

**THE RITE OF PASSAGE: A STUDY OF THE
THEME OF INITIATION IN THE POETRY OF
CHARLES TOMLINSON**

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IN THE POETRY OF CHARLES TOMLINSON

An Abstract
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the Graduate Council of
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John M. Hooper
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ABSTRACT

Initiation is a central idea within the writings of the contemporary British poet, Charles Tomlinson. A number of Tomlinson's poems take the form of an initiation in which the character in the poem moves from one place to another and makes discoveries in so doing. Tomlinson compares these initiation poems to American Indian ritual in which actions are broken into stages in order that the consciousness may grasp their significance. By slowing actions down and examining each stage in the poem, we become aware of what Tomlinson terms "alien phenomena," which include everything we are not. These initiation ceremonies that take place within Tomlinson's poetry take place in the imagination of the reader and exist on a different level of reality. If we are to grasp the full significance of our existence Tomlinson tells us we must exercise our imagination. In Tomlinson's poetry the creations of the imagination have a reality of their own. The mind uses the physical substance that we can sense to create the imaginary situation of the poem. However, the mind is free within the poem and the imagination to order physical substance into a new reality.

The imaginary world created within the poem improves reality by allowing the reader to discern fine relationships and become more deeply aware of his place in existence. Tomlinson likens our position in existence to Adam and Eve

trying to return to Eden. The poem through working out a ritual of initiation on the reader puts him in harmony with existence through the imagination. In the moment within the poem that this resolution is achieved, the mind enters Eden. The state of Eden is a momentary one that is achieved only through a conscious effort.

The initiation that Tomlinson's poems accomplish in the long run occurs within the reader's daily life. Having read these poems our experiences stand out brighter, more distinct. Charles Tomlinson's poems improve our world when we pass beyond their image and symbol to apply a microscopic examination to our daily perceptions. Only when our imaginations take us more deeply into life can we find Eden. When we have done this we have made a rite of passage.

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by John M. Hooper entitled "The Rite of Passage: A Study of the Theme of Initiation in the Poetry of Charles Tomlinson." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Lewis C. Tatham

Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE RITE OF PASSAGE	7
III. A WEALTH OF WAYS	24
IV. THE CONSTANCY OF STONE	34
V. ADAM AND EDEN	51
VI. CONCLUSION	58
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	60

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1955 Donald Davie, introducing Charles Tomlinson's collection of poems in The Necklace, began by noting that the poems "require no introduction."¹ In a major way he was right. A large part of Tomlinson's poetic technique is his method of observation. His poetry is childishly complex. Tomlinson takes the most elemental things such as glass, water, stone and ice and surveys them with such minute perception that the obvious seems realized for the first time and the most commonplace objects take on new meaning. Tomlinson's poems bring his reader into a world not new, but previously unnoticed.

Donald Davie's description of the world created by Tomlinson in his poems was one of the first keys that led me into Tomlinson's "poetic universe." In the introduction to The Necklace Davie writes:

These poems . . . build up for themselves their own poetic universe. And if the world they inhabit is conspicuously 'their own', it is not therefore a private world. On the contrary; we are offered here no private symbolism or ad hoc mythology, no projection of conflicts personal to the poet. The world of these poems is a public one, open to any man who has kept clean and in order his nervous sensitivity to the impact of shape and mass and colour, odour, texture, and timbre. The poems appeal outside of themselves only to the world perpetually bodied against our senses. They improve that

¹Donald Davie, "Introduction," The Necklace, by Charles Tomlinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. xii.

world. Once we have read them, it appears to us renovated and refreshed, its colours more delicate and clear, its masses more momentous, its sounds and odours sharper, more distinct.²

Tomlinson's poems are the observations of a man whose keen senses bring his world to him.

A number of Tomlinson's poems take the form of an initiation in which the persona moves from one place to another and makes discoveries in so doing. Tomlinson compares these initiation poems to American Indian ritual in which actions are broken into stages in order that the consciousness may grasp their significance. By slowing actions down and examining each stage in the poem, we become aware of what Tomlinson terms "alien phenomena," which include everything we are not. These initiation ceremonies that take place within Tomlinson's poetry take place in the imagination of the reader and exist on a different level of reality. If we are to grasp the full significance of our existence Tomlinson tells us we must exercise our imaginations. In his poem, "Aesthetic," the narrator says: "Reality is to be sought, not in concrete,/ But in space made articulate."³ In an identical phrase found in two of Tomlinson's poems the voice of the poem says: "The mind is a hunter of forms, binding itself, in a world that must decay, to present sub-

²Davie, p. xii.

³Charles Tomlinson, "Aesthetic," The Necklace (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 1, ll. 1-2.

stance."⁴ However, once the mind has bound itself to the present substance it is free within the poem and the imagination to reorder it into a new reality.

The imaginary world created within the poem improves reality by allowing the reader to discern fine relationships and become more deeply aware of his place in existence. Tomlinson likens our position in existence to Adam and Eve trying to return to Eden. Monroe K. Spears in his article on the Welsh poet, David Jones, says that Jones uses the term "anamnesis" as a key term in his poetry. He says Jones uses the word not merely to mean "unforgetting" but "'recalling' or 're-presenting' before God an event in the past so that it becomes here and now operative by its effects."⁵ If Spears noted a similar condition existing in Tomlinson's poetry it is not found in his article, but it seems Tomlinson's poetry also presents man's anamnesis in trying to return to Eden. The poem through working out a ritual of initiation on the reader puts him in harmony with existence through the imagination. In the moment within the poem that this resolution is achieved, the mind enters Eden. The state of Eden is a momentary one that is achieved only through a conscious effort.

⁴Charles Tomlinson, "Oppositions," The Way of a World (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 49. These lines are also found in "Mistlines," Written on Water (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 50, ll. 8-12.

⁵Monroe K. Spears, "Shapes and Surfaces," Contemporary Literature, 12 (Autumn 1971), 403.

Any commentator on Tomlinson's poetry is today somewhat of a pioneer. It has been over twenty-five years since Relations and Contraries, his first collection of poems, was published and in that time Tomlinson has produced a total of fourteen books and pamphlets and a folio, generally after first bringing the poems out in magazines. Despite his prolific production, Tomlinson's audience of readers remains small. There are a large number of short articles on Tomlinson's work, most of which are book reviews, but there are few serious critical works that go beyond the surface of his poetry. To date my study is unique as there has been no other study made of the theme of initiation in Charles Tomlinson's poetry. Sadly, in being different from other contemporary poets, Tomlinson's point is missed entirely by most critics. Critics like Brian Swann, who criticizes Tomlinson for being insensitive, cool and smug,⁶ and Greystiel Ruthven, who says Tomlinson's poetry is "not human enough,"⁷ have lost themselves in Tomlinson's technique. In not taking the effort to follow Tomlinson's poetry where it leads these critics have failed to recognize the sensitivity and rich humanity of Tomlinson's poetry. I do not believe any critic would say Tomlinson's poetry is not difficult but the study of it is amply rewarded.

⁶Brian Swann, "English Opposites: Charles Tomlinson and Christopher Middleton," Modern Poetry Studies, 5 (Winter 1974), 224.

⁷Greystiel Ruthven, "Charles Tomlinson--An Introduction," Gemini/Dialogue, 3 (Spring 1960), 32.

Perhaps the two finest studies that have been made of Tomlinson's poetry have been made by Michael Edwards and Calvin Bedient. Michael Edwards has studied Tomlinson's poetry as a "negotiation"⁸ and "a search for 'Eden'".⁹ Calvin Bedient discusses the "active intentionality" of "the grace of consciousness" and finds an "Eden image" within "the locus of a fine relation" in Tomlinson's poetry.¹⁰ The points established in Bedient's and Edwards's articles are substantial and valuable to any study of Tomlinson's poetry.

The most complete discussion of initiation in Tomlinson's poetry is found in his own work, The Poem as Initiation, which he illustrates with his poem, "Swimming Chenango Lake."

In the four separate chapters of this thesis I have concentrated on the way Tomlinson develops his theme of initiation within his poetry. The second chapter serves as an introduction to the theme of initiation. I have used The Poem as Initiation as a foundation for this chapter and discuss Tomlinson's "Swimming Chenango Lake," "Rower," and "The Hill" as poems of initiation. The third chapter shows the way the consciousness is initiated into alien phenomena

⁸Michael Edwards, "The Poetry of Charles Tomlinson," Agenda, 9 (Spring/Summer 1971), 127.

⁹Michael Edwards, "Charles Tomlinson: Notes on Tradition and Impersonality," Critical Quarterly, 15 (Summer 1973), 139.

¹⁰Calvin Bedient, "Charles Tomlinson," Eight Contemporary Poets (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 18 and p. 7.

in "Hawks" and "Mackinnon's Boat." The fourth chapter demonstrates initiation within the imaginary situation of the poem in "The Picture of J.T. in a Prospect of Stone" and "The Apparition." The final chapter follows the initiation theme to Eden in "The Way In," "Eden," and "Adam." Through this study I hope my reader will be led, to use Tomlinson's own phrase, "into and through and out on the other side" of the "imaginary experience" of his poetry.¹¹

¹¹Charles Tomlinson, The Poem as Initiation, (Hamilton, New York: Colgate University Press, 1968), p. 2.

