

### Chapter III: Onanism and Death

To reconnect consciousness with the unconscious, to make consciousness symbolical, is to reconnect words with silence; to let the silence in. If consciousness is all words and no silence, the unconscious remains unconscious.

Get the nothingness back into words. The aim is words with nothing to them; words that point beyond themselves rather than to themselves; transparencies, empty words. Empty words, corresponding to the void in things.

N.O. Brown, Love's Body<sup>1</sup>

Without the desire to reconnect words with silence, the sequences which begin with "Where Knock Is Open Wide" and conclude with "The Shape of the Fire" are ultimately meaningless to the reader and understandably dismissed as foolish experiments or clever charlatranry. It is clear, however, that in Roethke's development, the poetic need to break through the limitations of language was as basic as the psychological need registered in the poems to break out of established forms of consciousness, and that these poems are the basis of a serious revolution. Without comprehension of this serious undertaking, the later works - which are built on discoveries made here - can be seen only as a return to "more traditional forms as a remedy".<sup>2</sup>

If only because they elucidate later poems these poems would be worthy of further study, but a more basic issue is implicit in any consideration of Roethke's

interior monologues. At what point does silence become poetry? It is both a technical and a mystical question for Roethke, as it was for his predecessors.

For, nothing spake to me but the fair Face  
Of Hev'n and Earth, when yet I could not speak:  
I did my bliss, when I did Silence, break.  
(Traherne, "Dumness")

Even the reasonable Dr. Johnson knew that silence is ultimate expression. "Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief", he complained of Lycidas. Silence is unity. The poet breaks his silence and communicates only partially and only to a selected few. And yet Roethke's goal is universal readership, as is the goal of all anagogic poetry.<sup>3</sup> It is with this dilemma in mind that one should approach the poems to be considered. "Where Knock Is Open Wide" begins with an attempt to represent the closest thing to silence, and as the poems progress, silence becoming language and therefore bonds to consciousness. "The Lost Son", bound in the limitations of language, attempts to break free, to communicate through gibberish. "The original sense," says N.O. Brown paraphrasing a myriad of authors, "is nonsense; and common sense a cover-up job, repression."<sup>4</sup>

Treated as silence becoming language, "Where Knock Is Open Wide" is far less unintelligible than it is dense. Even the title is packed with far more significance than its original source. "Where Knock Is Open Wide" cannot



be written off as a borrowing from Smart's "Song To David", although the borrowing is propitious. Smart's designation is one of spiritual unity.

...in the seat to faith assigned,  
Where ask is have, where seek is find,  
Where knock is open wide.

Roethke's speaker, however, is more than Smart's "man of prayer". "Where Knock" retraces beginnings, not fulfillments, and all beginnings and prebeginnings are intertwined - the child's birth of perception, the adult's rebirth of vision, human birth, biblical and darwinian birth of the world, etc. etc. The similarity in title and theme to Dylan Thomas' "Before I Knocked", which retraces the embryonic development of Jesus, furthermore, indicates another beginning. All beginnings are to be considered here, since "Where Knock" is a limitless space, a space which exists before the beginning of time and encompasses all aspects of the state of birth. The gnomic texture of the title, furthermore, is as much an attempt to cope with language as unconscious as it is imitative of the theme.

The rebirth has been made necessary by the limitations reached in the previous sequence. "Judge Not" literally prepares for "Where Knock Is Open Wide".

I imagined the unborn, starving in wombs, curling;  
I asked: May the blessings of life, O Lord, descend  
on the living.

(48)

The innocent of the world, the unborn, with no instincts at all, are protected or destroyed by the place which keeps them and the presence or absence of time. This can be seen as much in the Old Man style of "Judge Not" as in its observation. The innocent protagonist of the greenhouse has been destroyed by time and change. With this awareness, "Where Knock" begins. It is a kind of apologia for the return.

A kitten can  
Bite with his feet;  
Papa and Mamma  
Have more teeth.

Sit and Play  
Under the rocker  
Until the cows  
All have puppies.  
(71)

Because a kitten can only cause pain with his hidden claws, and Papa and Mamma's pain can be far greater (the difference in the quality of the pain is soon explained) it is best to remain hidden, with the kittens, in an enclosed space, the womb perhaps, until birth. The causal relationships in the grammar here have to be supplied because the state of "Where Knock" is precisely one without cause and effect. Knock is open wide.

