is more, according to some observers, this is all to the good and nothing to worry about. But I should see no reason to repine if a miraculous change, a dispensation of Allah the Compassionate, took place in the nature of oil-wells everywhere, and thereby caused the world's explosive engines to join the bones of the mastodon. But there will be no such luck. We shall get what we have asked for. We are evidently in a second industrial revolution; the first was when we gave being to the machines, and with them reformed the world; now we find the machines have run away with us, and our problem is to gain control, if we can, before they wreck the civilization we built with them. At the moment, it looks like long odds on the machines.<sup>168</sup>

Two pungent comments leave no doubt as to his feelings on materialism. The first is found in "The African Coast": "Of all the infernal uses to which a country can be put there is none like development."<sup>169</sup> The second appears in The Sea and the Jungle: "I begin to think the commercial mind is the most dull, wasteful, and ignorant of all the sad wonders in the pageant of humanity."<sup>170</sup>

It is not that Tomlinson is in love with the past, but that he remembers some of the distillates of the past which

<sup>167</sup>South to Cadiz, pp. 181-182.

<sup>168</sup>"The Road to Concord," South to Cadiz, pp. 181-182

<sup>169</sup>Old Junk, p. 34.

<sup>170</sup>p. 194.

today's racing world of materialism finds no room for. It is not that thoughts in meditation were clearer, or finer, or more profound yesterday; it is that today there are no thoughts in meditation for there is no time for meditation. It is not that the eyes of yesterday saw more clearly; there is not time today for eyes to look.

Tomlinson was a deeply religious man, yet ritualistic religion and many of the acts performed in the name of religion often disgusted him. He felt Christ would be misunderstood if he were to come to earth today, would be a criminal, "for the religious and political leaders of his day recognized what his teaching would lead to as easily as would any magistrate to-day who had before him a carpenter accused of persuading soldiers that killing is murder."<sup>171</sup> Pious Christians did not want to face realities. He recounts his view thus:

How often have I listened to the cool and haughty contralto of ladies of education and refinement who were clearly unaware that what they were encouraging, what to them afforded so much pride, what deepened their conviction of righteous sacrifice, was but an obscene outrage on the souls and bodies of young men. How is one to convey that to ladies? All that a timid writer may do is to regret the awful need to challenge the pious assurance of Christians which is sure to be turned to anger by the realities.<sup>172</sup>

In Cordova he visited a mosque which had been turned into a cathedral after the defeat of the Moors. He was impressed by what had been beauty, but says that "one would find it hard

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<sup>171</sup>"Great Statesman," Waiting for Daylight, p. 163.

<sup>172</sup>"Authors and Soldiers," Waiting for Daylight, p. 91.

to believe that the artists who created that secluded lace-work of gems were of a culture supported chiefly by intrigue, torture, treachery, and the scimitar; and then one remembers the nobility of the Gothic, and by what methods, at times, the authority of Jesus has been impressed on the memory of the careless."<sup>173</sup>

He feels, however, that there is a promise of good. He describes an occurrence at sea when the "horizon expanded to a surprising distance," and the "change in the quality of the sun and air became most marked." "These manifestations," he says, "filled the few of us privileged to witness them with awe, and a new faith in the power and compassion of God."<sup>174</sup> He believes there are some verities of life:

Anyhow, one thing is certain of time, whatever Einstein may say of it, of time that was, and is, and is to be: without the laughter of children, and the singing of birds, heard as if echoing from everlastingness, and delight as good as new when apple and cherry blossoms are out again, and a right to the use of one's own mind as unquestioned as a free share in air and sun, then earth's best would be as the garden of Proserpine. What may be the truth about the apparition of existence I would do no more than venture a private word, but so much of that truth is surely in loveliness; for if joy is not a partial revelation of the Absolute, then goodness is no more than a convenient figment, like Greenwich mean time, and the worst is as the best; and so awful a conclusion won't bear looking at.<sup>175</sup>

<sup>173</sup>"Cordova," South to Cadiz, p. 93.