CHAPTER II
THE RITE OF PASSAGE

Charles Tomlinson says that the theme of his poetry is relationship.¹ In The Poem as Initiation and several of his poems and other commentary he addresses the importance in poetry of the theme of initiation, which although a part of the large idea of relationship conveyed in Tomlinson's work is an important theme in its own right. The personae in Tomlinson's initiation poems embrace new experience. Initiation in these poems becomes a ceremony of moving from the unknown to the known.

In October 1967 Tomlinson addressed the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Colgate University. His address was published the following year as The Poem as Initiation. The Poem as Initiation is Tomlinson's most comprehensive statement about his poetry and his feelings about art in general. The Poem as Initiation focuses on the way initiation forms the poem and the way the form of the poem or "ritual" structures the experience and forms a parallel reality. It is this structured parallel that is the initiation and theme Tomlinson develops in The Poem as Initiation and his initiation poems. The idea of initiation is simple. Initiation is any first encounter with something that is not oneself. The ritual initiation in

¹Charles Tomlinson, Contemporary Poets of the English Language, ed. Rosalie Murphy (Chicago: St. James Press, 1970), p. 1097.

Tomlinson's poems goes far beyond the simple idea of discovery. He is not as concerned with the factual experience we have when we discover something new as in the way the mind uses this discovery to form a ceremony celebrating the encounter. Art creates a metaphor for reality which breaks the experience into stages in order that it can be understood. The physical act of initiation forms only a basis for the poem. When the act is formed into a ceremony it takes on the importance of a ritual. Several of Charles Tomlinson's poems which are to be discussed within this chapter are modeled after the form of a ritual initiation.

To complement and provide examples for his address, Tomlinson began and ended The Poem as Initiation with the reading of his poem, "Swimming Chenango Lake." Michael Edwards calls "Swimming Chenango Lake" "the finest enactment of natural encounter."² The address and the poem are central to the understanding of the theme of initiation in Tomlinson's poetry. The remainder of this chapter will be a discussion of the main points addressed in The Poem as Initiation and the way these points are illustrated in Tomlinson's poetry, principally "Swimming Chenango Lake." The chapter concludes with a discussion of "Rower," and "The Hill," two initiation poems that complement "Swimming Chenango Lake."

In swimming, the swimmer is in harmony with the water.

²Michael Edwards, "The Poetry of Charles Tomlinson," Agenda, 9 (Spring/Summer 1971), p. 127.

He makes "a where in water"³ for himself. In immersing himself in water the swimmer approaches a never completely obtainable union with the water and all it holds. Man is constantly reminded by contact with them that all things around him are "unman." Even other men are apart from him. Ritual, especially the type of ritual that is poetry, initiates man into his experiences and brings him closer to the things outside him. In his address Tomlinson described this process of initiation:

. . . The poem, in itself, is a ceremony of initiation. It leads us into and through and out on the other side of an imagined experience. It is a rite of passage through a terrain which, when we look back over it, had been flashed up into consciousness in a way we should scarcely have foreseen.⁴

Charles Tomlinson believes initiation has an important function in poetry and he tries to demonstrate this function in his own poetry. Tomlinson's own poetry is characterized as an effort at relation. His critic, Michael Edwards, describes the direction of Tomlinson's work:

Tomlinson's poetry is a negotiation with space and time. It is a continually repeated attempt, by meeting an uncontrollable world of spatial complexity and temporal flux, to create a dwelling for human imagination and for human passion. The negotiations focus on an encounter

³Charles Tomlinson, "Swimming Chenango Lake," The Poem as Initiation (Hamilton, New York: Colgate University Press, 1968), p. 2, ll. 29-30. This poem is also found in The Way of a World (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 3-4. Subindicated parenthetically.

⁴The Poem as Initiation, p. 5.

between the poem's narrator, or a second- or third-person projection of him, and a natural scene bodied against the eye, his mind and his will; or on the establishment of wider meaning and larger poise through social convergence; or on certain buildings, usually 'not ancient but old', which harbour space and time in a richness of relation.⁵

The function of the poem in initiating the reader into previously unseen experiences is important especially to the twentieth-century man. The man of the twentieth-century has a greater burden in ordering his reality for in doing so, he must order the experience of all those before him again in his own mind. Past experience is a determinant of our present experiences and actions, at least to a degree. This influence of the past has had an effect on man as long as history has been recorded, but twentieth-century man has a greater bulk of history to order and greater access to it than his ancestors. The poem can be a quick vehicle through present and past experience. Tomlinson says:

. . . The poem weighs and measures occasions by calling attention to the intricate meshings of words. . . . In the poet's weighing and measuring . . . there is a dwelling on the inner rhythm of events that is as fundamental and as primitive, if you like, as ritual. And like ritual, the poem dwells on the event, to force us to a consciousness of the meaningfulness of that event. Like ritual, the poem is pointed outwards from its own contemplative pausing, towards life at large, towards the possible meaningfulness of life at large. There is no occasion too small for the poet's celebration . . . all ask, through the insistence of the poem's ritual celebration, to be recorded by

⁵Edwards, "The Poetry of Charles Tomlinson," p. 127.

us in their deeper significances. The poem invokes them and we attend as without the poem we should not have done.⁶

The poem, viewed as ritual, becomes a method of observation and initiation. It becomes a pathway into closer observation and understanding of experience.

The poem fragments the experience that it seeks to record, dissolving actions to their component parts and drawing attention to these parts. In doing so, the experience of the poem causes a weld between man and his external surroundings. Tomlinson gives an example of the way ritual works in the Pawnee Indian ceremony, the Hako. This ceremony is a poetic invocation for the crossing of a stream. He says:

. . . The invocation is divided, we are told, 'into several parts which correspond respectively to the moment when the travelers put their feet in water, the moment when they move them and the moment when the water completely covers their feet.' All these stages are celebrated and differentiated.⁷

This sort of ritual thinking, invoking a union with the universe, acts as does a poem. The poem is this sort of thinking captured in words, the poem calling attention to the words and the words calling attention to the event. The poem breaks a single action, which in reality seems to be continuous, into various stages. Tomlinson notes that the poem:

. . . seeks to make the consciousness pause over the stages of the act. It meditates and mediates an event while taking a grip on external

⁶The Poem as Initiation, p. 6.

⁷Ibid.

reality and attempting to adjust the consciousness to that reality.⁸

The reader of "Swimming Chenango Lake" pauses over the stages of the act of crossing the mind-lake Chenango as the swimmer in the poem "reads the water's autumnal hesitations a wealth of ways."

"Swimming Chenango Lake" presents man connecting with alien phenomena, "confronted by all that we are not" as Tomlinson describes the meeting of ocean and land in another poem, "The Atlantic."⁹ "Swimming Chenango Lake" begins:

Winter will bar the swimmer soon.
He reads the water's autumnal hesitations
A wealth of ways

(p. 1, ll. 1-3)

These opening lines set the mood for the entire poem. They indicate the capacity of man's senses to read a multiplicity of interpretations into his experiences. The poem is also framed in the season of fall, a time of autumn leaves, a time also symbolic of man's own mortality. These lines suggest a friction in that man wishes to establish a stasis for himself, to create for himself harmony within his environment. Opposing that desire is the continual flow of time. The coming of fall also draws nearer winter. Because life is a temporary state, man knows that in time he will be barred from it. As it is certain that the cold of winter will prevent the

⁸The Poem as Initiation, p. 7.

⁹Charles Tomlinson, "The Atlantic," Seeing is Believing (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1958), p. 1, l. 23.

swimmer from swimming it is also certain that death will at some time come to him. An example of the pathetic fallacy is shown as "the first leaves at the first/ Tremor of the morning air have dropped/ Anticipating" the swimmer. (p. 1, ll. 5-7) Muted examples of the pathetic fallacy are not at all uncommon in Tomlinson's poetry, for his poems are drawn up in the world that is full of possibility and speculation. If it can be thought, it can be in the framework of the poem. Tomlinson's poems are constructed on the planes of factual observation and fantasy. Tomlinson says that a poem is an "imagined experience." In Tomlinson's poetry imagined experience exists equally alongside close factual observation of details. Tomlinson suggests in some poems that the imagined experience comes closer to the truth.¹⁰ Tomlinson shifts to an almost scientific view of the water and juxtaposes the animation of the leaves with the geometry of the water:

There is a geometry of water, for this
 Squares off the clouds' redundances
 And sets them floating in a nether atmosphere
 All angles and elongations: every tree
 Appears a cypress as it stretches there
 And every bush that shows the season,
 A shaft of fire. It is a geometry and not
 A fantasia of distorting forms, but each
 Liquid variation answerable to the theme
 It makes away from, plays before:
 It is a consistency, the grain of the pulsating flow.

(p. 1, ll. 9-19)

¹⁰Tomlinson's clearest statement of this idea is found in his poem, "A Meditation on John Constable," Seeing is Believing (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1958), p. 26. A fuller discussion follows in chapter four.

This dual view of the properties of water ties in with water's nature. Water as a substance has reflective qualities and volumes and movements that can be plotted and measured mathematically. But water is also a substance with special qualities. Water is the source of all life and, as a symbol of life, it takes on nearly magical qualities in man's imagination. Water imagery contributes to the initiation theme in "Swimming Chenango Lake." The swimmer, man moving in an element paradoxically akin and alien to him, performs a ritual of baptism. The swimmer becomes symbolic of the man in exploration, honing his senses for discovery in an alien environment. He builds new life within himself through added experience. The body fluids of man, especially his blood, are chemically similar to sea water. Man originates as a swimmer in his mother's womb and at birth is exposed to the alien phenomena of the world. While the fluids outside the swimmer's body are similar to those inside, they are separated by a skin which contains man. Man is at the same time linked to and separated from his physical world. The poem is like water. Viewed mechanically the poem can be scanned and measured and studied, but the true beauty of the poem is lost if the ceremony and the occasion of the poem are not absorbed, transplanting the poet's imagined experience to his reader.