A distinction should be made here also between "He" (the infant) and "me" (the protagonist) and "you" (the reader), since you as a reader are invited to join "me" in an attempt to re-enter the world of "He".

His ears haven't time  
(71)

The ears of the infant do not comprehend the nature of time, and therefore he does not comprehend the distinction between real, chronological future, and anticipatory fantasy. Therefore:

Until the cows  
All have puppies  
(71)

is as valid a measure of time as anything. It is also an image of birth, a child's image, cows being the first animal associated with maternal functions and puppies one of the first animals associated as offspring.

The child's lack of comprehension of time is related to his lack of comprehension of "reality". Reality, however, is misleading: For, although in reality one would measure pain quantitatively (as in the first verse), "A real hurt is soft". Physical pain is hard, but true pain is not measurable physically.

His ears haven't time  
Sing me a sleep-song please.  
A real hurt is soft.  
(71)

The three lines may now be explained as follows: If I (the speaker) go to sleep (retreat from conventional conceptions of reality into a timeless place), I will understand what real time and real hurt is. In sleep time is not linear, reality is not measurable. So in sleep is true reality. The dream vision, a standard literary tradition



from Chaucer to Roethke, almost always takes on mythic comprehensive significances; thus "he", "me" and the implied "you" are necessarily incorporated into it.

The next verse, "Once upon a tree,/ I came across a time," is a sleep vision of pre-birth, in which space and time have been reversed; tree and time are transposed. The importance, the absolute reality of this revelation, is emphasized in the next lines:

It wasn't even as  
A ghoulie in a dream.  
(71)

With "ghoulie" the childish fantasy is negated.

The tree in this verse may be the one which Seager discusses in his description of Roethke's mystical awakening,<sup>5</sup> or a reference to Thomas' state of unity in "Fern Hill" when he "lordly had the trees and leaves". Simultaneously, however, another story than the personal is introduced - the expulsion of man from the garden of eden and the story of birth. The tree, it will be recalled, taught knowledge of good and evil, that is, knowledge of distinctions. Later, in "I Need, I Need", the protagonist complains, "The Trouble is with No and Yes" (75), which Malkoff and others quite correctly gloss as a philosophical introduction to disunity. Here begins the contraries without which, Blake proclaims, there is no progression.

The tree will be the introduction to the knowledge

of opposites, disunity, contraries, because it is the introduction to time. "In Space things touch, in time things part" says Miss Quested in Forster's, A Passage To India. And the gradual introduction to time in "Where Knock" will simultaneously separate the infant from the mother, biblical man from eden, primitive man from his unity with the environment, man from stone, etc.

The verse, "Once upon a tree", does not introduce time, however, but only the story to be told. The next verse begins with a vision of the conjunction of space and time.

There was a mooly man  
 Who had a rubber hat  
 The funnier than that, -  
 He kept it in a can.  
 (71)

The vision is perceived from a unified sensibility - man and animal are the same and the animal is identified by the sound it makes. The object of the description, however, is not of a unified nature. This can be seen if Roethke's verse is contrasted to Joyce's "Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo..."<sup>6</sup>

Joyce's story is an adult's version of a child's vision. Roethke's is a child's vision of adulthood. The hat is later associated with role-playing, "I wish I had ten thousand hats/ and made a lot of money." (75) The rubber

hat, then, is the ability to play roles, adapting to various situations. But it is accomplished through deception: the rubber hat is preserved and hidden "in a can". Burke, Malkoff, and others have also adequately explored the sexual implications in the hat kept in a can.

The protagonist, however, is entirely unaware of the implications of this verse. The outside world, and its ego-ness, is funny, just as the whole concept of adult sexuality and the desire of two to become one, recapturing the lost unity, can only be humorous to the unified infant. Ultimately all actions are humorous perceived from a nonchronological perspective. It is this perspective that gives Yeats' Chinamen in "Lapis Lazuli" eyes that are gay. An infant, however, does not arrive at this knowledge, he is this knowledge.

