

Chapter II: The Greenhouse Self

As adults, we have forgotten most of our childhood, not only its contents but its flavor; as men of the world we hardly know the existence of the inner world: we barely remember our dreams, and make little sense of them when we do.

Laing, The Politics of Experience¹

For a man needs only to be turned around once with his eyes shut in this world to be lost... Not til we are lost...do we begin to find ourselves.

Thoreau, Walden²

One must go back to go forward. And by back I mean down into the consciousness of the race itself not just the quandries of adolescence...

Roethke, SL³

In moving from addressing his reader as "you" to "we" in Open House, Roethke shifts his persona, and his self conception of a poet as well, from the accusing isolatto to the representative man. But the use of the declarative "we" is insufficient: it does not include the reader because sufficient common ground has not been established, because the subject matter of the poetry is intensely personal rather than immediately universal. The simple use of "we" in these last poems is inadequate, necessarily constituting a relationship based upon superficial commonalities since a relationship of depth is impossible when depth is declared to be unknowable. In the final section of Open House, Roethke attempts to include the reader by

redefining his personal orientation as public. But, because it is an attempt to make contact with others by denying the self, it is the least successful section of an unsuccessful work. This formal public image is, for Roethke, a kind of prostitution of the self, one to which he occasionally returned in the course of his development, but one that was never again to appear in his sequential structure.⁴

Instead, in The Lost Son, Roethke reverses his direction, and attempts a new, dramatic way to make contact with the reader, to involve the reader in a universal, subsurface experience. To involve the reader, paradoxically, is to involve the most personal and private aspects of the self; and to involve the less acknowledged aspects of both, necessitates a more basic control of the language and a new inclusive yet simplex technology. Although the material is personal (the lost paradise of the greenhouse) in contrast to the more "universal" material of "Feud", it gains universal dimension by judicious compression, control, and concentration of vision. "Cuttings" marks this change in poetic technique.

"Cuttings" and its more intellectual successor, "Cuttings (later)", are the emblematic poems which mark Roethke's change of direction. Most immediately significant is the presentation of relevant detail which enables the reader to note, and to experience, the cut slip and

the human identification. The "No ideas about things, but the thing itself" of Williams and Stevens, takes on an interesting amplification in the introductory "Cuttings" poems. As Kenneth Burke has noted, "The poet need but be accurate as he can, in describing the flowers objectively, and while aiming at this, he comes upon corresponding human situations as it were by redundancy."⁵ The effect of this technique is the desired involvement of the reader, since he sees the correspondences between human and plant before he is "educated" about them in "Cuttings (later)".

The microscopic view of nature is, at least in part, the cause of this participatory description and reaction. In "The Light Comes Brighter", it will be recalled, the description of nature is more general, encompassing a more noble spectrum of nature than a few paltry slips. The generality of the description, however, necessitates a vast amount of human, authorial, intervention. The objects in the scene must be linked rationally, artistically. Order must be created from the data, and the author must be more selective, more evaluative, more directive. The past is recalled, the future looked to. The reader is then told how the author and the reader respond to this vernal scene in terms of an assumed generalization. The called for reactions, furthermore, are standard. The relation between the poet and his material are as distant as that relation between the scene and the reader.

The assumptions about nature in "The Light Comes Brighter" which are proven wrong in Part II of Open House, are those of the rational intellectual, scientific approach to external data in that they seek to define and explain both the inner and outer world in terms of rules. Wylie Sypher's Loss of Self summarizes the historical limitations of these assumptions:

...realism in art and physical law in science, was actually only a way of repressing man's consciousness - actually only a retreat from responsibility, because art and science alike read into the world, quite dishonestly, the compulsion that existed inside the self. The compulsions, essentially moral, were projected into the natural world as physical laws, the action and reaction of "forces". Thus the self was denied and alienated from the world. The rational focus of art and science was an excuse for hating the world. The pictures painted by academic formulas in "accurate" perspective were a means of rejecting reality rather than representing it.⁶

While Sypher is exclusively concerned with history, it is clear that the ahistorical assumptions of "Cuttings" are based upon a conscious rejection of this form of realism. Roethke's notebooks of this period contain many entries which quite specifically announce a new form of realism. An example:

How bleak and black and dead-ended can be the
literal approach to experience:
The eye is not enough.

The elicited responses in "Cuttings" are not standard, precisely because no visible direction is provided. The eye, the human vision and intervention in "Cuttings", is limited to syntactical subordination, word choice,

prepositional causality - the unobtrusive tools of a master of the language.

