

## Chapter IV: The Search for Love

...the I-am experience is not in itself the solution to a person's problems: it is rather the precondition for their solution....In the broad-sense it is a relation to one's self and one's world, an experience of one's own existence (including one's own identity), which is prerequisite for the working through of specific problems.

Rollo May, Existence<sup>1</sup>

For the inmost growth of the self is not accomplished, as people suppose today, in man's relation to himself, but in the relation between one and the other, between men, that is, preeminently in the mutuality of the making present - in the making present of another self and the knowledge that one is made present in his own self by the other - together with the mutuality of acceptance, of affirmation and confirmation.

Martin Buber, "Distance and Relation"<sup>2</sup>

Once she is man's equal woman cannot be man's goal. Yet at the same time she is spared the bestial abasement that sooner or later must be the price of divinizing such a creature. But her equality is not to be understood in the contemporary sense of giving rise to rights. It belongs to the mystery of love. It is but the sign and evidence of the victory of Agape over Eros. For a truly natural love exacts and creates the equality of those loving one another. God showed his love for man by exacting that man should be holy even as God is holy.

Denis de Rougement, Passion and Society<sup>3</sup>

The Waking and Words for the Wind have not been considered as unified and progressional works, and with reason. The Lost Son and Praise to the End! trace a linear development of the self, and even when the details cannot be comprehended, the general patterns of progression are clear. The "progression" in The Waking and

Words for the Wind is far less clear, if only because there are ready made chronologues of the self - Jung, Freud, etc., for the earlier books to be matched up with, whereas the later development has yet to be pieced together by any academician in as complete and unique a fashion as Roethke has provided. But there is a development, a very basic and crucial development in any consideration of modern man.

To introduce this progression, it is useful to compare the latter two books with the former, since these later works are based upon the momentum and direction of the earlier ones. Thus, if The Lost Son and Praise to the End! trace the evolution of life from plant to animal, then The Waking and Words for the Wind continue the evolutionary process from animal to man, from profane man to holy man. Concomitantly if The Lost Son and Praise to the End! record the schizophrenic journey into the self and out, the latter two books take the self out into a greater and greater environment, eventually encompassing all creation. If The Lost Son and Praise to the End! register the struggle to be born, The Waking and Words for the Wind record the struggle to become something more.

Existential psychoanalysis provides some of the tools with which the early stages of the progress out of the self can be analyzed. Their definition of the experience of the self in the world (Mitwelt) is particularly useful

at this point, and helps to explain much of The Waking.

The Mitwelt is the world of interrelationships with human beings. But it is not to be confused with "the influence of the group upon the individual", or "the collective mind", or the various forms of "social determinism". The distinctive quality of Mitwelt can be seen when we note the difference between a herd of animals and a community of people. ...In a group of human beings...a...complex interaction goes on, with the meaning of the others in the group partly determined by one's own relation to them. Strictly speaking, we should say animals have an environment, human beings have a world. For world includes the structure of meaning which is designed by the interrelationship of the persons in it. Thus the meaning of the group for me depends in part upon how I put myself into it. And thus, also, love can never be understood on a purely biological level, but depends upon such factors as personal decision and commitment to the other person.<sup>4</sup>

The discovery of Mitwelt is the subject of The Waking and the early sections of Words for the Wind: these works methodically explore the limits of individual existence in the world of man. "The Visitant" seems to begin where "O, Thou Opening, O" leaves off, with a passive waiting for something more than self involvement, and leads eventually to the transcendence of the limitations of individual existence in "Meditations of an Old Woman".

One might well compare "The Visitant" with Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans Merci": in both a mysterious lady symbolizing artistic inspiration appears, disappears, and leaves the hero to wake alone in the world of nature. Keats' knight, however, is bereft; the discrepancy between

reality and the imagination is too great for him to bear. Roethke's protagonist is afforded an opportunity for insight and affirmation.

The spirit moves,

.....  
 Moves, like the snail,  
 Still inward,  
 Taking and embracing its surroundings,  
 Never wishing itself away  
 Unafraid of what it.

("A Light Breather", 101)

The spirit here encompasses external reality and transforms it. Birds always sing if one wills it.