The change to a chronological orientation makes causal relations, makes necessity from data that happens to exist nearby, and makes games serious. The protagonist later desires and anticipates his growth and maturation into a mooly man with "ten thousand hats". What is crucial here is that what he here perceives as humorous, he will later take seriously, and in this seriousness the social identity (ego) and the individual identity (self) will become confused. Indeed the plot of Praise to the End! is in part the loss and reestablishment of a sense of self.



In "Where Knock", the self, that is so prominent in this sleep song, is not yet confused by chronological time and social necessities, but views the world from above, that is, within.

The state here is one of pre-conception: with fertilization chronological time takes over. "[I've] Boarded the train there's no getting off" says Sylvia Plath of pregnancy, and indeed there is a similar shocking introduction to chronological time in "Where Knock" when the protagonist meets his father; "What's the time, papa-seed?" (72). This introduction, in turn, begins the struggle for replacement of the father. "The self is present with 'father's penis in mother's womb'"<sup>7</sup> and it is here that the oedipal complex begins.

At least two implications are in the next line, "Everything has been twice", that conception has not yet erased the knowledge of the cyclic nature of time, and that this birth, this vision of awakening, is analogous to the literal conception of the protagonist. Father is then literally a fish, a sperm, and Christ. D.H. Lawrence:

In the beginning  
Jesus was called the Fish  
And in the end.

The cyclical nature of revelation, which later in Roethke's works becomes cumulative and spiral, here necessitates the multilayered terminology, multileveled symbols, and unification of seemingly different progressions - Christ, God,

the protagonist, man, and the life impulse are one.

I sing a small sing,  
My uncle's away,  
He's gone for always,  
I don't care either.

Although the child is separated from his actions here, as the subject verb structure indicates, there remains no distinction between verb and object, between action and result. There is yet no song separate from the singer, or the process of singing. But there is a distinction between the song of the self and the world outside, and this distinction between elements and beings is prerequisite to the development of the concept of good and evil. And in the next lines good and evil come into being, the evil to be spurned and the good to be incorporated. The uncle, who in Roethke's own past, was thought to be the cause of the downfall of the greenhouse empire and all the financial problems of Roethke's youth, is here associated with the fallen Lucifer, expelled from heaven and thrown into a newly created hell. The "I don't care either" (72), emphasizing the childish ability to separate his own needs from the adults who do not provide for them, marks the beginning of the separation of heaven and hell in the mind of the protagonist, a separation which eventually will have to be resolved and encompassed.

I know her noise,  
Her neck has kittens,  
I'll make a hole for her.  
In the fire.

(72)



All that is productive and good is associated with "Her"; "Her neck has kittens" (72) is accurate baby shorthand for "her voice purrs". It is also a procreative image, and for her softness, warmth, and maternal associations she is welcomed into the as yet undifferentiated seat of the passions. He does not "love" her, but makes a place for her, he does not reach out, but brings her into him, a proper image for the infantile incorporative stage.

From these contraries come progression. The movement in Part 2, the growth of awareness, can be seen in two factors; (1) the change from present to past tense, from undifferentiated time to specific measurements: "I sing a small sing" becomes "I sang I sang all day" (72), and (2) the growth of awareness of the visionary nature of the whole scene, from "My uncle's away" to "It was and it wasn't her there". The unity of vision diminished, the distinctions between good and evil grow, and the awareness of time increases.

Time brings awareness of causality, a causality that may be inaccurate: Two objects seen together are related in the mind. The owl, of section 4, therefore, causes darkness because he appears with the darkness. "I know it's an owl. He's making it darker." (72) Knock is still open wide in the mind of the protagonist, but because he is applying his kind of knowledge to a disunited universe, he relates data which have no basis for



relationship.

The owl, furthermore, like the darkness it brings, is considered predatory, and is warned to avoid the protagonist: "Eat where you're at. I'm not a mouse." (72) Because of his very newness he should be exempt from this predatory world. Like the world at its formation, "Some stones are still warm." (72) Although the image is also related to the unformed bones of the protagonist, his bones and the stones of the earth are the same. And he feels he deserves the comfort of "soft paws" (as opposed to the claws of the owl).

In his defenselessness, he is out of place in the world in which he finds himself; "Maybe I'm lost/ Or asleep." A mistake or a bad dream. Here begins the lostness, the direction that will culminate in the second part of the sequence, "The Lost Son". The protagonist is made aware that he is not a part of the world, indeed that part of the world may be against him.