In his poems Charles Tomlinson calls for intense examination of simple actions. Complex actions are made from simple

ones. Tomlinson says in The Poem as Initiation:

. . . the kind of thinking . . . among so-called primitive peoples corresponds to the kind of thinking that on a different plane we find in modern science: the differentiations of crossing water, that is, correspond to the more abstract differentiations of our science of today. I borrow this instance of the crossing of the water because it seems to correspond with the way of working of a poem like "Swimming Chenango Lake." It seeks to make the consciousness pause over the stages of the act. It meditates and mediates an event while taking a grip on external reality and attempting to adjust the consciousness to that reality.¹¹

"Swimming Chenango Lake" of all Tomlinson's poems most closely parallels the structure of the Hako. In several lines the swimmer prepares to enter the water, enters it, and is covered by it and swims through the water:

But he has looked long enough, and now
 Body must recall the eye to its dependence
 As he scissors the waterscape apart
 And sways it to tatters. Its coldness
 Holding him to itself, he grants the grasp,
 For to swim is also to take hold
 On water's meaning, to move in its embrace
 And to be, between grasp and grasping free.

(pp. 1-2, ll. 20-27)

In these lines water again is animated and takes on magical, ritual qualities. The water's coldness holds the swimmer, it embraces him, it has a meaning that in swimming he discerns. The figurative initiation of the swimmer within the poem initiates the reader vicariously. The solitary rite of the swimmer gives him no name. He is universal and, in his exploration, he like all men must bring his body to a new

¹¹The Poem as Initiation, p. 7.

place in experience, a place that will be rapidly forfeited. As the swimmer's rite of passage is completed Tomlinson again uses the pathetic fallacy to make the final stage of the initiation. In the beginning of the poem the water drew the swimmer into itself and the swimmer prepared himself to enter it. His swim completed, the swimmer draws himself from the cold of the water. Likewise, the water moving closer to winter now bars the swimmer:

Human, he fronts it and, human, he draws back
 From the interior cold, the mercilessness
 That yet shows a kind of mercy sustaining him.
 The last sun of the year is drying his skin
 Above a surface a mere mosaic of tiny shatterings,
 Where a wind is unscaping all images in the flowing
 obsidian,
 The going-elsewhere of ripples incessantly shaping.

(p. 2, ll. 41-47)

In ceremony the swimmer cannot retrace his course once it is complete. The "flowing obsidian" and the "interior cold" signal the end of the initiation for the swimmer. The beginning and end of the poem correspond with the beginning and ending of the day, season, and year of the swimmer's experience.

One of the main criticisms levelled against Tomlinson's poetry is an alleged failure of his poetry to understand the human situation. Greystiel Ruthven says, ". . . the trouble with Tomlinson's own art is that it is not human enough."¹² This accusation comes from only a superficial reading of Tomlinson's poetry. Tomlinson as a narrator is frequently

¹²Greystiel Ruthven, "Charles Tomlinson--An Introduction," Gemini/Dialogue, 3 (Spring 1960), 32.

removed from his poems, which have as their subject physical objects chiefly rather than people and places, but his aesthetic stance does not preclude sensuousness and a deliberate effort to describe man's thoughts and existence.

Edwards says of the criticism:

'Swimming Chenango Lake' is a deeply perfect disproof of certain charges commonly levelled against Tomlinson. He is accused of lacking feeling, of coldly reporting the minutiae of things, of committing himself to the poem only as an observer, of being incapable of claiming the reader through more than adequate imagery. . . . Yet the pressure behind the poems is manifold, and richly human.¹³

Another water initiation poem, "Rower," makes an interesting contrast to "Swimming Chenango Lake." In this poem the rower, unnamed as was the swimmer of Chanango Lake, is more an interloper in the environment he enters. Unlike the swimmer the water he enters takes little notice of him. It does not anticipate him and once he is there he changes it little. The setting is one of calm, described as "a plotless tale," a shore waiting for the afternoon tide to come in, "a day that's nebulous."¹⁴ This morning calm of the sea is countered by the vigorous and sudden entrance of the rower:

But then,
Out into the bay, towards deeper water,
Sidles the rower, gaining speed
As he reaches it. Already his world
Is sliding by him. Backwards

¹³Michael Edwards, "The Poetry of Charles Tomlinson," p. 128.

¹⁴Charles Tomlinson, "Rower," Written on Water (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 6, ll. 1-2. Subsequent references to this poem in this chapter will be indicated parenthetically.

He enters it, eyes searching the past
Before them

(pp. 6-7, ll. 18-24)

"Rower" does not have the same structural relationship to the Hako that "Swimming Chenango Lake" has. The rower's entrance is abrupt rather than deliberate. "Rower" is not as directly a poem of baptism. Yet whereas the two poems differ in the directness of their link to ceremony, both poems have the themes of exploration and initiation, which have deep ceremonial significance. And as Tomlinson would note, giving experience the form of a poem, even the minor experience of rowing around a bay ceremonially makes it larger than life. The form of "Rower" and the awareness kindled in the reader of the poem make the poem a poem of initiation rather than any actual gain in knowledge by the rower.

In his initiation the rower symbolically has much the same position as has modern man. Entering experience backwards, he looks to the past in entering the future. "Rower" like "Swimming Chenango Lake" draws attention to the geometry of water. The half-circle of the bay that the rower completes corresponds to the half-circle of his oar strokes.

"Rower" is framed by the low morning tide as "Swimming Chenango Lake" is framed by the lake's autumn stillness and cold. Both the swimmer and the rower work to the end of their course. As the rower heads once more toward shore he faces out to the direction of the incoming tide with the awareness that the passage of time and coming tide will end

the morning and wipe away all trace of his passage.

One chief idea conveyed by "Swimming Chenango Lake" and "Rower" is the help man gains from alien phenomena. The poems call attention to the universe of existences outside our own. Poetry looks out from the human framework to other men and creations and orders the experience gained from observation into the imagined experience of poetry. Tomlinson says:

The poem tries to celebrate the fact that the help we gain from alien phenomena--even from water, in which (after all) we can't live--the help is towards relation, towards grasp, towards awareness of all that which we are not, yet of relationship with it.¹⁵

The senses take in alien phenomena and they are amplified in the mind. When the experience becomes larger than itself, becoming symbolic, it becomes a rite and art is produced. A moment amplified in ritual becomes larger than life. Through art it also becomes permanent, frozen in time. No moment is too insignificant to celebrate.

The monologue of "The Hill" begins by cautioning the reader, "Do not call to her there,/ but let her go/ bearing our question/ in her climb" and with a rhetorical question, "what does she/ confer on the hill, the hill on her?"¹⁶ Calvin Bedient describes these lines of the first stanza of "The Hill" as "bare . . . obviously tense with imaginative concentration: with the conceived drama of contemplation, and the

¹⁵The Poem as Initiation, p. 7.

¹⁶Charles Tomlinson, "The Hill," American Scenes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 11, II. 1-5.

conceived mystery of relationship."¹⁷ The relief of the girl against the hill creates a dramatic effect which emphasizes the boundaries which define her act. The important point made by "The Hill" is that initiation is a conscious act. The initiate works against resistance to gain the consciousness that comes from his act. As the swimmer in "Swimming Chenango Lake" took "hold on water's meaning" making a "where in water" the girl climbing the hill: "in making her thought's theme/ that thrust and rise,/ is bestowing a name."¹⁸ All three actors in the initiation poems I have cited were alone and unnamed. What is it that these explorers bring to themselves through their act of initiation? Tomlinson provides a partial answer in "Adam" when he says: "We bring/ To a kind of birth all we can name."¹⁹ Through our encounter with all we are not we not only define all the things we encounter but also define ourselves. In "Something: A Direction" he says: "Sun is, because it is not you; you are/ Since you are self."²⁰ Carrying this sort of thinking to the extreme we give each thing and ourselves an existence when we discover and acknowledge it. Bedient comments:

¹⁷ Calvin Bedient, "Charles Tomlinson," Eight Contemporary Poets (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 14.

¹⁸ "The Hill," ll. 13-15.

¹⁹ Charles Tomlinson, "Adam," The Way of a World (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 8, ll. 15-16.

²⁰ Charles Tomlinson, "Something: A Direction," Seeing is Believing (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1958), p. 56, ll. 3-4.

So the hill stands forth, rounds out into being,
 through the generosity of the girl's attention.
 The grace of consciousness consists in its active
 intentionality: the girl makes her thought's
 theme that thrust and rise. It is, after all then,
 stones that are inert. Indeed, a recoiling
 spring, Tomlinson perhaps goes too far when,
 in "The Hill," he adds:

. . . do not call to her there:
 let her go on,
 whom the early sun
 is climbing up with to the hill's crown--
 she, who did not make it, yet can make
 the sun go down by coming down.