This is a fine theory, and useful when one deals with a world which can be manipulated to seem, at least, to be in tune with the self and the spirit. The absolute reality of death, however, changes the ability of the self to impose itself upon the world. "Elegy for Jane, My student, thrown by a horse", is noteworthy in this context for its contrast to "The Visitant" and "A Light Breather". Both describe a woman in the past tense, and, if the visitant may be considered the "spirit" in "A Light Breather", both women are fish and bird-like. Structurally, too, there is an important similarity between these poems; the narrator appears in the last section of each of these pieces, alone. The difference, however, is basic - one is a dream and the other is a real person.

The images of fish and bird in "The Visitant" and "A Light Breather" are lent creative and spiritual con-

notations. The fish, here as elsewhere in Roethke's works, is an emblem of passive progression as it moves with the water, as well as an emblem of, if not Jesus, the creative religious forces in the universe. The bird is both spirit and song, the source of poetry. In "The Visitant" and "A Light Breather" these images help to build the impression that the vision is indeed a spiritual one - liquid, passive, beautiful. In "Elegy for Jane" the same images intensify individual human details of this student; "a sidelong, pickerel smile", "A wren, happy, tail into the wind" (102). The realness of Jane is the essence of the poem and is antithetical to the spirituality of the "visitant".

For the very human, unique girl who "When she was sad...cast herself down into such a pure depth,/ Even a father could not find her" (102), does not "stay" like the spirit. Not only was she sometimes isolated, but she has been isolated ultimately in death. Perhaps the most significant lines of the poem, thus, are the last five, which capture the speaker, alone, astounded at his separation from the girl, astounded that he can no longer have any effect upon her.

If only I could nudge you from this sleep,  
 My maimed darling, my skittery pigeon.  
 Over this damp grave I speak the words of my love:  
 I, with no rights in this matter,  
 Neither father nor lover.

(102)

The shock of the powerlessness over the ultimate isolation from others which concludes "Elegy for Jane" brings one to the extreme reaction of the old lady, who, since she cannot possess all, retreats from the world entirely. The passage of time and death limiting drastically the possibilities of man to "seize the world", the old woman desires to possess the future, to know the world of God, to transcend this false world which daily slips away from her. No longer capable of resisting the world of loss as she could were she a young man able to "roll in the dust of a fine rage" (104), she would prefer to disappear, to tune out. She is further isolated by the monologue genre, coming after a series of lyrics with an empathic speaker: No one is with this old lady.

The basic premise underlying the anger and bitterness of the old lady is that man's entire relationship to the world is concerned with possession or being possessed. If life does not belong to one, it does not exist. The spirit, which in "A Light Breather", "moves,/ Yet stays." (101), once confronted with loss and impotence, "hardens" (104) and makes impossible "that dance.../ That made [man] think the universe could hum" ("Four For Sir John Davies", 105).

If the creation of identity leads to the desire to incorporate all, and its inevitable failure follows with the withdrawal from existence, the world cannot "hum".

How then does the individual fit into the universe? The Dance attempts to recapture an interrelationship, to exist without "seizing". Borders between the self and others are relaxed. The value of the individual experience, the individual insight, is consciously de-emphasized:

I saw one [bear] slide  
Down a steep hillside on a cake of ice, -  
Or was that in a book?  
(105)

And the most misunderstood lines in Roethke's poetry should be read in this context, poetry being less an effort of the individual to surpass his peers, than a communal dance.

I take this cadence from a man named Yeats;  
I take it, and I give it back again:  
For other tunes and other wanton beats  
Have tossed my heart and fiddled through my brain.  
(105)

Community at this point, however, is limited to individual and word and/or animal, something that is alive, but cannot answer back. The protagonist does not dance with people, but bears and cadences.

The distinctive quality of Mitwelt can be seen when we note the difference between a herd of animals and a community of people. Howard Liddell has pointed out that for his sheep the "herd instinct consists of keeping the environment constant". Except in mating and suckling periods, a flock of collie dogs and children will do as well for the sheep providing such an environment is kept constant.<sup>4</sup>

Mating and suckling periods - the only times when it becomes necessary to become cognizant of the physical suitability of the other for the need to be fulfilled.