<sup>174</sup>The Sea and the Jungle, p. 94.

<sup>175</sup>"On Being Out of Date," A Mingled Yarn, pp. 142-143.



He believes that the world can be renewed. In "The Ruins" he tells of his thoughts after finding an old account book in a town that had been destroyed by gunfire:

Yet amid all the misery and horror of the Somme, with its shattering reminder of finality and futility at every step whichever way you turned, that ledger in the road, with no one to read it, was the gospel promising that life should rise again; the suggestion of a forgotten but surviving virtue which would return, and cover the dread we knew, till a ploughman of the future would stop at rare relics, holding them up to the sun, and dimly recall ancient tales of woe.<sup>176</sup>

The same feeling came to him as he went home to England after his trip to the Malay States. He felt a new awakening of understanding when he first made out the outlines of the coast:

We got under way again, and night fell on the coast and sank at last over all the waters. Leaning on the bulwarks and gazing landward, I could just make out a deeper shadow athwart the seas of night, formless under the faint glimmer in the meridian. It had no bounds. It was immense and intangible. I felt the inward glow of a new and deep desire. I cannot tell you what that shadow was, for, thought transcendently it was there, it was dim and mysterious, almost beyond vision; England! That shadow was the indenture on the very stars of an old grandeur, the memory impressed on night itself, blurred but indelible, of an ancient renown. It was the emanation of an idea too great for us to know; the dimming through the gloom to me in my isolation and misgiving of wonderful things almost forgotten, of the dreams and exaltations of splendid youth, of the fidelity of comrades, of noble achievements, of our long-past intimate sorrows, of precious things unspoken but understood, of our dead. No. Not even old night could hide that presence. It was indefinable, majestic, severe, and still. And it may have been resigned and communing, its age-long work done, in the fall of a darkness which it knew to be ultimate. Or it may have been retired within the night, dominant on its seas, making no sign knowing the supreme test of all its

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<sup>176</sup>Old Junk, p. 200.

labors was at hand, vigilant but composed, waiting for another morning to dawn in the hearts of men when there should be light to build the City of God.<sup>177</sup>

Thus we close with a selection that exhibits many of the manifestations of Tomlinson's style. In it we find idea, image, figure, rhythm, and diction. In it, too, we recognize the genius who can see, who can feel, and who can select from all the words those that so precisely present idea, image, figure, and rhythm.

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<sup>177</sup>Tide Marks, pp. 294-295.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ARTIST

In the preceding chapters we have explored the writings of Tomlinson in an attempt to discover something of his philosophy of life, of his philosophy of writing, of his artistry as a stylist as revealed in his writings. We have seen that Tomlinson was a man sensitive to the physical world and to man and man's place in the universe. He was not a formally religious man, but he felt that the God of the universe must be good and that He must be pained that man has so misused the world. Tomlinson sympathized with the common people because he was one of them. He distrusted government and man's ability to handle progress. He abhorred privilege for the privileged few. He was outraged that the physical world which he saw clearly and which he revered should be ignored or destroyed by man and so-called civilization. We have found that his style encompasses his philosophy and represents his mind, and that it conveys to the reader those ideas which were important to him. His style makes clear to us the physical world as he saw it and the realms of his mind and spirit. We have discovered some of the influences of his early life, such as Poplar, ships, poverty, books, early employment. We have found what he himself said about

writers and writing. We have seen his sensitivity reflected in the use of color, in the creation of images, and in the development of figures of speech. We have examined his choice of words and his construction of sentences as factors of his style. All of this we have attempted to demonstrate. In this chapter we shall analyze two essays of comparable length but of different styles and subject matter. The analyses will be based upon those marks which we have discovered to be representative of Tomlinson's expository style, and upon those aspects which reflect his background and philosophy.