In this instance, of course, the 'making' is only
 a manner of speaking. And yet here Tomlinson, for
 one rare and indulgent moment, encourages a solip-
 sistic illusion. Putting by the domestic uniform
 it usually wears in his poems, the mind steps
 forward as almost a demiurge, capable of making,
 by a simple withdrawal of attention, a heavenly
 body slide out of the sky.²¹

Tomlinson champions the power of the mind in his poetry and
 it would not be inconsistent with his thought for the sun
 to set through the girl's will. He says it is his "own
 basic theme--that one does not need to go beyond sense
 experience to some mythic union, that the 'I' can be respon-
 sible only in relationship and not by dissolving itself away
 into ecstasy or the Over-soul."²²

Bedient's interpretation of the last stanza of "The Hill"
 as Tomlinson's flirtation with solipsism is one way of viewing
 the poem. Tomlinson gives equal treatment to a factual, though
 narrow, view of consciousness. Although the tree falling in

²¹Calvin Bedient, "Charles Tomlinson," pp. 18-19.

²²Charles Tomlinson, "Some American Poets: A Personal
 Record," Contemporary Literature, 18 (Summer 1977), 284.

the forest makes noise, if the ear cannot hear it the consciousness cannot give it reality. By withdrawing her attention, the sun may go down for the girl, or if she chooses, it may stay up in her consciousness regardless of reality. "The Hill" makes sensory experience and the ability of the mind to alter and reorder experience dominant over the mind's ability to reason what it does not sense. It puts the mind in the position of a receiver. The kingdom of possibility of Tomlinson's poetry is bound only by the limits of the imagination, not by the laws of science. In acting alone the efforts of the characters in Tomlinson's initiation poems are spotlighted and seem more deliberate, their consciousness harder won than if they were members of a group.

Within the poem the girl climbing the hill works between the opposites that define the scene of her initiation. Michael Edwards comments:

. . . "The Hill" is a mature and richly human gathering of moods before nature into a single mood deeply balanced and sustained by a calm intellectual rigour. A girl climbing a hill is both "shrunk" and "magnified" into particularity by its wide sweep; "unnamed" by the expanse she yet bestows a "name"; between Nature as "hard" and Nature as a "giant palm" (it is a favourite image) she shows the art of "negotiation".²³

The swimmer, the rower, and the climber all demonstrate the theme of initiation. The initiation takes place within the poem and the mind of the reader. The ceremonial acts within the poem are symbolic of larger acts of initiation.

²³Michael Edwards, "The Poetry of Charles Tomlinson," p. 135.

Yet simple acts serve better to illustrate the theme of initiation. The fundamental quality of the initiation would be lost in a more complex poem. In reality the simple acts would be insignificant. Within the framework of the poem the ceremonial acts become a trial and a rite of passage by which the initiate stands to solve a mystery of his existence. Through a conscious effort he earns an understanding of and a relation with all around him. A different type of initiation ceremony occurs when we understand the way things around us relate to and differ from us. The swimmer, the rower, and the climber are initiated by completing an act. They move from one place in time to another and in so doing their consciousness is changed. All experiences amplified through art become celebrations, transitions into new territory, new awarenesses of things on the other side of man's skin. All men are initiated into what they are not as a process of their growth. Man's intelligence is measured by his awareness of what he is and is not, by the length of his grasp and by how much he has related and defined himself. In Tomlinson's world of possibility all things are animated and even things that are "unman" have an identity of their own. The next chapter looks at "Mackinnon's Boat" and other poems in which the act of initiation is the discovery of consciousnesses other than our own.

CHAPTER III
A WEALTH OF WAYS

Charles Tomlinson's initiation poems call attention to the universe of existences outside our own. The poet looks out from the human framework to other men and creations and orders the experience gained from his observations into the imagined experience of the poem. The initiation that takes place within Tomlinson's poems heightens our consciousness. This increased awareness is the achievement Tomlinson hopes to gain by acting out the drama of an initiation within his poetry. Tomlinson says:

. . . The poem tries to celebrate the fact that the help we gain from alien phenomena--even from water, in which (after all) we can't live--the help is towards relation, towards grasp, towards awareness of all that which we are not, yet of relationship with it.¹

Tomlinson develops the idea of initiation in "Hawks" and "Mackinnon's Boat" beyond the rite of passage initiation poems discussed in the previous chapter. In "Hawks" and "Mackinnon's Boat" the initiation brings about a relationship with alien animals of the coming of spring with man's reasoned consciousness of seasonal change.

In the opening lines of "Hawks" Tomlinson draws attention to the physical separation of hawks and man. The

¹Charles Tomlinson, The Poem as Initiation (Hamilton, New York: Colgate University Press, 1968), p. 7.

hawks "hovering, calling to each other/ Across the air, seem swung/ Too high on the risen wind/ For the earth-clung contact of our world."² Yet man and the birds are carried on the crest of the change of seasons and are linked:

. . . we share with them that sense
 The season is bringing in, of all
 The lengthening light is promising to exact
 From the obdurancy of March.

(p. 25, ll. 5-8)

Spring is a time of transition for it comes "from the obdurancy of March" with "lengthening light" and brings a promise of new growth to all living things. Tomlinson's hawks are lovers and will regenerate themselves. Spring is a time of regeneration. The rebirth that the hawks will bring about parallels the regeneration spring will bring.

The seasons are an appropriate vehicle relating man's relation to and separation from the movement of the universe. The seasons give man a yearly introduction to the flux of life. Man must exercise his senses if he is to relate himself to the things around him. In "Hawks" the narrator draws himself out of his earthbound shell and flies with the hawks:

. . . and we
 Though we cannot tell what it is they say,
 Caught up into their calling, are in their sway,
 And ride where we cannot climb the steep
 And altering air, breathing the sweetness
 Of our own excess, till we are kinned
 By space we never thought to enter

²Charles Tomlinson, "Hawks," Written on Water (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 25, ll. 1-4. Subsequent references to this poem in this chapter will be indicated parenthetically.

On capable wings to such reaches of desire.

(p. 25, ll. 10-17)

For a moment the poet has entered new territory and has viewed the universe through the eyes of a hawk. Viewing things from more than one point of view is a deeper form of initiation. Through becoming aware of the alien phenomena and achieving a relation with them we become aware of their plurality. These things alien to us have worlds of their own. Distinct universes of action exist at the same time on different planes of consciousness. Through his imagination in his poems Tomlinson enters the consciousnesses of animals. In "Hawks" man's sensation expands through his observation of birds in flight. The act of initiation is in the poem from watching the hawks and sharing their sensations.

"Hawks" draws a parallel between the air world of birds and the land-bound world of man and contrasts the cognizance of both beings. "Mackinnon's Boat" goes a step farther in juxtaposing three creatures of the land against the sea creatures they pursue.

"Mackinnon's Boat" has a quality nearly like that of a photographic essay. The monologue defines at least part of man's relationship with the sea in opposition to other creatures. The poem's chief characters are a dog, two lobster fishermen, Mackinnon and Macaskill, and the ocean creatures their nets bring in. Each of the creatures

illuminates the other, but chiefly they illuminate the men. It is interesting to note the names of these two fishermen, Mackinnon and Macaskill. The words kin, skill, and kill are found in their names. Certainly the poem indicates man's kinship to other animals and men. The poem shows the skill of the fishermen in their trade which requires the slaughter of sea animals. The prefix "Mac" meaning "son of" taken in the context of the poem characterizes the seamen as sons of the sea, in taking their living from it. Perhaps these names are the actual names of two North Atlantic fishermen, but it seems more likely they were chosen for their sound and are the result of Tomlinson's conscious effort to control the effect of his art. Whatever the origin of these names their ambiguity plays an effective role in the poem.

Water imagery in "Mackinnon's Boat" contributes to the drama of the poem. The water resists the efforts of the fishermen. Throughout Tomlinson's poetry the sea is a place of mystery. In "An Insufficiency of Earth" the imprints of the wind in the wood-fleece are as "faceless as the sea."³ Water hides its depths. In "Swimming Chenango Lake" the water is "obsidian."⁴ In "On Water" it is "vitreous ebony."⁵ In

³Charles Tomlinson, "An Insufficiency of Earth," A Peopled Landscape (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 21, l. 20.

⁴Charles Tomlinson, "Swimming Chenango Lake," The Way of A World (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 3, l. 46.

⁵Charles Tomlinson, "On Water," Written on Water (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 3, l. 4.

"Mackinnon's Boat" it is "black."⁶ Yet water is a symbol in Tomlinson's poetry for alien phenomena. He chooses an initiation in water, a baptism, in the poem "Swimming Chenango Lake" as an example to illustrate initiation in The Poem as Initiation. Through an initiation in water as well as initiations in other environments we gain awareness through our efforts in the initiation act. In "On Water" the narrator says of water:

and yet it confers
as much as it denies:
we are orphaned and fathered
by such solid vacancies:⁷

Experience takes time from us and kindles understanding..
Initiation within the poem is like experience in our lives.
In acting we must give up time. We pay this price to purchase experience.

"Mackinnon's Boat" is framed by the "forgetful waters" of the sea. The sea is the stage upon which the poem is set, yet the sea does not help the fishermen in their work. In the beginning lines of the poem:

. . . Mackinnon's boat
Arcs out: the floats of his creels
Cling to the shelter half a mile away
Of Turner's cliff. Black today
The waters will have nothing to do with the shaping
Or unshaping of human things.

(p. 3, ll. 1-6)

⁶Charles Tomlinson, "Mackinnon's Boat," Written on Water, p. 3, l. 5. Subsequent references to this poem in this chapter will be indicated parenthetically.

⁷"On Water," p. 3, ll. 13-16.