The prayer of section 3, the second verse, is one of necessity.

A worm has a mouth.  
Who keeps me last?  
Fish me out.  
Please.

(72)

If he is "kept last", not allowed to develop in the world, he will be destroyed. Another stage in fetal development is anticipated: the development of individual organs and

individual controls of environment. Like a worm (and looking like a worm in his foetal stage) he needs a mouth to have intake, since he is no longer a part of the food he eats. Therefore he asks to be fished out, to be rescued from the stage in which he finds himself, to become a fish, a more developed, more self-supporting being than he has been.

Michael Robartes, singing of the twelfth crescent of the moon, likens man to a worm. The similarity of the stage is so great it begs comparison:

The hero's crescent is the twelfth.  
 And yet, twice born, twice buried, grow he must,  
 Before the full moon, helpless as a worm,  
 The thirteenth moon but sets the soul at war  
 In its own being, and when that war's begun  
 There is no muscle in the arm; and after,  
 Under the frenzy of the fourteenth moon,  
 The soul begins to tremble into stillness,  
 To die into the labyrinth of itself.  
 ("The Phases of the Moon")

This is the first of many instances in which specific links between Roethke's sequences and Yeats' phases can be seen. Whether Roethke actually had his eye on Yeats' Vision or not, the sequence is very similar, and much of the imagery which will appear later is strikingly parallel.

The worm, who later becomes the snake, is also associated with Lucifer. His individuation, in Paradise Lost, is the cause of the fall, the individuation of man. His desire, his "mouth", is coveted by the protagonist. And this desire is related to the dissociation of the next

verse. The call to God, "...give me a near" (73), acknowledges the separation from God and is associated with the birth of knowledge ("I know! I know!" (73)), the sharpening of the senses ("I hear flowers"), and the awareness of self distinctions ("Hello, happy hands."). Related in part to the curse of Adam, labor, hands function throughout Roethke's works as symbols of social identities. Hands operate distinct from the rest of the body (as in "Orders for the Day": "Hands hard and veined all over,/ Perform your duties well," (7) and "The Lost Son", "I have married my hands to perpetual agitation,/ I run, I run to the whistle of money." (56)) in which hands and the making of money are linked. Sources from psychoanalysts are not necessary, furthermore, to document the development of the infant who discovers his hands, agents of the ego.

If section 3 is concerned with the fall of man and the separation of infant into id and ego, then section 4 recapitulates a lost unity and displays a growing knowledge of the implications of this fall. The narrative is one of lost unity, a fishing trip with the protagonist and his father, in which the protagonist was united with the environment, united with the fish, and united with the father. The association of the child with the fish is also analogous to the pre-natal development of the protagonist, because the fish has desires and needs which are easily fulfilled in the environment, but is constant-



ly in danger of more mobile, more developed creatures; for example, his father.

The unification of the senses in the first verses introduces the childlike sensibility. Phrases like "Stepped in wet" (73) rather than water which is wet, suggest here that the child does not link cause to effect, noun to verb to object, but melts verb, adjective, and object together. He is not distinct from his actions (I-stepped) nor is the water distinct from the feeling it gives to him. The blurring of distinctions can also be seen in the description of the stone which splits into stone and frog.

The next verse is a triumph of fish over predatory universe.

I was sad for a fish.  
Don't hit him on the boat, I said.  
Look at him puff. He's trying to talk.  
Papa threw him back.

(73)

Knowledge breeds power. The child wins a victory over the father by protecting the fish, by asserting its human desire. At this success, he affirms the power of the fish, and the child who has, by associating with it, saved it.

Bullheads have whiskers.  
And they bite.

(73)

If the father was a fish in section 1, the son has now begun to replace him. Inflicting pain through incorporation

will soon become a characteristic of his post-lapsarian state.

This personal memory is analogous to the biblical story, as well as another memory. The Father is a fisher of souls as well as the fish. The fish, the fisher, and I are one. And the identification soon becomes replacement which is equivalent to the biblical fall.

The florist, also God and father in the edenic greenhouse, is elegized in the fourth verse.