The Partner, concerned with the search for fulfillment, becomes the bridge from animal to human intercourse.

The relative freedom of this "animal" identity of The Dance must also not be overlooked. The speaker here, romping with the bears, rarely doing the same thing twice, having no teachers, is limited by the same freedoms. He is caged, uneducated, "though dancing needs a master" (105), and self conscious in his role as trained bear, "This animal remembering to be gay" (105). Perhaps by accident phylogony has here been recapitulated in ontogony. The speaker here is a more highly developed being than he was in Praise to the End!, but with the limitations of civilization placed upon him and the burden of development upon himself.

Trained to some extent by civilization but still animal in his desires, the protagonist of The Partner is faced with the need to "elevate" basic passion, or degrade to a physical level a noble, selfless wish: "Was I the servant of a sovereign wish,/ Or ladle rattling in an empty dish?" (105). But the underlying motivation soon ceases to matter: it is a mutual need, fulfilled mutually with "commingled feet" (106), the existence of death limiting the capabilities of man and necessitating interrelation. "The lively dead had taught us to be fond" (106) also refers to the inspirators of the poem, Davies, Donne, and Yeats, who gave direction, both poetically and

philosophically. The line length is similar to Davies, the cadence is Yeats', but more important, the whole concept of love as a stay against chaos belongs to all of these poets and countless others. And poets, like lovers, unite and share concepts, cadences, feelings, for a higher purpose. Roethke's vision of Yeats after he completed The Dance is far more a measure of Roethke's concept of the interrelationship of the poetic community than a proof of his reliance upon Yeats. Roethke explains, "At last I was somebody again. He, they, the poets dead - were with me."<sup>5</sup> The whole concept of community in poetry is identical to community in human relations.

Although Roethke's borrowing from Yeats has been discussed far too much, one particular point needs to be noted. Roethke's question, "Who can embrace the body of his fate?" (106), echoes, of course, A Vision in which the body of fate is defined as "the sum, not the unity of fact, fact as it affects a particular man."<sup>6</sup> At this stage the world rushes in, overburdening the protagonist with sensory data, and it is too much for him. Later he not only embraces, but transcends the body of fate, because fact becomes no longer individual.

The dance of the animals which follows, despite the lesson given by the protagonist, "...we live beyond/ Our outer skin.../ Do what the clumsy partner wants to do!" (106), is limited by animal comprehension. "The joy

outleaps the dog" (106). The human creatures, however, exceed the animals. Both worlds, the divine and animal, are partially open to the couple. Like Hamlet, they crawl between earth and heaven, like the old lady of "Old Lady's Winter Words", they are caught between the past and the future. Man, a moment in time, a fragment in space, cannot accept these limitations, and this indeed is what makes him human.

The spirit and the flesh cried out for more.  
 We two, together, on a darkening day  
 Took arms against our own obscurity.  
 (106)

And indeed these limitations are transcended in the act of union: The self is transcended, as is time, space, and matter.

The valley rocked beneath the granite hill;  
 Our souls looked forth, and the great day stood still.  
 (106)

The necessity of complete abandonment of the self is emphasized in the metaphor of feet. "Those but wanton to the knees" (106) cannot free themselves from the last ties with the known, from earth, from the self. The result of complete wantonness is "moonlight", a spiritualization of the earthbound.

In the final verse of the third section, the partner becomes the wraith: the pair at the sensual cry rise "to meet the moon," released from spatial binds. A part of the woman remains, the emblem of this attainment.

It was and was not she, a shape alone,  
 Impaled on light, and whirling slowly down.  
 (107)

The love between adorer and adored, between Beatrice and Dante, is clearly ideal, unrelated to the "visible", which "obscures".

All lovers live by longing, and endure:  
 Summon a vision and declare it pure.  
 (107)

Although it soon becomes apparent that in the love poems this summoned vision of love is a barrier to love, it is here the only means of transcendence. The spiritual purity of the union allows them to "rise from flesh to spirit", to end in light.