Sticks-in-a-drowse droop over sugary loam,
 Their intricate stem fur dries;
 But still the delicate slips keep coaxing up water;
 The small cells bulge;
 (37)

That Roethke is shamelessly courting the Pathetic Fallacy is not immediately evident precisely because it is so complete. This is Nijinsky's secret of a tree discussed by Seager in his biography of Roethke, the "renovating virtue" in a complete union with nature. Nijinsky writes:

I started to go down a dark road, walking quickly, but was stopped by a tree which saved me. I was on the edge of a precipice. I thanked the tree. It felt me because I caught hold of it; it received my warmth and I received the warmth of the tree. I do not know who most needed the warmth.⁸

"Cuttings" is a "new nature poem" in this manner. Nature and humanity are united for mutual warmth and healing. This interrelationship is evident throughout the poem, in the grammar, the syntax and the meter. The particular details noted such as the drying of the "intricate stem fur", suggests for both man and nature the collapse of the external sophisticated scaffolding, and the natural and necessary need to return to a "root" based existence. Metaphors do not guide the reader to a comparison of "intricate stem fur" with the complicated rational exterior of civilized man, however, because the comparison is

immediate: they have not the distance of an intellectual or metaphysical comparison.

Word choice is also a major factor. Roy Harvey Pearce points out that "Sticks-in-a-drowse" and "coaxing" are related to "human qualities", while the more technical and artistic words "delicate" and "intricate" "...qualify and classify the anthropomorphic claim, and...establish a more than ontological relationship between the perceiver and the thing perceived."⁹ The relationship between man and nature attempts to become one of identity, not similitude, and so must be expressed in the structure of the language rather than description.

Perhaps even more significant than this ontological chiasmus is the causal structure of the first sentence. That cuttings when planted die above ground, grow roots and begin a new plant, is factual botanical information. The causal relationships between the death of the superstructure and the rebirth of the plant are human. "But still...": This phrase has the most significant position in the quatrain and is given the greatest rhythmic emphasis, which, in turn, lends to these two monosyllables the greatest importance. The quatrain position, rhythm, thrust of the monosyllables, and, above all, the pivotal grammatical structure, indicates an affirmation of life, a willful rebirth from the roots of dead superstructures (and therefore a renewal of life from the roots rather

than the superficial aspects of life) and the message does not seem to be there at all.

The result of these manipulations is a specific observation of specific phenomena, but with no observer. The observer does not appear until after the break in "Cuttings (later)", the perspective of "I" being the essence of the "later" of the title. Subject and object are united in "Cuttings" as they are not in the next poem. Alan Seager writes that Roethke began to spend a great deal of time staring at objects and free associating from them after he had completed Open House. The purpose was mystical. He explains in "On Identity":

To look at a thing so long that you are a part of it and it is a part of you. If you can effect this, then you are by way of getting somewhere; knowing you will break from self to involvement, from I to Otherwise, or maybe even to the sense that all is one and one is all. This is inevitably accomplished by a loss of the "I" the purely human ego, to another center, a sense of the absurdity of death, a return to a state of innocency." ¹⁰

The loss of the center of "I", the loss of the distinction between observer and observed. "The new concept of the unconscious," observes Robert Langbaum, "has extended man to the very borderline between animate and inanimate nature."¹¹ And it is the unconscious universe which Roethke cultivates here. Underhill provides an apt quotation: "'God', says Eckhart, 'is nearer to me than I am to myself. He is just as near to wood and stone, but they do not know it.'"¹² In a similar way, the poem

appears to be replete with an unconscious, dynamic and self-creative life force, particularly mystic in concept, blurring distinctions between poet and subject.

The question of self and the position of the self in modern society is one which is later probed in the sequence. There is in The Lost Son a movement from the instinctual surrender to the environment and the life force to the inevitable anonymity of urban existence, and the subsequent desire to conquer and comprehend the world as the "realists" had done. Quite obviously Roethke is not only being "modern" in "Cuttings", he is providing the basis for a careful and mystically based analysis of modern ontology. And it is a religiously mystical experience, for The Lost Son is concerned not only with the growth of an infant (plant) into adulthood and decrepitude, but also with the death of the harmony of the human being with his creator, and the creative forces.

The new beginnings are of course technical as well as mystical and ontological. Like William Carlos Williams' Edgar Allan Poe, who in In The American Grain, turns his back upon all the influences which had controlled Roethke's poetry.

Haven't all the ways of being formal and fancy, for this moment in time, been mastered? Even Yeats in his high speech grates on me much of the time. How grateful I am to forget them, those contemporaries whom one honors by doing otherwise! Stevens to the left of me, Cummings to the right of me - goodby, Louise and Rolfe, this silly's escaping into his own life at last."¹³

This notebook entry of Roethke's, a conscious rejection of all the 'masters' of poetry - all formality - seems to be part of the philosophical bases for "Cuttings". The rejection of all rules but the rules of the self, however, does not lead to what Rosenthal has termed "confessional" poetry. In this respect the poetry of Roethke can be directly contrasted to that of a poet such as Sylvia Plath. Plath's "self" concern points inward; it becomes, in fact, a vicious cycle from which she cannot emerge, a state which N.O. Brown terms "shellfishness". Roethke's self concern points outward. One might compare Plath's "Daddy" with Roethke's "To My Sister" in which Roethke rejects the very nexus of "Daddy". "Preserve Thy hate Thy heart" (5), says Roethke ironically, and Plath seems to take this advice seriously. Her hate in "Daddy" is her very identity and must not be lost.