The essays to be examined are "The Pit Mouth," written in November, 1907, and "Transfiguration," written sometime between January and November of 1907, probably in September. "The Pit Mouth" is a journalistic product written by a reporter covering a mine disaster. "Transfiguration" is a reflective essay in the best form of the personal essay. "The Pit Mouth" reveals Tomlinson's abiding concern for the Nobodies; "Transfiguration" shows his delight in the world through his response to physical sensation. If we have learned anything about Tomlinson's skill, our examination of these essays should demonstrate the validity of the conclusions we have drawn.

### "The Pit Mouth"

The ten paragraphs of "The Pit Mouth" are of similar length except for the seventh, ninth, and tenth. The first shows the reporter's feeling that he is an intruder in this place of sorrow. The second describes the approach to the

colliery; the third suggests the quietness at the mouth of the mine and the coldness and emotional steeliness of the countryside. The fourth again suggests the feeling of intrusion; the fifth adds to the description of the mouth of the shaft; the sixth tells of the arrival of the rescue experts; the seventh, the long paragraph, describes the return to the surface of the rescue party and the growing sense of tragedy; the eighth is a prose ode to the common people; the ninth tells of his departure from Great Barr; the concluding paragraph is the picture of Great Barr on the day after the tragedy.

The kinds and forms of the sentences used in "The Pit Mouth" are revealing. There are seventy-two sentences in the piece, forty of them simple sentences, ten of them compound; the other twenty-two are distributed thus: fourteen, complex sentence; five, compound-complex; three, sentence fragment. The simple, periodic sentences average only 16.4 words to the sentence. Only three sentences possess more than forty words. There are many four-word sentences. Short sentences mean, of course, that modifiers must be simple. We find simple modification. There are few participles and only two participial phrases. There are three adjective clauses and a few clusters of adjectives. Modification, then, must be achieved by simple adjectives or by very short unadorned prepositional phrases, and this we find to be true. The result is a moving toward a center with the

elimination of most, but not all, of the patterns of reflective writing that we shall find in "Transfiguration." The author is reporting. He must get to his subject. There will be time enough at the end of the piece for the philosophical reflection that we usually associate with Tomlinson's works. But in the first part of the essay, we see a reporter of integrity doing the job a journalist should do.

The first sentence of the essay introduces the scene of the accident: "There was Great Barr, idle, still, and quiet."<sup>1</sup> The three short adjectives could apply to an idle grist mill or a housewife in repose or a worker retired after many years of labor. They suggest peace, and yet there is an intensity in this peace even when it is not associated with this particular event. The second combination of three adjectives consists of harsh, bleak words that reinforce the feeling of the first sentence that all is not well. "Raw," "bleak," "winter" connote tragedy. We see next the drawing of interest toward the center: "Through the Birmingham suburbs, out into the raw, bleak, winter roads between the hedges, quite beyond the big town . . . one approached the village of calamity . . . Young men streamed by on bicycles in the same direction, groups were hurrying there on foot."<sup>2</sup> Not only is the movement to the center, but the center is circumscribed by the many people who are embraced by the disaster: "The road ran by the boundary,

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<sup>1</sup>Old Junk, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

and was packed with people, all gazing absorbed and quiet into the grounds of the colliery; they were stacked up the hedge banks, and the walls and trees were loaded with boys."<sup>3</sup>

Briefly the situation is this: A fire has broken out in the coal mine hundreds of feet underground. The word has reached all in Great Barr, for all who live there are bound to the colliery by employment. The fire sends up smoke through the ventilating shaft. Attempts are made to rescue the miners trapped below. A rescue party returns bringing no hope, only a "moribund cat."<sup>4</sup> The day passes without news, but with the increasing certainty of death. It is evident that those who try to save the trapped ones will only die themselves. And the people who die or who will die are common people.

This is a report of tragedy in the life of a coal mine. Tragedy must be shown to us--if the reporter is to succeed in his effort--so that we feel in our own souls a reaction such as Tomlinson knew. The means which he uses to secure our responses are these: word choice, sentence patterns, figures of speech and images, organization. As we examine each feature, we shall note that the factors are interlaced.