Mist hides the land from man. The forbidding sea emphasizes the fishermen's distance from their home on the land. Alien, they travel upon it, but the sea will hold no memory of them. The sea's blackness hides its depths:

. . . Distance has disappeared,
 Washed out by mist, but a cold light
 Keeps here and there re-touching it,
 Promising transparencies of green and blue
 Only to deny them. The visible sea
 Remains a sullen frontier to
 Its unimaginable fathoms.

(p. 4, ll. 16-22)

The two fishermen working alone on the boat share with each other a moment of friendship. The men's friendship contrasts the separation they feel from the sea that separates them from familiar surroundings. On the alien sea they share experience with each other. Man is aware of his humanness through companionship with other men.

. . . Macaskill throws
 To Mackinnon a cigarette down the length
 Of half the craft. Cupping,
 They light up. Their anonymity, for a spell,
 Is at an end, and each one
 Free to be himself once more

(p. 5, ll. 79-84)

These lines remind the reader of the labor and comradeship of the merchants in "On a Landscape by Li Ch'eng" of whom the narrator says: "Their solitude is unchosen and will end/
 In comity."⁸

Sea, air, and time make no memory of man in his passing.

⁸Charles Tomlinson, "On a Landscape by Li Ch'eng," Seeing is Believing (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1958), p. 19, ll. 10-11.

What memory is made he must make himself.

. . . An evasive light
 Brightens like mist rolling along the sea,
 And the blue it beckoned--blue
 Such as catches and dies in an eye-glance--
 Glints out its seconds. Making a time
 Where no day has a name . . .

They linger down a wake whose further lines
 Are beginning to slacken and fall back to where
 Salt at last must outsave name and time
 In the alternation of the forgetful waters.

(p. 5, ll. 89-94, 11. 96-99)

"Mackinnon's Boat" is divided into three spheres of understanding. The dog understands little of why he is on the boat or what is being done. The things he sees on the ocean he does not understand. He came to this unfamiliar environment through his companionship with the men:

. . . The dog eyes
 Its gliding shapes, but the signs he can recognize
 Are land signs: he is here
 Because men are here, unmindful
 Of this underworld of Mackinnon's daily dealings.

(p. 4, ll. 22-26)

Mackinnon and Macaskill are anonymous in their relationship with the sea. The men understand life in the sea of air and some of the life below water. The dog and sea creatures can conceive only their own worlds. The anonymity of the men is brought out in their dealings with the sea creatures. The sea creatures mirror the dog in their unconsciousness of the ocean of air above them:

. . . the flailing
 Seashapes pincerred to the baits, drop
 Slithering and shaken off like thieves
 Surprised, their breath all at once grown rare

In an atmosphere they had not known existed.
 Hands that have much to do yet, dealing
 With creel on creel, drag out the catch
 And feeling the cage-nets, re-thread each fault.
 Crabs, urching, dogfish, and star.
 All are unwanted and all are
 Snatched, slaughtered, or flung to their freedom--
 Some shattering on the cordage
 They too eagerly clung to. Hands must be cruel
 To keep the pace spry.

(p. 4-5, ll. 46-59)

To the seashapes man has no identity other than "Hands" to
 bind them.

. . . The trough of the gunwhale
 Is filled with the scrabbling armour of defeat;
 Claw against claw, not knowing
 What it is they fight, they swivel
 And bite on air until they feel
 The palpable hard fingers of their real
 Adversary close on them; and held
 In a knee-grip, must yield to him.
 The beaked claws are shut and bound
 By Mackinnon.

(p. 5, ll. 65-74)

The sea creatures cannot live in the thin air above the sea,
 and symbolically it "orphans" them or takes life from them.
 Correspondingly man is "fathered" or given a figurative
 rebirth from the food from the sea and through his act of
 initiation in going out onto the sea to take the seashapes.
 As the sea animals surrender their "solid vacancy" in the
 sea, man takes it up. A solid vacancy is a space previously
 void or at least unfilled by man, that he takes up in the
 process of the act of his initiation. This is best defined
 in the "where in water" the swimmer's body in "Swimming
 Chenango Lake" becomes heir to. Water and air are "solid

vacancies," as on a different plane time is a solid vacancy. We move through the solid vacancy of time, out of one void into another. We cannot return to the "where" or place we gain through initiation except through a moment that is preserved in the form of art.

One of the important points made in "Mackinnon's Boat" is the contrasting cognizance of man and other animals. All creatures are like the lobsters, enclosed in their own shell, but few except man on their own power move out into what Tomlinson calls in The Poem as Initiation "alien phenomena" to seek new experience. Man can gain from these alien phenomena and his recordings of the gains he makes form his art. "Mackinnon's Boat" makes its impression through the contrasting awarenesses of the dog, man, and sea animals.

Mackinnon and Macaskill in "Mackinnon's Boat" are not initiated. The initiation comes in the poem in the way the reader can compare the consciousnesses of the men, dog, and sea animals. In "Mackinnon's Boat" the reader gains a fuller understanding of himself through the help gained from the alien phenomena of the poem. Tomlinson says of alien phenomena:

It is a help that teaches us not to try merely to reduce objects to our own image, but to respect their otherness and yet find our way into contact with that otherness.⁹

A critic, Michael Kirkham, commenting on this thought notes that "the mind must . . . derive its nourishment from what

⁹Charles Tomlinson, The Poem as Initiation, p. 7.

is other, external to it."¹⁰

Even though we are surrounded by things that are alien to us--and in his poetry Tomlinson tries to make us aware of this otherness--his effort is to draw us closer to it. He seeks "as far as possible, [to] make us at home in the world."¹¹ With each initiation in his poetry we come closer to resolving our differences and increase our understanding of all that we are not.

All life is a process of initiation. Although the experience gained through initiation cannot alter physical reality, impressions gained from observations of physical reality can be reordered in the mind to alter mental experience. This mental experience becomes permanent in the form of art. In the following chapter Tomlinson's daughter Justine becomes a character in the initiation poems, "The Picture of J.T. in a Prospect of Stone" and "The Apparition." The initiation takes place in these poems in the mind of the narrator as he reorders his sensory impressions to form a mental experience and heightens his awareness through it.

¹⁰Michael Kirkham, "Negotiations," Essays in Criticism, 17 (July 1967), 369.

¹¹Denis Donoghue, "The Proper Plentitude of Fact," The Ordinary Universe: Soundings in Modern Literature (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 42.

CHAPTER IV
THE CONSTANCY OF STONE

In The Poem as Initiation Charles Tomlinson calls the poem an "imagined experience."¹ In the ontology created within Tomlinson's poetry, imaginary experiences exist alongside factual observations with equal or greater value. He often suggests that a world created by the imagination is closer to reality than one created purely of fact. In "Reflections" he says: "We, since no mirrors,/ Are free both to question this deployment/ And to arrange it--what we reflect/ Being what we choose."² In the introduction of The Necklace Donald Davie comments on Tomlinson's view of reality:

. . . we can imagine a peculiar cast of mind, or a magic glass, or an apparatus of a special sort; and having imagined these, we can deduce with a sort of logic the world that this mind would perceive, or that this machine would render for our inspection.³

The poem is a machine of this sort that leads us into a different level of reality.

In "The White Van" Tomlinson places imagination alongside observation in saying the third eye is the "mind's" and

¹Charles Tomlinson, The Poem as Initiation (Hamilton, New York: Colgate University Press, 1968), p. 5.

²Charles Tomlinson, "Reflections," Seeing is Believing (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1958), p. 4, ll. 11-14.

³Donald Davie, "Introduction," The Necklace, by Charles Tomlinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. xiii.

the fourth eye is chance.⁴ He says of this third mind's eye that "It sees possibility."⁵ It is not enough to see what is, but the poet also sees what could be. The poet must take advantage of the chances given him. The mind has a hunger to be initiated in order that it may gain an increased awareness of reality. He uses the metaphor of fire to describe this hunger. "The mind, that rooted flame/ Reaches for knowledge as the flame for hold--/ For shapes and discoveries beyond itself."⁶ The poem is formed of observation, imagination, and chance. The poet creates a reality out of "the kingdoms of possibilities." Through his imagination the poet can hear "the boughs of the oak . . . roaring/ inside the acorn shell" and can see "the red rider" crossing "the canyon floor/ under a thousand feet of air," even though he may be thousands of miles away.⁷ In Tomlinson's poetry reality is not necessarily fact. Tomlinson makes his strongest statement of this idea in "A Meditation on John Constable" when he says: "The artist lies/ For the improvement of truth. Believe him."⁸ A similar statement is found in "The Art of

⁴Charles Tomlinson, "The White Van," Written on Water (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 30, ll. 29-32.

⁵Charles Tomlinson, "Skullshapes," The Way of a World (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 52.

⁶Charles Tomlinson, "Flame," A Peopled Landscape (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 37, ll. 6-8.

⁷Charles Tomlinson, "A Sense of Distance," The Way of a World, p. 29, l. 23, ll. 8-9, ll. 3-4.

⁸Charles Tomlinson, "A Meditation on John Constable," Seeing is Believing, p. 26, ll. 51-52.