Roethke's continuous aim was to find a definition of self that went beneath his psychoses, and to make the origin of neuroses accessible to him for creative purposes, healing and poetic. His "self" in his poetry is the material, not the speaker. Jung's statement that the artist, "Being essentially the instrument for his work... is subordinate to it,"¹⁴ echoed by Roethke, with qualifications, in "Open Letter" ("For once...I am an instrument"¹⁵) must be taken one step further if it is to be applicable to The Lost Son. Bachelard quotes Lescure: "An artist

does not create the way he lives, he lives the way he creates."¹⁶ The self, that is, is an instrument of the conscious artist.

Roethke's escape into the self, then, is not contradictory with the loss of self in "Cuttings", because it is only through the self that the creative principle can be found - only through the looking with one's own eyes (and not the eyes of the dead) that any conscious identification can be made with any other object. In the word "conscious" lies the distinction between Open House and The Lost Son. In "How to Write Like Somebody Else" Roethke ponders the problem of the use of sources for poetry and distinguishes between conscious and unconscious imitation - unconscious imitation being imitation controlled by the imitated; conscious, by the imitator. "A conscious instrument", Roethke calls himself in "Open Letter", and in these poems he is at last a conscious instrument, using himself for his poetry.

The effect of all these beginnings is a new beginning for the reader. Deprived of all the "handles" to which he has grown used - the speaker as guide, the subject as human, the idea of poetry as expression, etc. - he must face the poem directly, not as another artifact, but as a viable being. Mills summarizes this change of attitude:

The eye of microscope power trained on the minute, thriving vegetable life and mineral realms of the earth that determines the range and character of

sensibility here...they are an affront to our habitual forms of perception. We are forced to look at things differently or reject the poetry altogether. The labor urged on us demands that we strip away those winding clothes of category and convention with which we deaden our senses of life, and that we regain our simplicity of vision.¹⁷

For the reader "Cuttings" is an initiation rite - both a test of strength and an acclimatization: to pass through is to be allowed into the greenhouse.

Once the reader has "regained" his "simplicity of vision", however, he begins to lose it. For "Cuttings (later)" is just not as simple a vision. A notebook entry, "First I must look, then I must learn"¹⁸, suggests the sequence of these poems; from an immediate, instinctive unification with the object to a recollected intellectual comprehension. Jerome Mazzaro originally pointed out the distinction between these two poems:

"Cuttings" establishes that birth is life coming through the slime. With strong phallic imagery, the reproduction of "Cuttings Later" [sic] pulls the worlds of plant and man together.¹⁹

The state presented in the poem is better approached from the antithetical direction: in "Cuttings (later)", there is a world of man, a separation between man and plant.

Jarold Ramsey emphasizes this distinction:

But in..."Cuttings: Later" [sic]...the poet floods in with anthropomorphic meanings; the vegetable-human equation is struck for the first time. [emphasis mine] ²⁰

This mental equation is immediately evident:

This urge, wrestle, resurrection of dry sticks,
 Cut stems struggling to put down feet,
 What saint strained so much,
 Rose on such lopped limbs to a new life?
 (37)

"This" is a gesture of removal, a distancing device from both the plant and the self. The muscular description in the first two lines, furthermore, gives way to an antithetical sentence structure in the second half of the quatrain. Thus, the sentence is divided into two contrasting parts; the first two lines describe the vitality of the plant in human terms - resurrection, wrestle, feet - implying a conscious will, the second part of the quatrain compares the human with the plant in botanical terms - lopped limbs. Furthermore, the separation is syntactical; the plant couplet is a subordinate, and therefore passive clause, the human comparison central, active, and intellectually interrogative.

The next seven lines describe the growth of new life in the "I", the growth of a new mind, and the simultaneous separation of man from his environment. For the plant is not conscious, and the man can not only register his consciousness, but can even articulate the specific source of sensory data.

In my veins, in my bones I feel it, -

As the plant grows and "sprouts" break out, the involvement of the speaker's intellect is intensified. From identity in "Cuttings", he has moved to metaphor in

his analogy of the "saint". By line nine, a simile is introduced, a more intellectual poetic exercise. The slippery sprouts are like fish. As the poem concludes, the separation is so complete, that it is conceived of as a conscious union on the part of the speaker.

I quail, lean to beginnings, sheath-wet.

The active voice in itself implies consciousness. Burke's observation, that in reading Roethke's lyrics, "you have strongly the sense of entering at one place, winding through a series of internal developments, and coming out somewhere else"²¹ is particularly applicable in this short verse. The poem turns back on itself as the consciousness of the speaker develops, realizing both the ontological need to return to beginnings and the danger of coming so close to undifferentiated existence, the danger of irrevocable loss of one's sense of differentiation, of identity. Not only does the speaker "quail" at the prospect, but he apparently goes about an attempted union backwards, returning to the roots through the sheath, in a decidedly phallic and unbotanical image.