We have discussed the introduction of the scene and of those concerned. We now turn to his interpretation of these.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 80-81.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

In the second paragraph and again in the last two paragraphs we find a figure drawn that dominates the picture. This is a skeleton, the raw black timbers of the above-ground part of the mine structure. The impression we gain as we see the image is one of height, narrowness, darkness, destitution, implacability, relentlessness, mercilessness. All these are found in "Three high, slim chimneys were leisurely pouring smoke from the grotesque black skeleton structures above the pits."<sup>5</sup> The word "grotesque" reminds us that the world for Great Barr is out of joint or deflected from center. Tomlinson ends his piece, after reporting the action about the pits and eulogizing those who attempt rescues, with a rephrasing of the same figure of doom. He says, "I left that place where the starshine was showing the grim skeleton of the shaft-work overhead in the night";<sup>6</sup> he then adds, "A group of women were still gazing at the grotesque ribs and legs of the pit-head as though it were a monster without ruth."<sup>7</sup> One can see, in that structure outlined against a cold morning sky, another time and three empty crosses against another sky. I believe that is what Tomlinson meant for us to remember, for here again the common man had been sacrificed to privilege and materialism.

English winter weather intensified the effect of the disaster, and this Tomlinson shows us. The words which we use

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.



to describe tragedy are more often the words of winter than of summer. "Raw," "bleak," "winter" suggest impersonal sympathy, the withdrawal of emotion. There is a like suggestion in the "roads between the hedges, quite beyond the big town smoking with its enterprising labours."<sup>8</sup> We realize intellectually that not all industry can stop because of an accident in one small part of the industry, but we feel at the same time in the heart that failure to stop is an indication of callousness.

In the description of the landscape, which includes the colliery buildings, we see more of coldness. The colors used are brilliant colors, but they are colors that suggest the emptiness of emotion rather than the presence of feeling. "Around us, a lucid landscape (for it had been raining) ran to the distant encompassing hills which lifted like low ramparts of cobalt and amethyst to a sky of luminous saffron and ice-green, across which leaden clouds were moving. The country had that hard, coldly radiant appearance which always impresses a sad man as this world's frank expression of its alien disregard."<sup>9</sup> The picture is crystal clear; there is nothing to soften either the image or the emotional coldness. One of these color words alone would mean little. Another combination of them could awaken a different emotional response. But the pattern here suggests only the impersonal inscrutability

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

of the universe. The hills are metal and gem, hard substances, silver white and bluish purple mass. This figure is full of color. The green, however, is ice-green, and the heavy grey clouds emphasize the feeling of "alien disregard." Tomlinson did not choose colors for his image that were not there; he saw the colors and was able to choose words to convey the colors as his sensitive eye saw them. He took what he saw and what he sensed and drew the picture for us.

His description of the colliery and the land around it may be symbolic; he suggests the power of privilege as represented by the mine in this passage: ". . . and beyond the far dip was the village, an almost amorphous group of mean red dwellings stuck on ragged fields about the dominant colliery buildings."<sup>10</sup> The mine where "the new red-brick engine-houses stood"<sup>11</sup> is strength, and the well built engine house is domination. The homes of those who must work far below the ground in order that the colliery will prosper are unidentifiable, one from another. The houses, like the people who live in them, are almost shapeless and nameless.

Simple sentences dominate the seventh paragraph, depicting the rescue team at work, and the eighth, the eulogy of the common man. Many of these sentences are very short:

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

"There was a signal";<sup>12</sup> "The air smelt of iodoform";<sup>13</sup> "They entered the sage, and down they went."<sup>14</sup> Some are not so bald, but even they have no decoration: "A cloth was laid on the ground from the shaft to the engine house, and stretchers were placed handy";<sup>15</sup> "That quickly uprunning rope was bringing the first news."<sup>16</sup> We see in these examples the simple sentence performing as it should to suggest the significance of time, the action of strength, the building of emotion. These sentences convey the threat of tragedy. Details are selected; sentences are constructed as sentences must be. But the effectiveness of the sentences does not depend alone on type. The effectiveness lies in the rhetorical form as the vehicle and in the choice of words together with the order of presentation. Details crammed into a long sentence would not have been effective; we would have lost that feeling of horror within us. Short sentences with vague images would have been ineffective. It is both word and sentence that bear the idea. We read, "An hour and more passes in nervous and dismal waiting."<sup>17</sup> The word "dismal" is the key to the effectiveness. Tomlinson has used the word

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

in an obsolete meaning: ill-omened. "Woeful," "dreadful," "gloomy," "cheerless," do not describe the waiting, do not suggest the end of the waiting; dismal does. In another place, attention to the details of an action is used to move us. "The doctors took off their coats, and arranged bottles and tinkling apparatus on chairs stuck in the mud."<sup>18</sup> The phrase, "chairs stuck in the mud," reminds us of the rain, the impersonal rain that has fallen that day, the expression of a universe that could not care about these tragic people-figures.

Although Tomlinson is capable of arousing emotions within us, he is never sentimental. He reports as a good journalist should, and we know of the dread in the hearts of the women who watch at the mouth of the mine. In a single paragraph are three references to the women, references that are terse but more moving than an elaborate interpreting of their fears could be. The three references show the breaking of a circle as well as the death of a husband or son. The first is this: ". . . the women, some carrying infants, broke ranks."<sup>19</sup> The image of the women reaching for news is heightened by the presence of the babies. The second: "They knew nothing; and the white-faced women, with hardly repressed hysteria, took again their places by the engine house."<sup>20</sup> As

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

before, a small detail focuses the picture: ". . . took again their places by the engine house." The "hardly repressed hysteria" does not move us as does the picture of the women returning to wait. In the third of these selections, he makes sure we feel the poignancy of the scene. "Occasionally a child, too young to know it was adding to a mother's grief, would wail querulously."<sup>21</sup> We are to realize the piercing pain of a double grief.

Throughout we are impressed by the accuracy of reporting. Tomlinson gives this description of the mine fire:

Nothing showed of the fire but a whitish smoke from a ventilating shaft; and a stranger would not know what that signified. But the women did. Wet with rain showers they had been watching that smoke all night, and were watching it still, for its unceasing pour to diminish. Constant and unrelenting, it streamed steadily upward, as though it drew its volume from central fires that would never cease.<sup>22</sup>

The smoke of a mine fire behaves in just such a manner. It is not a journalist with his imagination who draws the fire by the smoke, but a sensitive man who is moved by the developing tragedy. The women--figures of tragedy waiting--are watching the smoke. The smoke of a mine fire is whitish smoke. It moves upward, seemingly without end. The use of "unrelenting" rather than another word such as "unceasing" shows the strength of the fire underground, a force that was beyond man.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 83-84.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

Another picture that adds to the painful effectiveness of the account is this: "I left that place where the star-shine was showing the grim skeleton of the shaft-work overhead in the night, and where men moved about below in the indeterminate dark like dismal gnomes."<sup>23</sup> Here are two contrasting images: a harsh, bright "star-shine" above the sharply outlined coal-shaft scaffolding; and an image that is indistinct because of the "indeterminate dark" and "dismal gnomes." One is bright, stark, impersonal; the other is dark and desolate, for those who move in it are in a limitless, dismal land of failure.

Tomlinson does not see the miners impersonally. He sees them as the inheritors of the mantle of chivalry. The salute to the commonman miners and their commonman rescuers is almost an ode, a prose ode, of course, although there are some parts of it that are poetic in form. It is not poetic prose, which he did not believe existed, but it is prose in its finest form. He dubs the miners and their rescuers, the common men, knights because of their service and valor. He shows their greatness by all the marks the sophisticates would call vulgar or uncivilized. They were coarse, unwashed, poor. He sees them as knights, as he sees Welsby of Normanton who "buckled on his harness and went to the assault,"<sup>24</sup> going forth to save one of their own. He epitomizes them all in his

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

salute to Welsby of Normanton; he gives them title as well as honor.