Poetry" when he states: "when the truth is not good enough/ We exaggerate."⁹ Even though the reality contained in the poem is not concrete fact, if we are to believe Tomlinson's poems, it is no less true. His poems promise to put the universe in order for his reader. Imagination amplifies the observations we make in our world, and in the poem we find a world in which our observations are more distinct, fresher. In a review of American Scenes, John Carey says: "When Mr. Tomlinson writes about a half-pear you feel you never saw one before."¹⁰ Tomlinson aptly sums up the effect of imagination in his poems in "Ceci N'est Pas Une Pipe" when he says: "There is this comfort in the hypotheses of fancy: they restore the world to us by denying its premises."¹¹ The reality that works within the poems exists along a fine line. Its truth makes us more aware of our existence in the real world yet the reality found in poetry does not have to acknowledge the truth of all concrete reality. The initiations that take place in Tomlinson's poetry and the truths they improve are acted out in imaginary worlds created within his poems.

Children are by definition initiates. As they are initiated through life they move farther from the time of

⁹Charles Tomlinson, "The Art of Poetry," The Necklace, p. 14, ll. 5-6.

¹⁰John Carey, "Prytherch," New Statesman, 71 (June 17, 1966), 894.

¹¹Charles Tomlinson, "Ceci N'est Pas Une Pipe," The Way of a World, p. 54.

their birth toward their death. In "The Picture of J.T. in a Prospect of Stone" the narrator, who apparently is Tomlinson, symbolically places his daughter between her youth and her future death and imagines what it would be like if he could turn her to stone to prevent her from growing older. The poem is another example of the way the poet takes a moment and makes a ceremony of it.

Tomlinson says, "The Picture of J.T. in a Prospect of Stone" "is perhaps more personal in tone than his other poems" and it is "an attempt to combine family associations with a moral climate and setting which yield up 'the constancy of stone' as their fundamental image."¹² The poem is set in Gloucestershire in southwestern England where the buildings are constructed chiefly of stone. In "The Picture of J.T. in a Prospect of Stone" the father views his child as she plays in the area between the village green and the local cemetery. A stone wall separates the green from the graves and the child in the momentary image of the poem is crossing it. Symbolically she is poised between the innocence of her play in her youth represented by the village green and her ultimate decay and death represented by the village graveyard.

Tomlinson says of the poem and the setting conveyed by it:

¹²Charles Tomlinson, "The Picture of J.T. in a Prospect of Stone," Poet's Choice, ed. Paul Engle and Joseph Langland (New York: Dial Press, 1962), p. 261.

. . . here, there is one over-riding experience-- that of the continuity of stone architecture with both history and setting. A continuity, an ineradicable spirit of place, a land of limestone-- "that humanistic rock," as Adrian Stokes calls it--all these seem to form for a poet a moral medium and a moral currency. What more natural than that he should try to unite these appearances, enriched by time, with that which is most youthful, most near and most fresh--a child of three, seen at play, as she is in the act of making use of them. Conceivably she will use them as spiritual tokens in the future--stone resting securely yet in disquality on unequal stone, buildings knit by common materials into locality--just as the poem uses them in which she appears, her passing presence qualified and judged by their durability.¹³

This picture preserves a critical moment in the father's observation of his child. Tomlinson seems to be engaged in a dialogue with himself in which he could be thought to ask: In this fragile moment in my child's life, so enjoyable to me, what can I do to slow the time? I can do nothing but save it in my memory. Wouldn't it be wonderful if I could do something to preserve this moment and keep my daughter from growing old, possibly coming to harm? The stone weathers slowly and lasts beyond our years. The father in his imagination explores the possibility of freezing his child's youth as if she were to become a statue of granite:

--Wish her
the constancy of stone.

--But stone
is hard.
--Say, rather

it resists

¹³Poet's Choice, p. 262.

the slow corrosives
and the flight
of time¹⁴

In an earlier poem, "In Defense of Metaphysics," Tomlinson noted how stones call attention to our mortality. Stones in contrast to man do not die or noticeably age. "Stones are like deaths/ They uncover limits."¹⁵ Stone, however, is unlike life. Were J.T. to be preserved in stone she would no longer be a little girl. She could not run and jump and laugh. To turn J.T. to stone would take "the play, the fluency/ from light" (p. 17, ll. 21-22).

Promoting the argument of J.T.'s preservation in stone in this imaginary debate the father wonders if his child would rebel against being changed to stone.

--How would you know
the gift you'd give
was the gift
she'd wish to have?

(pp. 17-18, ll. 23-26)

He autocratically replies:

first
I'd give
then let her

live with it
to prove
its quality the better and

¹⁴Charles Tomlinson, "The Picture of J.T. in a Prospect of Stone," A Peopled Landscape, p. 17, ll. 11-19. Subsequent references to this poem in this chapter will be indicated parenthetically.

¹⁵Charles Tomlinson, "In Defense of Metaphysics," Seeing is Believing, p. 31, ll. 13-14.

thus learn
 to love
 what (to begin with)
 she might spurn.

(p. 18, ll. 29-38)

The speaker arguing against turning J.T. to stone questions giving the child a gift the father desires for her that she may not want.

--Gift is giving,
 gift is meaning . . .

--You'd
 moralize a gift?

(p. 18, ll. 27-28, ll. 39-40)

Here the poet resolves the dilemma as the two voices come to the conclusion of the poem. The first voice says, "I'd have her/ understand/ the gift I gave her." The opposing voice answers "she shall/ but let her play/ her innocence away" (p. 18, ll. 41-43, ll. 44-46). The "gift" that J.T. has been given is to be captured in the stone words of Tomlinson's poem. In order for her to understand this gift of art, the imagined experience that her father has placed her in, she must first lose her innocence by being initiated to the experiences that time will bring her.

"The Picture of J.T. in a Prospect of Stone" in its moment operates on several levels of reality. The poet creates the imaginary situation of a young girl being turned into stone to illustrate his point. Were the child turned to

stone she would not age and time would not harm her. He would wish his child, like the stone that surrounds him, to "resist the slow corrosives and the flight of time." J.T. could not be turned to stone except through her re-creation in art. The reality of art exists on a separate level from physical substance. "The Picture of J.T. in a Prospect of Stone" is another example of this division. The swimmer, rower, climber, the characters of "Mackinnon's Boat," and J.T. all act out their initiations in the imaginary world of the poem. Physical substance can take the form of art through representation, but art cannot be changed to life. In reality the father can do nothing to keep his child from getting older, nor as he shows in the last lines of the poem does he want to. The gift the father has given his daughter is the moment immortal in the poem. The moment in the poem has the quality of life. J.T. at age three could not understand the gift in the poem her father gave her but as she grew in experience the poem would take meaning in her experience as a moment that through art had resisted time. Her initiation is worked through the awareness the reader gains through the poem of the artist's function, turning life to stone figuratively in the words of the poem.

"The Apparition" seems to have been written as a complementary piece for "The Picture of J.T. in a Prospect of Stone." The poems are parallel in tone, theme, and subject. In "The Apparition" the narrator recounts a dream. In the dream the

mind of the narrator has gone back in time. The reality conveyed in the dream is like the reality of the poem: "Unreal, . . . / With too much life."¹⁶

The apparition, Justine, appears to the narrator and the reader to tell them "Tomorrow/ . . . we plough up the pastureland" (p. 45, ll. 6-7). At first this statement is a puzzle until the apparition's meaning becomes clearer to the dreamer:

. . . of what pastureland
 You spoke, I'd no idea. Then
 Reading the meaning in your face, I found
 Your pastureland had been your hallowed ground which now
 Must yield to use. And all of my refusals,
 All I feared, stood countered
 By the resolve I saw in you and heard:
 While death itself, its certain thread
 Twisted through the skein of consequence
 Seemed threatened by the strength
 Of those dead years.

(pp. 45-46, ll. 11-21)

"The Apparition" makes a different approach to the idea of death than "The Picture of J.T. in a Prospect of Stone" but their meaning is the same. Death is a certainty. Any protests or fears prove useless to alter the fact. In the poem death must be admitted as a reality that has equal meaning in the imagination and the world of concrete existence. The narrator in "The Apparition" concludes:

. . . It was a dream--
 No more; and you whom death
 And solitude have tried, must know
 The treachery of dreams. And yet I do not think it lied,

¹⁶Charles Tomlinson, "The Apparition," Written on Water, p. 45, ll. 5-6. Subsequent references to this poem in this chapter will be indicated parenthetically.

Because it came, without insistence,
 Stood for a moment, spoke and then
 Was gone, that apparition,
 Beyond the irresolute confines of the night,
 Leaving me to weigh its words alone.

(p. 46, ll. 21-29)

Death is a reality the poet must grapple with. It must be given reality within the poem in order that the reality of the poem may keep in touch with life. Were the poet to deny death he would be telling a lie that could not be believed. In both "The Picture of J.T. in a Prospect of Stone" and "The Apparition" Tomlinson asserts the reality of death in order that we may be aware of life. Both poems are initiation poems in that they lead the reader through the imaginary experience of the poem. They amplify the reality of death and leave us to weigh that reality.

Tomlinson's initiation poems try to resolve the problem of the artist's trying to construct things of permanence in a universe that is continually undergoing a process of change and decay. The entire initiation theme in literature is based on the relationship time has to experience. As experience is gained, time is lost, limiting the possibility for total new experience. The experience captured by the artist is a separate experience from that existing in real life. The moment captured in poems like "Swimming Chenango Lake," "Rower," "The Hill," "Mackinnon's Boat," "The Picture of J.T. in a Prospect of Stone," and "The Apparition" is if not better than the actual experience is different in at

least two ways. The experience of the poem is a public one and anyone whose senses will allow the art to carry him into the occasion of the poem can live it. The experience of the poem is also different in that it may be relived through rereading, gaining with each rereading. First-hand experience belongs only to the doer and it is his to live only once. The idea of Tomlinson's art is simple. Tomlinson looks into the moment in his poems as if it were under a microscope. Through an intense inspection of his observations in time, he elevates a moment or a series of moments to the level of ritual and through dissecting and examining a brief event its total significance is realized.