The consciousness, the articulation of the need to cut oneself off from all previously sustaining associations and to return to the beginnings of life, to the source of identity, is as important as the need itself. It is a falling away from the identity of subject and object, but it is the beginning of creation. For without consciousness

and will, without the pain of "sucking and sobbing", there is neither sainthood nor artistic endeavor. The two poems then, while sequential, are also dialectical, explaining both aspects of the return.

I have dwelt so long on "Cuttings" and "Cuttings (later)" because they are initiation poems, like Blake's introductory songs to "Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience", explaining the source of the poems as well as setting the tone for the sequence. Once past these introductory pieces, Roethke begins a sequence which expands and develops the sequence of these two pieces, beginning with new life and concluding in consciousness and the ambivalent need to return.

Basic to The Lost Son is the sequential outline, an outline which retraces the whole journey to reunite with the roots, the undifferentiated primordial, and retraces the growth of individual identity. The poems, at times, seem subservient to the sequence - less successful poems have been included simply because they suit the structure - but even these poems are enhanced when viewed in the sequential perspective. Indeed, it is quite clear that Roethke planned The Lost Son this way. James Jackson, a former student and colleague of Roethke, writes:

Prior to the start of Son...Ted made a "brief" for each verse in progress. An analytical sub-structure; a reasoned-out girding of his thoughts which could then, ideally, submerge itself in the "secret jour-

ney" of song. (And quite naturally at this time he utilized existing traditional verse-forms, stanzaic patterns, etc.) Proof? At Bennington, at that genesis - interlude of the "great change", his poems in their rough drafts startled me over and over again by their obvious duo-structure: the legal or the logical co-existing side by side with the intuitive, the associational: the former being most in evidence in the presence of certain abstract nouns, generalized epithets or crudely personified ideals, which almost without exception disappeared in the later drafts. These abstractions were at once so out-of-tune, so alien in their feel and texture, in the context of the associational of "internal landscape" as you call it, that I can remember often bursting out to him in immediate questioning or objection to their presence. To which Ted's quick reply and fairly casual defense was, "Sure, sure, but its not going to stay in, for God's sake! It's just something left over from the thought stage of the piece. The thinky-thinky.²²

The scientific structure of The Lost Son may be outlined as follows: Part I traces the birth of a child from the primordial erotic/thanototic forces to the beginning of identity and the loss of identification with the vegetative, what may also be called the psycho-sexual socialization process. It also traces the growth of artistic control of natural potential for beauty. This sequence is roughly equivalent with the life-death sequence, the loss of a personal eden, and the loss of a social eden. Part I is also a chronological and spatial tour of the greenhouse, from the cellar to the roof, mapping out the space of this objective correlative quite literally.

In this first section may be most clearly seen the "layering" technique of Roethke. Personal history, psycho-

analytic theory, psychosocial theory, botany, and aesthetic theory are found to be essentially so similar that they are interchangeable and their terminology and symbolism are also interchangeable. Part II, however, is less unified, in part due to the fact that at this stage in the development a dissociation has set in. It is a human being's adolescent and adult experiences which are traced, a sequence which arrives at the contemporary human "dead-end" in which the simple socialization process has been insufficient to create a complete and satisfied adult. Since there can be no progress forward, the only alternative is to return to the self, to the beginnings, to discover the causes. The "recycling" is attempted in Part III.

Part IV, "The Lost Son", later included by the author in the Praise to the End! sequence, is structurally significant in both contexts, as well as being a significant independent work. In the original context, I believe, "The Lost Son" is a schizophrenic nightmarish "leaning to beginnings", a search for lost unity. But "The Lost Son" goes much further than the preceding poems, encompassing a journey that is racial and cosmic as well as individual, and is thus better understood in its equivalent structural position in the mythic Praise to the End! which retraces the same cycle as The Lost Son, but from within, from the roots themselves. Beginning with the origins of existence,

Praise to the End!, like its sources and analogues Wordsworth's Prelude, Milton's Paradise Lost, Blake's Milton, Joyce's Portrait of an Artist, and other mythic works, attempts to relive, to reorder the past for the purpose of confronting the present state of identity.

The sequence of The Lost Son, then, evolves in a cyclical pattern. But not only are the general structures of this book carefully worked out, the same painstaking organization is apparent in the substructures as well. If we assume "Cuttings" and "Cuttings (later)" to be introductory poems, explaining the rebirth in the poet of a new kind of vision, then the rest of Part I of The Lost Son divides into three groups of four poems each - each group marking a stage of growth: the first group is concerned with the growth of a plant from germination to independent identity, to pruning, to flowering. The second group, "Moss Gathering", "Big Wind", "Old Florist", and "Frau Bauman, Frau Schmidt, and Frau Schwartz", take as their subject the place of man in the greenhouse and his progressively larger role in "taming" the flowers, making art out of nature.²³ The third group deals with the blossoming and dying of life and its transformation into art. All three sections, then, reproduce the cycle of birth, growth, and death. Simultaneously they retrace a larger cycle, from natural life to a kind of transcendence over this cycle in imagistic art - from undif-

ferentiated life, to death that is immortality.