The common people! Greatness is as common as that. There are not enough honors and decorations to go round. Talk of the soldier! Vale of Welsby of Normanton! He was a common miner. He is dead. His fellows were in danger, their wives were white-faced and their children were crying, and he buckled on his harness and went to the assault with no more thought for self than great men have in a great cause; and he is dead. I saw him go to his death. I wish I could tell you of Welsby of Normanton.<sup>25</sup>

Thus he salutes a common miner who went out to try to save those who were also common, as Tomlinson was common. He dubs him knight named in honor of his exploits on the field of combat. Thus he saw all common men, knights who gave of themselves for others.

### "Transfiguration"

"Transfiguration" is a reflective essay. Essays of reflection do not drive directly toward a point; they are not unadorned exposition. A reflective essay is like the reaction from a pebble dropped into a quiet pool. Wavelets move upon the surface of the water; others ripple out from the falling stone as it glides down finally to rest. Ripples meet and touch others; the pulse blends or merges or survives to stir again. The swirls jostle, drift away, retreat, weave in and out, reinforce other wavelets. Each movement, each merger, each deflection reveals new patterns of movement. So each word pattern conveys new tones of meaning. The ripples on

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

the surface of the water are the thought-stirrers; those rocking below are the reflection bearers. We see from many angles; we examine many viewpoints. We reflect upon our views and so receive the writer's stimulus for our own comprehension. Thoughts are renewed and reinforced by emotional response.

Sentences are an indication of the pace of this piece, for a sentence must bear thought. Many of the sentences in "Transfiguration" are short. They move the essay forward. They present facts or indicate substance. They put before us ideas which the author would have us examine. But the examination is another matter. As the author holds aloft the thought before us and turns it so that we may examine it in all its variegations, he lengthens the sentence; he refuses to permit us to stop in the midst of shifting tones and insists that we must go on until we see the idea reflected wholly.

There is wide variation in sentence length in "Transfiguration." There are eighty-three words in one sentence, four in another. Nine sentences have more than fifty words, eleven sentences fewer than ten. Such extreme variation in length is unusual. The sentences are divided almost equally between simple and complex sentences, with eighteen being simple sentences, fourteen complex; one sentence is compound, and one, compound-complex. The great number of longer



sentences suggests that we should find much modification, many images, and ideas examined and considered. The short sentences suggest the germ of the idea; the longer sentences evaluate ideas and construct images. For example, we find an idea in the short sentence "The apparition of that island depends upon the favour of the sun."<sup>26</sup> We learn more about the apparition in the long sentence that follows, a sentence which has five figures of apparition: "ghost," "alluring and immaterial fragment," "vision of sanctuary," "frail mirage of land," "roseous spot."<sup>27</sup> The fact of the apparition is noted in twelve words; the image is examined reflectively in eighty-four words. As expected, we find long sentences laden with modifiers and images. "Transcendent and mounting qualities," "passionate azure of the bugloss," "the hot and arid sand," "distant sleepy uplands," "saline meadows, lush and warm"<sup>28</sup> are clustered modifiers. There are in one sentence, a sentence that is a paragraph, five images--the bay, the coast, the cliffs, the fields, the streams of gossamer, each image drawn with phrases or adjectives or both.<sup>29</sup>

The mood of reflection moves easily into patterns of rhythm. There are accent patterns in "blue water-worn pebbles,"<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>"Transfiguration," Old Junk, p. 75.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

"the wet strand over which she came wading,"<sup>31</sup> "the thought of a haven of peace."<sup>32</sup> There is one longer metrical run: ". . . there are saline meadows, lush and warm, where ditches serpentine between barriers of meadowsweet, briers and fat grasses."<sup>33</sup> A rearrangement of line length produces this interesting pattern:

there are saline meadows, lush and warm,  
 where ditches serpentine  
 between barriers of bittersweet  
 briers and fat grasses.