Tomlinson describes the way ritual or symbolic experience grows from observations in The Poem as Initiation:

. . . The poem weighs and measures occasions by calling attention to the intricate meshings of words. . . . In the poet's weighing and measuring . . . there is a dwelling on the inner rhythm of events that is as fundamental and as primitive, if you like, as ritual. And like ritual, the poem dwells on the event, to force us to a consciousness of the meaningfulness of that event. Like ritual, the poem is pointed outwards from its own contemplative pausing, towards life at large, towards the possible meaningfulness of life at large. There is no occasion too small for the poet's celebration . . . all ask, through the insistence of the poem's celebration, to be recorded by us in their deeper significances. The poem invokes them and we attend as without the poem we should not have done.¹⁷

The physical act of initiation is elevated to ritual once it has been preserved in art. Here it becomes another kind of

¹⁷Charles Tomlinson, The Poem as Initiation, p. 4.

experience. It becomes a symbolic initiation in the poem. The ritual moment is examined and reexamined until its full force is felt. The experience of which the ritual moment is made may be actual or imagined, a conglomerate of experiences, but for that moment the artist has achieved a constancy with the universe. Time does not carry away the occasion of the poem and the artist has for that moment defeated time.

In "Four Kantian Lyrics," a poem in four parts, Tomlinson builds toward a realization of the way man is related to the earth, his environment. As in nearly all of his poems the images of this poem integrate into the central thrust of the poem. The poem is built of single observations of moments: the first of leaves falling, the second of the coming of a rainstorm, the third of wind blowing through the leaves of a tree and the last of a sound coming from the distance, noticed by man, unnoticed by grazing cattle.

In the first of the lyrics, "On a Theme of Pasternak," the narrator stares "watching a sea of leaves put out the sun."¹⁸ The flow of fall leaves coming from the tree becomes like a sea quenching the fire of the sun. As the leaves vacate the tree and threaten to let the light pass, the light becomes less with the coming of dusk:

. . . Rents of space
threatened to let it through
but, no--at once, the same
necessity that tamed the sky

¹⁸Charles Tomlinson, "Four Kantian Lyrics," A Peopled Landscape, p. 20, I, ll. 4-5. Subsequent references to this poem in this chapter will be indicated parenthetically.

to a single burning tone
would drag it deeper.

(p. 20, I, ll. 8-13)

The dark and the wind animate the tree and its "branches" blackened ledges . . . rear recoiling" (p. 20, I, ll. 18-20). The wind completes the metaphor in this poem. In the darkness of night the black bare branches of the trees are unseen, but the wind rakes and rouses the leaves making a noise like the coming of the sea's tide.

As the first of the lyrics compares wind to the sea, the second lyric compares a coming rainstorm to wildfire. In "What it was like" the narrator says:

It was like the approach of flame
treading the tinder, a fleet
cascade of it taking tree-toll,
halting below the hill and then
covering the corn-field's dryness
in an effortless crescendo.

(p. 20, II, ll. 1-6)

After the storm:

. . . The blinded pane
emerged from the rainsheet
to an after-water world,
its green confusion brought
closer greener. The baptism
of the shining house was done
and it was like the calm
a church aisle harbours
tasting of incense, space and stone.

(p. 21, II, ll. 12-20)

The poem uses the full force of water imagery to record the moment of the rain storm. It also hints of the destroying effects of water which in flood form can destroy as well as

does the wildfire. At the same time water "covers the corn-field's dryness" and thus gives life. In the final lines, after the storm, the rain on the house becomes like a baptism and the sensations after it are like those found in a church aisle where the tastes of incense, space and stone linger. In the first two lyrics water imagery as well as the image of the taste of stone after the storm indicates the paradox found in the world that the moment is constantly changing while things ancient--though momentarily changing as in sunrise and set, the tide and the change of seasons--viewed in the fullness of time maintain their constancy. Man cannot retain this constancy but instead travels toward death. The moment is a symbol of man's lack of constancy.

The narrator follows the theme of mortality begun in the first two lyrics protesting man's mortality in the third lyric, "An Insufficiency of Earth."

. . . We cannot pitch
our paradise in such a changeful
nameless place and our encounters
with it. An insufficiency of earth
denies our constancy. For,
content with the iridescence of the moment,
we must flow with the wood-fleece
in a war of forms, the wind
gone over us, and we
drinking its imprints, faceless as the sea.

(p. 21, III, ll. 11-20)

The earth is insufficient in that it is not consistent with man in being mortal. The changes it makes are nearly unnoticeable in comparison with those man notices within himself. Therefore, the earth denies our constancy. Speaking of the

tree, a huge thing compared to man and seemingly lifeless, therefore a symbol of the earth and its constancy, the narrator says:

. . . You think it for a second
hugely dead, until the ripple
soundless on the further corn,
is roaring in it.

(p. 21, III, ll. 8-11)

Man cannot be as constant as the tree or the earth and in so being he is out of time with the environment that supports him.

The resolution, or perhaps a compromise, is found in the final lyric, "How it happened." A sound comes from a farther farm, beyond the distance that the eye can see. Man's mind unites him with those things he can sense and his reason takes him beyond mere appearance. Man can understand that there are trees at night as well as in the daytime, despite what his eyes tell him when he cannot see their black branches in the dark. Man can exercise his senses, imagination, and reason or he can lead a bestial life without achieving his full potential. Man is apart from the earth by his being out of time with it, but man is also a creature that craves unity. The narrator concludes:

. . . There are two
ways to marry with a land--
first, this bland and blind
submergence of the self, an act
of kind and questionless. The other
is the thing I mean, a whole
event, a happening, the sound
that brings all space in
for its bound, when self is clear

as what we keenest see and hear:
 no absolute of the eye can tell
 the utmost, but the glance
 goes shafted from us like a well.

(p. 22, IV, ll. 10-22)

Man's senses have their limits, but by exercising them man can closer approach a wedding with the land. Man unlike other animals can be initiated and can gain knowledge from his acts. The initiation ceremonies acted out in Tomlinson's poems make us aware of our own mortality. We are out of time with the universe we live in. We rush to our death in comparison with stones and trees that age so slowly we almost do not notice it. Man's separation from the time of the universe gives him a vantage point of the universe other beings do not have. Because we are aware of our mortality we are driven to see and understand all that we can. Our mortality urges us on to new initiation.

Tomlinson creates initiations in his poems through his method of observation. He notices the seldom noticed and takes his reader into a new poetic universe which is as Davie said, ". . . open to any man who has kept clean and in order his nerveous sensitivity to the impact of shape and mass and colour, odour, texture and timbre."¹⁹

What is physically apparent is amplified by the perception of the artist. Tomlinson's poems alert the reader to the fact that there are many ways of perceiving and ordering

¹⁹Donald Davie, "Introduction," The Necklace, p. xii.

experience. Art gives reality an added dimension. The initiation acted out in the poem attempts to resolve the opposite states man finds himself between. In the moment of resolution we enter a state Tomlinson calls "Eden" in his poetry. The following chapter discusses Eden, the resolution that develops from the rite of initiation.

CHAPTER V
ADAM AND EDEN

Charles Tomlinson does not rely heavily on the mythical allusions that fill much of English literature. His creations for the most part exist on their own without any allegiance to the literary or social context in which they exist. Frederick Grubb commenting on this aspect of Tomlinson's poetry says: "He aims to see everything for what it is, and not some other thing--to extricate things, in their singularity, from the fuss about politics, economics, psychology, religion, and all the rest of it."¹ The exception to this rule is the state of mind in Tomlinson's poetry he calls "Eden." Tomlinson explained his feelings about myth and Eden in an interview with Jed Rasula and Mike Erwin:

I think there's a lack of myth in my poetry because it usually arises directly from something seen. I want to register that in all its clarity or in all its implications. The nearest I come to myth is that word "Eden," which I can't seem to get rid of and that fits what I'm doing with its implication of primal things, fresh sensations, direct perceptions unclouded. In a recent poem, "The Way In," . . . I describe the demolition of parts of Bristol--humble and rather fine streets in their unpretentious way, neighborhoods never to be restored. I catch sight of an oldish couple dragging away scrap iron, old magazines, odds and ends in a battered perambulator and this I suppose is a use of myth, though I dislike the word "use." It's a use of myth in so far as I

¹Frederick Grubb, A Vision of Reality (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), p. 238.

see them as Adam and Eve long-banished from Eden.²

"The Way In" depicts Adam and Eve cast out of Eden into the industrialized civilization Tomlinson disdains:

. . . I see the faces of a pair
 Behind their load: he shoves and she
 Trails after him, a sexagenarian Eve,
 Their punishment to number every hair
 Of what remains. Their clothes come of their trade--
 They wear the cast-offs of a lost decade.

The place had failed them anyhow, and their pale
 Absorption staring past this time
 And dusty space we occupy together,
 Gazes the new blocks down--not built for them;
 But what they are looking at they do not see.
 No Eve, but mindless Mnemosyne³

The Eve of "The Way In" is a contradiction. Eden in Tomlinson's poetry is attained through a conscious effort of the mind.