From "Root Cellar" to "Orchids" there is a movement from undifferentiated life to the awareness not only that there is a difference between "I" and "You", but also that all of nature is not unified, that it is in a state of war, striving to take over dissident elements, to return to a state of entropy. The original entropy is represented in "Root Cellar", where even the smells are congressed. This cellar is obscene in its blind eroticism, yet completely natural in its source, wild and unconfined by the greenhouse organization. "Bulbs broke out of boxes hunting for chinks in the dark." (38) These are the sexual beginnings to which the speaker of "Cuttings (later)" leaned, the beginnings of all life in general and of phallic life in particular. Yet the erotic is also the thanatotic, as the ambivalent speaker of "Cuttings (later)" is all too well aware. Life begins from end-products, dead matter, "Leaf mold, manure, lime..." (38), and the life force and death force are one. "Nothing would give up life:/ Even the dirt kept breathing a small breath." (38) Like the dust from which Adam emerged.

This paradoxical unity with earth, desirable or not, is not permitted to remain. In the next poem the mechanism of the greenhouse forces the fetal plants into identifiable existence and alienation from the earth. In the

forcing house the bulbs and shoots have become "Great cannas or delicate cyclamen tips." (38), individuals with individual characteristics. But they are now barely distinguishable from the machines that force them into existence, "All pulse with the knocking pipes." (38) Even the machines are barely distinguishable from the nature they order. They channel nature, compressing fifty summers to a few days, channeling the excrement into life giving steam.

In both "Root Cellar" and "Forcing House" the observer is minimized. The rhythms of the lines are primarily imitative of the subject matter, not the speaker. Although central to "Root Cellar" is the repulsion/ attraction toward the subject, this attitude is entirely in tune with the apparent attitude of the roots themselves, existing in a cellar in which "Nothing would sleep" and "Nothing would give up life". The description from "Forcing House", "All pulse with the knocking pipes", is also applicable to the observer. In "Weed Puller", however, there is a child, both an outgrowth of the forcing house of society and its agent. Isolated from the roots and plants, he is ashamed and disgusted by his forced association with the source of life. Looking above him, in tones reminiscent of the poet in Open House, the child expresses his desire to unite with the spiritually eternal and the pure, the inviolate. His spirit

is alive, but the flesh pulls him down to death as he crawls "on all fours, Alive in a slippery grave" (39). The child does not perceive the paradox of eros-thanatos in the roots, or their own brand of eternity, but sees only that they prevent individuation. With its alienated conclusion, the poem marks the end of innocence and the beginning of the self-seeking adult.

It is not surprising that in the next poem, "Orchids", the primordial power of nature has degenerated to a poisonous slyness. The sophisticated flowers are snake-like, devouring, an external force to be reckoned with, the antithesis of "Cuttings". The ego, human and natural, is born.

So many devouring infants!
Soft luminescent fingers,
Lips neither dead nor alive,
Loose ghostly mouths
Breathing.

(39)

The birth of the ego, the alienation from nature, the alienation from subject matter, and the growth of the plant are also analogous to the conception, incubation, and birth of an infant. This layer of meaning is most clearly seen in "Orchids", in which the flowers are throughout represented as infants in a nursery, but is also present in "Weed Puller", with its speaker "alive, in a slippery grave", desiring birth. Certainly the sexual nature of the symbolism in "Root Cellar" indicates

that this root cellar is the womb literally as well as symbolically, and "Forcing House" is a poem of procreation as well as socialization and botany. On all levels, these four poems provide a clear sequence, and are best understood together.

The second section, less layered but far more complex, traces the birth and death of the artist of nature, the use of memory - from guilt to productivity, and the socialization of the child, similar and related experiences. In these four poems, "Moss Gathering", "Big Wind", "Old Florist", and "Frau Bauman, Frau Schmidt, and Frau Schwartz" (included in the sequence when it was reprinted in The Waking, Roethke's final rearrangement of these poems), the pastness of these descriptions becomes increasingly evident as the speaker and the protagonist separate in time.

Although a rolling stone gathers none, the child in "Moss Gathering" not only collected moss, but dug elbow deep, coming into such contact with the earth that he felt as if he had pulled "off flesh from the living planet." (40) This extremely close contact with nature has already proven dangerous in "Orchids", since the parasitic universe is constantly seeking to destroy the individuality of others, but the protagonist is now too highly developed to be greatly susceptible. Instead his fear is of imposing himself upon nature, of being like the orchid, of

being so grand in his selfness that he can actually destroy the surface of the earth. Although in "Big Wind" nature is used productively and nothing is destroyed, the sense of guilt in "Moss Gathering" is monumental: "As if I had committed against the whole scheme of life, a desecration." (40)

But in the proverb gathering moss is also gathering memories, and the entire poem can be read as a metaphor for dipping into the solid, integrated, forgotten past. Although the kind of moss the poem describes mixes the erotic and thanototic in a now familiar pattern ("The living moss is used to line cemetery baskets."²⁴), it can also be seen how memories are also living yet both dead and murderous. Digging into the past is rejected here in a very similar manner to Open House, particularly "Orders for the Day" with its obsessive compulsive hands comparable to the boy's gathering guilt hands. The individual psyche and primordial nature are the same, and the unsolved problem is how they can be tapped, without being "desecrated". Through the positive memories of "Big Wind" and "Old Florist" a solution is reached, and in "Frau Bauman, Frau Schmidt, and Frau Schwartz" nature and the past, the dead, are creative and renovating forces.