He watered the roses.  
 His thumb had a rainbow.  
 The stems said, Thank you.  
 Dark came early.

(73)

The interrelationship of the creator with the creations is idyllic, but the ominousness of the last line reveals the change. The protagonist was not one of the stems which said "thank you", and thus brought the darkness.

Because of this, the description is in the past tense, "That was before". The fall from unity, the replacement of the father which had occurred in the third section, is here acknowledged. Just as the implications of Milton's Adam and Eve's sin are only comprehended after a review of the deed and the subsequent awareness of time, "My tears are tired" reflects the retrogressive sorrow and the further dissociation of the protagonist.

In the biblical story the world is tilted at the fall and the seasons begin. Time begins in earnest, as a

race to stay alive. Unlike the beginning of time at conception (or creation) the beginning of time here signals the start of the quarrel between man and nature. "Nowhere is out. I saw the cold." (73) To be out of eden, to be out of the womb, is to be nowhere, to have no orientation in the universe. Conjunctively, to be out of the universe is to be at war with the environment. Here the war represented is a condensed version of Part II of Open House, particularly "The Coming of the Cold".

With this exclusion and division, comes the desire to transcend the quarrel. "Went to visit the wind./ Where the birds die" (73) is a spatial quest for transcendence, beyond the capabilities of mere fowl. The purpose? Complete fulfillment: "How high is have?" (73) ( Says Blake in "There Is No Natural Religion", "Less than all can not satisfy man."). Addressing God-father, he suggests becoming the emblem of incorporation, a bite, while the father becomes the emblem of permissiveness and obsequiousness: "I'll be a bite. You be a wink./ Sing the snake to sleep." (73) There will be no fall from unity, no evil, no snake, if the two reverse positions and the son incorporates the father. The oral stage, developed in "I Need, I Need", is therefore symbolic. A child puts everything into his mouth because he wants to reachieve the entropy he has just lost. The problem is, of course, that one cannot eat one's cake and have it too. The



replacement incorporation of father results automatically in the loss of father, and/or the loss of edenic closeness with God. Which brings us to section 5.

Kisses come back.  
I said to Papa;  
He was all whitey bones  
And skin like paper.  
(73)

The dead father, the alienated god, returns to be felt as an absence. The physical is horrifying when deserted by the spiritual, and because of this desertion time acquires a different meaning:

The evening came  
A long long time.  
(74)

Comparable in significance to O'Neill's title "Long Day's Journey Into Night", these two lines echo the whole modern dilemma of the purpose of life in a godless universe.

Profound though the realization may be, it cannot be acknowledged at this point if life is to continue. The social identity, the ego, does not permit awareness of so basic a loss.

I'm somebody else now.  
Don't tell my hands.  
(74)

"I" and external, functional identity are now separated, and the further development of the ego continues without this basic acknowledgement of the alienation of the self. The hunger for unity continues, but it is sublimated by the ego into more practical and less fulfilling pursuits.

"I Need, I Need" lacks the direct biblical references of "Where Knock" not because Roethke could not follow through with the plan, but because "I Need, I Need" illustrates a further step in the process of individuation, learning that all is not one in the universe, that "I" am unique, and then learning to relate to this "other", the world. Part one is concerned with the awareness of the "other", and the third part with the attempt to find a relationship with the "other".

The terrifying realization that he is not part of the universe which concluded "Where Knock" has led to a stage of symbolic incorporation, a stage which leads to inevitable difficulties. Although the world is conceived as a deep dish with all that is in it to be eaten, things manage to escape the self, "a sneeze can't sleep," (74). There is no immediate answer as to how to cope with this problem. The faucet, which also leaks, tells him nothing right away, although later the answer seems to come to him.

The drippy water  
Had nothing to say. (74)

Who else knows  
What water does? (76)

If all is not a part of me, then I may be made a part of something else, particularly a more encompassing spirit, "Do the dead bite?" (74). If it is Roethke's father who is meant here, then the lines, "A hat is a house./ I hid



in his" (75) reflect the father's social role of florist with which the child originally identified. But a psychoanalytical-biographical explanation is not necessary. The dead include all aspects of the past, tradition, social positions, etc., which form behavior. A temporary sanctuary against non-being, these traditions are stages which must be outgrown. In this context it is even possible to make a case for reading "house" as Open House.