The essay "Transfiguration" is an expanded image. Many images make up the completed picture, but all are a part of the whole, a scene bathed in almost ethereal light. There are points of definite figure drawing, but these serve only to provide a means of determining proportion. This is a seascape, a landscape painting of a bay with an island, vague in outline, a shore of "delicate cliffs and frail tinted fields,"<sup>34</sup> with moors and meadows above the shores extending from the cliffs. The moors and fields are of substance, as the island is at sundown (although not at midday), and these images have outline and some precise detail. The rest of the picture appears to be merely suggestion, constantly changing or appearing to change. The objects of the land and sea do

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

not seem to be what they are; they seem to be what they are not. A suffusion of light seems to exalt the earth. "It is the sublimation of the earth."

The essay exhibits many of the qualities of sublimity which Longinus discusses in his treatise on the sublime. There is grandeur of conception together with elevation of mind that inspires. By the choice and combination of significant details, by vivid images and figures, Tomlinson makes us conscious of the two-world scene we are beholding, the material world and the immaterial world.

The essay is a series of images, one following another, one often absorbing another. The images are vivid although often of indistinct outline. There are many images of texture, fewer images of color. Few of the images are chromatic; most of the colors have been transformed by light. There are "the black world,"<sup>35</sup> "a low yellow planet,"<sup>36</sup> "blue water-worn pebbles,"<sup>37</sup> and the children's "brown limbs."<sup>38</sup> All other colors are drowned in light so that their sharpness is lost. We see "a roseous spot,"<sup>39</sup> "passionate azure,"<sup>40</sup> "levels that are not green like fields, but golden and of a texture that reflects the light."<sup>41</sup> The light is so intense that the colors of the spectrum which compose it are lost in it.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

Images of texture abound in the essay. The images of the real world are substantial: "sundered granite,"<sup>42</sup> "a lump of separated earth,"<sup>43</sup> "solid and unquestionable stones,"<sup>44</sup> "hot and arid sand,"<sup>45</sup> "a high ridge of blue water-worn pebble,"<sup>46</sup> "a close matting of thyme, and herbage as close and resilient as moss."<sup>47</sup> (Here resilient moss influences the image, for resiliency is not substantial.) But there are many more images of texture from the world of illusion, a suggestion of cloud-like substance. We find these: "The island is . . . an alluring and immaterial fragment of the coast,"<sup>48</sup> "delicate cliffs and frail tinted fields,"<sup>49</sup> "The coloured fabric of the bay becomes diaphanous,"<sup>50</sup> "tear from their places and stream inland as torn flimsies and gossamer,"<sup>51</sup> "a frail mirage of land,"<sup>52</sup> "opalescent haze,"<sup>53</sup> "an impalpable dust of gold,"<sup>54</sup> "ripens the clouds,"<sup>55</sup> "distant sleepy uplands,"<sup>56</sup> "shiny entrance to the deep,"<sup>57</sup> "bright vacuity,"<sup>58</sup> "radiant void."<sup>59</sup> All of these suggest fragility that will disappear if touched or examined.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 76-77.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

There is another pattern of images which suggests the scene to be merely apparent, not real. These are figures of mystery, as in "The apparition of that island depends upon the favour of the sun. The island is only a ghost there, sometimes invisible."<sup>60</sup> "Again, [it] floats there only while the thought of a haven of peace and secure verities is still in the mind."<sup>61</sup> Because "the island in the bay is usually but a colored thought in the mind, a phantom and unattainable refuge by day, and a star by night,"<sup>62</sup> we feel that this is only a momentarily visible world, and that as we have called it into being by our thoughts, our thoughts may dissolve it. In this pattern we find the images of air, an idea which is invisible but which may have substance, a seeming contradiction in terms. "The west wind pours among the dunes," he writes, "a warm and heavy torrent."<sup>63</sup> We find another reference, "the quickened air."<sup>64</sup> Thus by suggesting the invisibility of what we see and the appearance of what we do not see, Tomlinson has successfully carried us along the border which divides the real from the unreal, the visible from the invisible, the material from the immaterial. And because we are upon this line of division, it is difficult for us to determine which is the real, the visible, the material.