The "natural order of things" (40), broken by human intervention in "Moss Gathering", is harnessed in "Big

Wind", as the scene shifts from the wild marshes to the controlled greenhouse. The destructive elements are separated by the glass walls from the nature of beauty, the chaotic from the artistic. The artist, here a part of society, "we" as opposed to the "I" of "Moss Gathering", does not desecrate nature, but saves and transforms it. Both manure and machines create and save the roses (which transcend both manure and machines) and they can do this because of the controlling four walls of the greenhouse, the enclosed space which is art, order, society.

"Big Wind", which marks the half-way point of Part I, establishes the greenhouse as a symbol of artistic space, an enclosed space which can contain "heaven and hell"²⁵ against the chaos without. The greenhouse, a triumph of inner space, marks the high point of the sequence. The very notion of the boat-poem, a confined space which forges ahead against the terrors of nature, affirms the life of this image. But this triumph is temporary. The kind of artistic production of "Big Wind" is gradually seen as a lost eden in "Frau Bauman, Frau Schmidt and Frau Schwartz". Things are enclosed and fixed only in the past. Bachelard's house is also Roethke's greenhouse:

In the life of a man, the house thrusts aside contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul. It is the human being's first world. Before he is "cast into the world," as claimed by certain

hasty metaphysics, man is laid in the cradle of the house. Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house.²⁶

Roethke's greenhouse is Bachelard's house, the security and order a child discovers in existence after the first traumas of birth. It is also Bachelard's house rediscovered and rebuilt. The adult learns to create his own house, making it a container of the felicitous past and the creative elements of nature.

A new balance is struck in "Big Wind", but it is of necessity a temporary balance, since life is dynamic and the spatial and temporal union of the greenhouse must pass. The cameo of stillness which follows, "Old Florist", is in direct contrast to "Big Wind", in tone, texture, and temporality. The image of the artist who has subjected himself and his own fleeting mortality to the principle of ordering beauty, is a quiet comment on the enthusiasm of "Big Wind". The sense of temporality is strong here, and serves as preparation for "Frau Bauman, Frau Schmidt, and Frau Schwartz" in which the "pastness" of the scene is predominant. Paradoxically the women are described as "gone" and yet their "witchery" transcends the limitations of their time. Unlike the old florist description, which sees no results today in the old man's sacrifices, "Frau Bauman, Frau Schmidt, and Frau Schwartz" "plotted for more than themselves" (44). The effect of these dead women upon the poet is redeeming. They renew the poet

"alone and cold in my bed" (44) as the spring breeze renews the cold seeds "And their snuff-laden breath blowing lightly over me in my first sleep" (44). It is his first sleep because he has never really slept before, never planted himself in his bed, awaiting inspiration from the productive past.

The old ladies who "teased out the seed that the cold kept asleep" (44) have the same effect on the lost child, "alone and cold in my bed" (44), and the third section of Part I concentrates upon this effect. As the flowers grow and bloom, so does the child, and the past becomes productive as well.

Surely the effect of the women is comparable to the hands which transplant the flowers into the greenhouse, returning the sprouts to an orderly, productive environment. In this greenhouse the flowers grow, "stretching and reaching" beyond their boundaries of glass, as the child too seeks independence and fulfillment in "Child on Top of a Greenhouse". The child and flower are interchangeable, the sequence is the same.

The search for transcendence for the child is suicidal, however, for as soon as he cuts himself off from the earth he becomes like the tulip in "Flower Dump", the next poem: "One swaggering head/ Over the dying, the newly dead." (43) The attempt to transcend time and enclosed space can only be fulfilled in that situation

presented in "Carnations", a cameo which captures the moment and balance unattainable in life. "Like that clear autumnal weather of eternity/ The windless perpetual morning over a September cloud." (43) The sequence, while developing the flower to a work of art, has cut the child and the flower from the earth, and the objet d'art from its life giving sources. "Carnations" has all the coolness and crispness of objectivity, and while it is perfect, "balanced", in its way, it is far removed from the struggles of "Cuttings" and belongs to Wylie Sypher's category of objective art, alienated from and fearful of nature.