The theme of part 2 is individuation through negation and identification, the fall from unity necessitating both steps. Nonsense rhymes in the section both conceal and reveal this growth of individuation.

Even steven all is less  
(75)

The division of the universe (into good and evil, me and not me, etc.), though into equal parts, makes it less than its sum. The separation into you-me makes me-good and you-evil. Given these equations it is easy to arrive at the next step - you-evil are against me-good. "I know you are my nemesis" (75), but nemesis implies that there is evil within me. Values are at best uncertain: "As you can see I guess I guess" (75).

To escape this dilemma one adopts a social mask, a superficial role which enables one to negate the opposite, to simplify the dilemma, and above all, to incorporate through power and money.



I wish I was a pifflebob  
 I wish I was a funny  
 I wish I had ten thousand hats,  
 And made a lot of money.  
 (75)

By the end of the section the protagonist has learned not only that the other cannot be incorporated, but that he must be rejected for the sake of order: "Not you I need" (75). The human being who has been created here is typically contemporary in his childlike mechanistic simplification and enforced isolation.

The double take, the vaudvillian "Stop the music", similar in theme to Open House's "Lull", brings the protagonist back from the extreme. The demonic personality, who has rejected both the "other" and the "sun" (pun for son, Son) returns:

The mind is quick to turn  
 Away from simple faith  
 To the cant and fury of  
 Fools who will never learn;  
 Reason embraces death,  
 While out of frightened eyes  
 Still stares the wish to love.  
 ("Lull", 31)

Awareness comes here in a rush:

Stop the larks. Can I have my heart back?  
 (76)

The human being must become human again. With this realization a downward movement begins, back to the earth. At first he is rejected for having alienated himself from his self and therefore the universe,

The ground cried my name:  
 Goodbye for being wrong.  
 (76)

But a gradual relationship begins between the feminine earth and the protagonist. Beginning with a magic ritual for the growth of crops in which the protagonist attempts to assert control over the earth, and over his body, to which the earth/body responds, a courtship develops:

Her feet said yes.  
 It was all hay.  
 (76)

Corresponding in history to the cultivation of earth by man, this episode is psychosexually a discovery of sexuality, the fertility of the self.

By a passive willingness to cooperate with the earth and his own body, the protagonist has passed through a stage, a gate, which would have been impossible had he remained rigid and uncooperative. The drippy faucet, then, did have the answer:

I said to the gate,  
 Who else knows  
 What water does?  
 Dew ate the fire.  
 (76)

But the "fire" of physical sexuality is not the central discovery. The infant in "Where Knock" speaks of another fire.

I'll make a hole for her.  
 In the fire.  
 (72)

This seems to refer to a more basic element of the self

than physical sexuality, and in the final passage from "I Need, I Need", it can be seen that a more basic fire, psychosexuality, is not extinguished but is found through the passive, waterlike state. Thus the knowledge comes after the sexual act that "another fire" exists, which "has roots" (76).

The copulation which begins "Bring the Day!", a copulation with the earth, with the mother (oedipal stage), discovers the very real danger of self-annihilation. To relate completely to anything else at this stage of identity-development risks the existence of the identity. Sudden claustrophobia follows:

Everything's closer. Is this a cage?  
(77)

The symbolic and sexual orgasm which follows, separating man from earth (again because of the coming of the cold), the child from fantasies of mother, and the searching protagonist from the depths of self, leaves the protagonist in a now acceptable because individual uncertainty.

Why is how I like it.  
(77)

The result of the planting is a new individual identity, symbolized as a tree which will continue to grow throughout the sequence.

When I stand, I'm almost a tree. (77)

Believe me, knot of gristle, I bleed like a tree;  
("Give Way, Ye Gates", 79)



You tree beginning to know,  
 ("Give Way, Ye Gates", 79)

The loss of self is equivalent to the planting of the seed. From this planting rises forth a tree which eventually takes on knowledge greater than itself. The awareness that passivity, loss of self, is necessary for the growth of the self, "Begin with the rock,/ End with water" (77), is itself a growth, and a further isolation from God and divine unity. The beckoning earth had asked, "How many angels do you know?" (77), and the protagonist now admits, "Hardly any old angels are around any more." (78).