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

"Transfiguration" is an essay, too, of the wonder of life. In it we find the spirit of Tomlinson, the man awed by the world around him and conscious of the good which life can bestow. He uses a figure from mythology to suggest that the sea is life giving:

Here in the bay on a September morning, if our world till then had been without life and voice, with this shine that is an impalpable dust of gold, the quickened air, and the seas moving as though joyous in the first dawn, Eros and Aurora would have known the moment, and a child would have been born.<sup>65</sup>

He turns the figure then that we may examine it from another side:

In this desert you may press a hand into the body of the earth, and feel its heat and pulse. The west wind pours among the dunes, a warm and heavy torrent. There is no need to make a miracle of the appearance of life on our earth. Life was at the happy incidence of the potent elements on such a strand as this. Aphrodite was no myth. Our mother here gave birth to her.<sup>66</sup>

He places the children in the image as figures of sea-generated life:

The Boy and Miss Muffett beside me are no surprise. They are proper to the place. The salt water and the sand are still on their brown limbs, and in the Boy's serious eyes and Miss Muffet's smile there is something outside my knowledge; but I know that in the depth of that mystery is security and content.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, he feels that the sea which has given life touches on a strand that has no substance:

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., pp. 76-77.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., pp. 77-78. .

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

Their feet move over a void in which far down I see another sky than ours. They go where I doubt that I can follow. I cannot leave my hold upon the rocks and enter the place to which their late and aerial spirits are native. . . . As their bodies, moving over the bright vacuity, grow unsubstantial and elfin with distance, and they approach that line where the surf glimmers athwart the radiant void, I have a sudden fear that they may vanish quite and only their laughter come at me mockingly from the near invisible air. They will have gone back to their own place.<sup>68</sup>

We find these images of life bathed in light. The island in the distance lies on the horizon "like an inexplicable brightness at sea when no island can be seen."<sup>69</sup> He shows us that "Our own shining globe floats with others in a sea of light."<sup>70</sup> He speaks of "this shine that is an impalpable dust of gold."<sup>71</sup> With another figure, he intensifies the light, "the generative day which makes the surf dazzling."<sup>72</sup> With another, he suggests light from within, "levels that are not green, like fields, but golden, and of a texture that reflects the light, so that these plains seem to have their own brightness."<sup>73</sup> We find these figures, "The bright vacuity,"<sup>74</sup> and the "radiant void."<sup>75</sup> Each of these figures--figures used with other implications, already discussed--may suggest variant ideas. It is the author-artist letting us view from many angles the images that pulse,

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., pp. 78-79.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., pp. 76-77.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

merge, drift, and reinforce each other in order that our perceived picture may be whole.

Over all we have the feeling of sublimity, of earth lifted out and beyond, transformed. Tomlinson tells us this in the meaning of the title "transformed." He repeats the thought in "It is the sublimation of earth."<sup>76</sup> He tells us the island floats only while the "thought of a haven of peace and secure verities are still in the mind."<sup>77</sup> We have a sense of far seeing, of reaching beyond, in the image "lying upon the horizon like a faint sunken cloud,"<sup>78</sup> in a "frail mirage of land,"<sup>79</sup> in "the strand has no substance,"<sup>80</sup> and in "down that shining entrance to the deep."<sup>81</sup> "The transcendent and mounting qualities of our elements"<sup>82</sup> suggest "life uplifted."<sup>83</sup>

No one of these qualities, images of brightness and filigree, appearance of light and life, harmony of the sentences, suggests sublimity. It is the symphonic arrangement of all that is the artist which elicits our emotional response to the essays of Henry Major Tomlinson.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.



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