If Part I has taken us from the summer of "Forcing House" to the autumnal "Carnations", then Part II, similar to "The Coming of the Cold" of Open House, brings us to a winter which excludes man from the universe. The seven poems of Part II develop the child into an alienated, cold, adult. In "Pickle Belt", for example, the conflict of socialized fear and natural pleasure of "Mr. Papa's Waltz" reaches adolescent proportions as it moves from the oedipal to the heterosexual stage. The boy in "Pickle Belt" is "perplexed" by his conflicting emotions, emotions at odds with each other and the external ordered factory. Nevertheless, there is expectation: lust unsatisfied is anticipatory fulfillment. To "Pickle Belt", "Dolor" contrasts directly: the adult is in a sterile environment,

since the experience of "Dolor" has been that it is the external, the dust, which is alive, and the internal, the dark, which has been denied life. As time stops momentarily, the speaker is at liberty to note his alienation, and the way his social upbringing has made nature poisonous and cold:

A wave of Time hangs motionless on this particular
 shore.
 I notice a tree, arsenical grey in the light, or the
 slow
 Wheel of the stars, the Great Bear glittering colder
 than snow,
 And remember there was something else I was hoping
 for.

(47)

The "arsenical" tree, the winter of the stars, stand in direct opposition to the greenhouse poems of summer and life filled nature. And yet, in principle, the "arsenical tree" is not far removed from the crisp carnations. Both are cold and crisply outlined against a frozen background. But, where "Carnations" is about autumn, and the ripeness and perfection of its fruit, "Double Feature" is concerned with winter, and art that is eternal because it is dead.

Much later, Roethke was to write in his notebooks:

You whips of air:
 I knew with what I staggered: I was crazed
 Into a meaning more profound than what my fathers
 heard,
 Those listening bearded men
 Who cut the ground with hoes; and made with hands
 An order out of muck and sand. Those Prussian men
 Who hated uniforms.²⁷

It seems reasonable to compare the "father's meaning" in this passage with the kind of movement in Part I of Open House. The poem, "Orders for the Day", which begins, "Hands, hard and veined all over,/ Perform your duty well," (7) is a kind of obsessive compulsion rejection of the demands of the self, of identity, particularly since it follows the plaintive last line of "Interlude", "What we had hoped for had not come to pass" (6). Rollo May, in characterizing this form of behavior, notes:

Compulsive and rigid moralism arises in given persons precisely as a result of a lack of a sense of being. Rigid moralism is a compensatory mechanism by which the individual persuades himself to take over the external sanctions because he has no fundamental assurance that his own choices have any sanction of their own.²⁸

Although "Dolor" and "Double Feature" note the mechanisms which have come to rule their lives, an undercurrent of rebellion permeates the poems. The self has not been forgotten entirely, and for this reason there is hope, a possibility of a "return".

The last line of "Double Feature", with its remembrance of "something I was hoping for", thus leads directly to the poem which follows, "The Return". The speaker in "The Return" indeed seems "crazed/ Into a meaning more profound" to the point where he is willing to expose himself to a highly uncertain but probably dangerous violation of the traditional notions of self

identity.

Despite this daring awareness, however, the speaker of the final two poems, "Last Words" and "Judge Not", has not the means available to become exposed to the dangers of "The Return"; a condition termed by the Buddhists samsara in which the individual endlessly uses the same impossible methods to solve a false problem. To face the necessary journey, the release from samsara, the speaker cannot permit himself to "lay down.../With the rags and rotting clothes," (47) cannot expose his wounds, as in "The Return", but asks instead for "...my hat, my umbrella and rubbers," (48) to encounter the storm head on, but with sufficient foul weather gear that he will not be exposed to the elements. The "Last Words" are only theoretically a farewell to language and a return to a silent, presocialized state, for desire is not sufficient; the speaker simply does not know the way to "Spiral Knowledge".

"Judge Not", therefore, is replete with "foul weather gear", with formulas which protect while they seem to expose one to reality. This formulaic approach to the trials of life, similar to that of Housman's "When I Watch the Living Meet", seems so insignificant and superficial that it can be termed nothing but an impasse, a dead end. The pains of youth and age leave only one alternative, to avoid birth. Those close to the

source of life are destroyed by their very innocence in the world. Those far from the source are dead and rotting by virtue of their very distance from the innocence of youth (as is the speaker of "The Return"). No judgment is possible since everyone is the victim of this dual death. The cycle of life is escaped through negation.

Were this the conclusion of The Lost Son, the sequence, while poetically interesting, would be sadly lacking in the unique characteristic of Roethke. Up to this point Roethke goes as far, but no further, than the "confessionals". With "The Cycle", Roethke begins a return, a genuine return, which enables "The Lost Son", the most unique and most characteristically modern of Roethke's poems, to exist.

Most significant is the process of "recycling". The third section, although it proceeds from the same precept as "Judge Not", with the decrepitude of life, seeks release from the "dull round" in a more positive direction.