In other words, the episode in "Bring the Day!" has brought the protagonist to the light side of the moon, objectivity. "The chill's gone from the moon." (77), he notes at the beginning of the poem, as if he were traveling through Yeats' Vision. And the parallel, so evident here, may be seen throughout the rest of the sequence. "Where Knock" begins on the dark side, emerging from complete subjectivity, and in "Sensibility! O La!" the protagonist emerges from darkness into "objectivity":

The light turns,  
 The moon still abides.  
 I hear you, alien of the moon  
 (82)

which is completed in "O Lull Me, Lull Me",

O my love's light as a duck  
 On a moon forgotten wave!  
 (83)

Whether Roethke had Yeats' phases in mind when he planned Praise To The End! is less significant than the fact that what is here perceived as progressive (escape from the moon cycle), as a growth of the individual, will soon become attached to a cyclical organization. Growing up is growing away from something to which one eventually must return. The cycle of the moon continues despite the protagonist's belief that he has transcended it, and despite the aggressivity of "Give Way, Ye Gates", the hopefulness of "Sensibility! O La!", and the euphoria of "O Lull Me, Lull Me", all the steps which take him forward also take him back.

"The Lost Son" sequence, originally included in The Lost Son and returned to that position in the Collected Poems, was placed in Praise to the End! when the latter was first published, and continued to be framed in that sequence until Roethke's death. For this reason it is generally discussed in the context of Praise to the End!. However, "The Lost Son" is a far more integral part of Praise to the End! than is usually recognized. At least part of what is lost in "The Lost Son" was there in "Where Knock" and it is necessary to comprehend the concept of cosmic unity of vision in "Where Knock" and the subtle inevitable way in which it is lost in order to understand the sudden terror which begins "The Lost Son". To say "I see what sings!" (O Lull Me, Lull Me (84)) is to revel in

the learned distinctions - to enjoy division, to enjoy the fall. There is something tentative and temporary in the peak of "O Lull Me, Lull Me" because these distinctions lacking the overall sense of unity lead to the complete isolation of the individual.

It is perhaps only this awareness that separates the last poem of the "What Knock" sequence, "O Lull Me, Lull Me", from the beginning of "The Lost Son". The horrified protagonist is marked by his isolation. Whatever it was that was singing in "O Lull Me, Lull Me" is now either painfully silent ("Voice, come out of the silence", (54)) or rejecting ("You will find no comfort here", (54)) and the hitherto joyful discovery is now horrifying. To learn that one is not a part of one's ancestors, at first lends the joy of independence to each action, but where does one go when he is not directed? "O Lull Me" thus concludes with the glorious awareness of the ground as another entity, the freedom of the feet from the earth, and the happy acknowledgement of simultaneous incompleteness, "I can't go leaping alone..." (84), "I'm an otter with only one nose..." (84). The Flight begins from this point: "At Woodlawn I heard the dead cry:" (53). The acknowledgement of others has resulted in an acknowledgement of death: a father cannot be understood to be dead until the son comprehends himself as a separate entity. The "lull me" thus becomes "I was lulled by the slamming



of iron" (53). And the awareness comes, after a passive waiting of two lines, that the otherness of nature equals the predatoriness of nature, freedom is isolation, singularity is nonentity, etc.

The nadir of identity, non-entity, is equated with death, and another part of the protagonist's terrified flight from Woodlawn is his refusal to accept non-being. Thus, despite the tomb-like atmosphere and the rejection by nature (All the leaves stuck out their tongues;" (53)), the speaker does not allow himself to shake "the softening chalk of my bones" (53), gathering his dissolving being together, and begins a search for home, for self.

Not having any particular identity, he is defined only by his particular actions. Verbs, therefore, are not preceded by nouns, which are at first in the past tense, "Fished", "Sat" (53), and then active and continuous, "Running", "Hunting" (54). This is the other side of the mythic; universal significance is achieved by the incorporation of collective mythologies or by universal nonentity. At this level no one is individualized and is therefore everyone.

The tenses of the verbs correspond to the ability of the protagonist to act. At first there is only a passive, aimless waiting. The protagonist sits "in an empty house" (53), a non being. (Identity has been continuously defined in terms of houses, as in "Where Knock",