This Eve, expelled from Eden, is "mindless" looking at what she does not see. This Eve has married with the land in the first way given in "How it happened":

. . . this bland and blind
 submergence of the self, an act
 of kind and questionless.⁴

In "The Way In" the poet has shown us what Eden is not by showing us the burned out remains of Adam and Eve in Hell.

Michael Edwards says of Charles Tomlinson's work:

"Deeply, his poetry is a search for 'Eden', a cherished

²Jed Rasula and Mike Erwin, "An Interview with Charles Tomlinson," Contemporary Literature, 16 (Autumn 1975), 406-407.

³Charles Tomlinson, "The Way In," The Way In (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 3, ll. 25-36.

⁴Charles Tomlinson, "How it happened," A Peopled Landscape (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 22, ll. 12-14.

word, and a lament for every loss of the piety of place." Tomlinson's poetry "maintains contact with the past. It defines a present."⁵

There is remorse in Tomlinson's poetry in not finding and having Eden. In "Eden" the narrator says:

. . . Eden
 Is given one, and the clairvoyant gift
 Withdrawn, 'Tell us,' we say
 'The way to Eden', but lost in the meagre
 Streets of our dispossession, where
 Shall we turn, when shall we put down
 This insurrection of sorry roofs? Despair
 Of Eden is given, too: we earn
 Neither its loss nor having. There is no
 Bridge but the thread of patience, no way
 But the will to wish back Eden⁶

Cast out from Eden we must try to remember and try to get back if only for a moment. Tomlinson tries to take his reader back to Eden in his poetry. He tries to achieve what Monroe K. Spears, in describing the poetry of the Welsh poet, David Jones, calls "anamnesis," meaning "unforgetting . . . recalling or re-presenting . . . an event in the past so that it becomes here and now operative by its effects."⁷ If we can only remember then maybe we can go back. Through art and the imagination we can enter Eden in our mind if our senses are keen. Though Eden is not mentioned in "How it happened," it is Eden

⁵Michael Edwards, "The Poetry of Charles Tomlinson," Agenda, 9 (Spring/Summer 1971), 139, 143.

⁶Charles Tomlinson, "Eden," The Way of a World (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 7, 11. 13-23.

⁷Monroe K. Spears, "Shapes and Surfaces," Contemporary Literature, 12 (Autumn 1971), 403.

Tomlinson describes when he says:

is the thing I mean, . . . The other
 event, a happening, the sound
 that brings all space in
 for its bound, when self is clear
 as what we keenest see and hear:
 no absolute of eye can tell
 the utmost, but the glance
 goes shafted from us like a well.⁸

Eden is the place the reader is taken by following the acts of initiation in Tomlinson's poems. The reality of the worlds formed by the poems improves the reality of the worlds we live in. It sharpens our senses, helps us remember what we may have forgotten and teaches us new ways to look at our world. From the initiations we experience in Tomlinson's poems we are aided in resolving the discrepancies we find in our experience that pull us in different directions. We gain relation with all that we are not and for that moment we are in harmony. Michael Edwards says Eden is found in a "resolution of opposites."⁹ Calvin Bedient describes Tomlinson's artistic method of coming to Eden:

. . . Whatever can be apprehended as the locus of a fine relation, dwelt on with intent devotion . . . becomes, to this poet, an 'Eden image'; at once pristine and permanent, it radiates being.¹⁰

In the poem the reader goes through a ceremony of initiation and in reaching out to understand the images of

⁸"How it happened," p. 22, ll. 14-22.

⁹Michael Edwards, "The Poetry of Charles Tomlinson," p. 131.

¹⁰Calvin Bedient, "Charles Tomlinson," Eight Contemporary Poets (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 7.

the poem comes to a fuller understanding of life at large. In the moment his understanding is realized he is like the swimmer of Chenango Lake "between grasp and grasping free."

Art, particularly the art of the poem, is the vehicle by which we enter Eden. In "Movements" Tomlinson says "rhymes" are the "Pass-words into the castle-keep."¹¹ The poem creates an imaginary world that serves as a bridge for the mind to enter Eden. Eden exists in the mind. Tomlinson in an image very similar to the one created in "Swimming Chenango Lake" creates an allegory in which the mind enters Eden in his poem, "Focus":

. . . the mind
that swimmer, unabashed
by season, encounters
on entering, places
as intimate as a fire's
interior palaces: an Eden
on whose emerald tinder,
unblinded and unbounded
from the dominance of white
the heart's eye enkindles.¹²

In The Poem as Initiation Tomlinson speaking of ceremony tells us that the poem is a mask that covers reality. In the poem there is a time when the mask is removed, when the act of initiation is achieved and we see reality both as a figure within the poem and for what it is in real life. This figur-

¹¹Charles Tomlinson, "Movements," Written on Water (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 51, III, 1. 5.

¹²Charles Tomlinson, "Focus," American Scenes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 17, II, 31-44.

ative understanding of reality allows us an additional level of perception that improves our daily life:

. . . But having defended ceremony, let me also speak of its limits. Again, there is an American Indian instance that comes to mind--this time from among the traditions of the Hopi nation. In the Hopi ceremonials, the tribal spirits are impersonated by clansmen who wear masks. Hopi children are brought up to believe that these masked figures are truly the tribal spirits. Then comes the central moment, when the child is initiated into youth by these spirits, and at this central moment the spirits remove their masks and the child sees that those he had taken for gods are only metaphors for gods: they are his uncles and kinsmen. In short, the ceremonial act is always indicating something greater than itself, something of the indivisible and thick texture of reality, something undefinable, yet out there and around us. The Hopi removal of masks confesses the limit of ceremony, but the very act of doing so is a ceremonial act which would have been impossible without the context of those masks and the rites of which they are a part. . . . We can never know all that reality, but the rite of the poem has, so one hopes, brought us into closer relation with it.¹³

The poem has its limits. Because we are mortal, death at some point ends our perception. Our senses are limited and we cannot perceive everything. Tomlinson says in "Tout Entouré De Mon Regard": "To see, is to feel at your back this domain of a circle whose power consists in evading and refusing to be completed by you."¹⁴ Edwards says: "The recovery of Eden is a local and momentary triumph within the general dissolution, both social and metaphysical."¹⁵

¹³Charles Tomlinson, The Poem as Initiation (Hamilton, New York: Colgate University Press, 1968), pp. 8-9.

¹⁴Charles Tomlinson, "Tout Entouré De Mon Regard," The Way of a World, p. 51.

¹⁵Michael Edwards, "The Poetry of Charles Tomlinson," p. 132.

In "Adam" Tomlinson creates the imaginary situation of Adam, still in Eden, naming the beasts. Eden, like time, cannot be made static. One finds Eden through conscious effort. Eden exists in our mind and is brought about through the efforts we make at relationship with our environment. We find ourselves figuratively like Tomlinson's Adam placed among a "teeming horde" that we must seek to understand. He says in "Adam":

. . . We bring
To a kind of birth all we can name
And, named, it echoes in us our being.¹⁶

This is the key to Eden. In understanding what we are not we understand what we are. In Tomlinson's poetry Eden still exists. His Adam, like the Adam and Eve of "The Way In," was exiled when he felt he had fully captured reality with a name. Man has limits but reality has none. Man finds Eden in his continual rite of passage to explore reality. Adam is all men. Tomlinson's message is clear. If we do not seek Eden we will be cast out of it:

. . . 'When you deny
The virtue of this place, then you
Will blame the wind or the wide air,
Whatever cannot be mastered with a name
Mouther and unmaker, madman, Adam.'¹⁷

¹⁶Charles Tomlinson, "Adam," The Way of a World, p. 8, 11.
15-17.

¹⁷Ibid., 11. 22-26.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The theme of initiation is the unifying principle within Charles Tomlinson's poetry and possibly all literature. Tomlinson fully demonstrates his skill as an artist constructing the imaginary situations of his poems. His poems become a rite of passage into his poetic universe. They make us look out from our human shell to the universe of existences outside our own. Having done this and experienced a taste of all the senses can hold, his poems teach us to dream and mold our observations into new experiences, new initiations. We, like Tomlinson's Adam, "bring to a kind of birth all we can name and, named, it echoes in us our being." Eden comes when initiation brings us into relationship with all we are not. In the instant that we find relationship and the differences have dissolved, we have found Eden and we have found ourselves. But having found it is not enough. The poems make us aware that Eden is perpetual and must be perpetually sought. Eden must be earned. We can become like the things around us by dulling our senses until we, like stones, submerge ourselves in existence. The way to Eden in Tomlinson's poems comes through keenly exercising our senses taking in all that the senses can tell.

Donald Davie's summary of Charles Tomlinson's poems still is applicable:

. . . These poems present analysis of human perception, how it works and how it ought to work, in a healthy personality.¹

After we have read Tomlinson's poems, gone through their rite of passage into sensuality and Eden and come back out into the world we live in we feel that the poems have improved our world. Having read these poems our experiences stand out brighter, more distinct. Charles Tomlinson's poems improve our world when we pass beyond their image and symbol to apply a microscopic examination of our daily perceptions. Only when our imaginations take us more deeply into life can we find Eden. I close as Tomlinson closed The Poem as Initiation:

. . . We put down the book. We put aside the mask. We go on living. But it is the book and it is the mask that bring to bear the mystery and the qualities of the process of living.²

¹Donald Davie, "Introduction," The Necklace, by Charles Tomlinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. xvi.

²Charles Tomlinson, The Poem as Initiation (Hamilton: New York: Colgate University Press, 1968), p. 8.

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