Pearce compares these poems to Eliot's affirmation:

Surely we are to recall the end of The Wasteland here. And Roethke is initiating a grand dialogue with one of his modernist masters. He too would Give, Sympathize, Control - make proper obeisance to them and share in them. The rain that comes to save his land, however, comes from underground and returns there, only again and again to move through, in the title of the poem, "The Cycle". The poet, in short, must discover his own cycle, his own underground, his own relationship to the source under the primieval stone.²⁹

Although Pearce is concerned only with a single poem, his statements are far more applicable to the whole of the third part. For the poems of this third section, past the half way mark of The Lost Son quest, move towards a direction of affirmation. From the desperation at the emptiness, the wasteland of modern society, and the inability of the psyche to emerge from the society and the social self, the five poems move toward a gradual understanding of the pattern of existence, and the subsequent direction for release.

"Night Crow" begins the process of unlayering. The individual in his situation, identified with the "clumsy crow" in the "wasted tree" (49) both reveals the need for a new beginning, and suggests the direction to be taken, behind or beneath this image of desolation, "Deep in the brain, far back." (49). The wasted crow calls forth "a tremendous bird", "a shape in the mind", which flies beneath the external, conscious reality. A similar image from Sylvia Plath's "Black Rook In Rainy Weather" points out the alternative.

I only know that a rook
Ordering its feathers can so shine
As to seize my senses, haul
My eyelids up, and grant

A brief respite from fear
Of total neutrality. With luck
Trekking stubborn through this season
Of fatigue, I shall
Patch together a content

Of sorts. Miracles occur.

Plath seeks to seize the external image, to bring her out of an apparently similar state to "Judge Not", "fear of total neutrality," and with it use other images to "patch together a content/ Of sorts". Similarly in "The Colossus" she begins, "I shall never get you put together entirely,/ Pieced, glued, and properly jointed." Patching and mending are techniques deserted by Roethke in "Night Crow". He clearly refuses at this point to "fumble my lost childhood" (As Anne Sexton terms it in "The Division of Parts"), but chooses to go beyond individual differences, individual childhoods, individual lostness, to a more basic source.

The link between "Night Crow" and Part II is the vision of the tree, first perceived in "Double Feature" as a symbol for the emptiness of present existence. The link between "Night Crow" and "River Incident" is the devolutionary direction. The bird flying back in "Night Crow" takes the poet back to his ontological beginnings, until he can feel a part of the beginnings of life in the sea.

Whatever I owed to time
 Slowed in my human form;
 Sea water stood in my veins,

 And I knew I had been there before,
 (49)

It is not only that ontogony recapitulates phylogony -

In this poem ontogeny and phylogony are one and the same. The speaker here does not only represent man - he is the evolution of the world. Mills, speaking of Praise to the End!, notes of the speakers:

Because the protagonist travels into the regions of memory the preconscious and the unconscious, he shows distinct similarity to the heroes of myth whom Jung saw as representative of the quest for psychic wholeness. Like those fabulous heroes or the lesser ones of fairy tales Roethke's lone protagonist must endure the trials and dangers of a mission into the darkness of personal history. The prize to be won is rebirth and illumination, what is called in one of the poems "a condition of joy."³⁰

In the poems of "return", the third section of The Lost Son, however, it becomes apparent that the speaker of this section is as much a jungian hero as the protagonist of the later work. The discovery of the interrelationship of self and world is the discovery of the representational nature of the individual quest:

And I knew I had been there before,
In that cold, granitic slime,
In the dark, in the rolling water.
(49)

As he reaches the "minimal" he reaches a kind of unity with the universe. The understanding of this unity makes his further quest not individual, but representational.

In "The Minimal", there is an emergence from the sea, an awareness that from these beginnings comes life. The return to the barely differentiated life does not destroy the individual, as has been increasingly feared

in Part I and Part II of The Lost Son, but instead renews. "The Cycle" describes the whole journey which has led up to the understanding of "The Minimal", and in its very description, reveals the awareness of a comprehension, not only of the specific step taken in "The Minimal", but the whole past direction. The "I" of "River Incident" who identified himself with the water, now knows he is also like the water in his recycling of identity. Even the necessary return is described in terms that apply both to the human psyche and to the principles of science:

The fine rain coiled in a cloud
 Turned by revolving air
 Far from that colder source
 Where elements cohere
 Dense in the central stone.
 (50)

Unlike the dense, closed substance of "The Adamant", in which individuality is unpenetrable, "The Cycle", with its loose trimeter imitates the cohesion of the cloud. Man and the world are one here. Identity has been transcended, at least in the realm of logic.

It is the discovery of a direction that is the victory in this section and leads to the joy of "The Waking". The goal has not been reached, but at least the speaker understands where to go. By becoming at one with his environment, by relinquishing the adult individual identity he has constructed, and accepting the cycle of

nature passively, he has prepared himself to return to "An early joy", the joy of the unborn and the just born.

This "joy" to which he will return is not his own birth, however, but a racial, evolutionary, universal joy, the beginnings of everything.

And all the waters
Of all the streams
Sang in my veins
That summer day.

(51)

The direction of "The Waking" is taken in Praise to the
End!