It is obviously inaccurate to consider this poem "inconclusive", as does, for example, Karl Malkoff. There is a clear movement toward the attainment of divine love from the physical. The difficulty with the poem is not that it is inconclusive, but that its principles are inoperable in any continuing exploration of love. Within the closed structure of a four part poem, the concept of nirvana through sexual union can work. As a sequence orgasm is impossible. The concluding lines, "The word outleaps the world, and light is all" (107) lead to a poetry of silence, equal to but opposite from the silence preceding Praise to the End!. Beyond words, not before words, and closer in significance to Smart's designation of "the seat of faith" than "Where Knock Is

Open Wide". Once again the yeatsian vision proves useful.

In discussing Phase 15, Aherne says:

All dreams of the soul  
End in a beautiful man's or woman's body.<sup>7</sup>

Phase 1, the dark side of the moon, the "pure plasticity", is opposite:

A beautiful man's or woman's body  
Ends in all dreams of the soul.

The ecstasy beyond words, the elevation beyond measure, is doomed. The final stanza begins: "The world is for the living. Who are they?" (107). And in this verse the couple actually is not among the living. But this sleep, this eclipse of self is part of a cycle, and waking is inevitable. One cannot be surprised, therefore, to turn the page and find the symbolic villanelle, "The Waking".

"The Waking" is one of the few poems which are announcements of states of being rather than descriptions of mental processes. The first, "The Adamant", announces the closed, impenetrable world of self. The second, "The Cycle", reveals the circular nature of all existence. "The Waking", less rigid in its experience, proclaims the closed cycle of becoming. Identity is not a state, but a process, and the first two verses announce this. The last four verses of the villanelle accept the different levels of being, as they rise and fall:

God bless the Ground! I shall walk softly there  
(Verse 3)

The lowly worm climbs up a winding stair  
(Verse 4)

.....take the lively air  
(Verse 5)

What falls away is always. And is near  
(Verse 6)

A testament of acceptance, differing from "The Cycle" in the voluntary involvement of the self in the process of becoming. In "The Cycle" the process is described in nature, with an implied human correspondence. The cycle here is not only human, but individual, unique; the speaker emphasizing his own necessity: "I learn by going where I have to go" (108).

"The Waking" also accepts the state of subjectivity and its loss. "What falls away is always. And is near." is also a reference to the primordial powers which can be tapped, even if they cannot be regained, for the creation of a different kind of poetry than "The Lost Son".

If The Waking is seen as the growth of acceptance of the uniqueness of the "I" in relationship to the world, Words for the Wind attempts to find a viable relationship - one that is not subjective, incorporative, or based upon the purely ideal. In each section, "Lighter Poems", "Love Poems", "Voices and Creatures", "The Dying Man", and "Meditations of an Old Woman", there is the same kind of progression we have seen in the earlier works. Roethke's remark on "The Lost Son" is equally applicable here;

"There is a perpetual slipping-back, then a going-forward; but there is some progress." <sup>8</sup> This movement is particularly evident here. The five sections overlap, slipping backward and moving forward, but it is clear that they are all a part of the same progress, the attempt to locate the self in the world, beginning in nonsense and ending in vision.

Despite the obvious depth of the "nonsense rhymes" of Praise to the End! other Mother Goose imitations by Roethke are usually ignored. The "Lighter Pieces and Poems for Children" include only a few of Roethke's self portraits in nonsense which merit closer study. In the sequential context, there are three factors in particular which bear note: 1) The new persona, irreverent and independent, 2) the movement in the seven poems from independence to solipsism, 3) the concern for self identity within the context of society. It is perhaps not as necessary to consider the poems in depth, but their tone and progression deserve further study.

Of the seven poems in "Lighter Pieces", the metaphor for the self in "Song for the Squeeze-box" is perhaps the most accessible to a modern audience: The speaker immediately establishes himself as a non-literary, easy going, gangster of prohibition vintage.

It wasn't Ernest; it wasn't Scott -  
The boys I knew when I went to pot;  
(111)

By dissociating himself from traditional American writers - Hemingway and Fitzgerald, the poet identifies himself with the common man and the self appointed happy go lucky renegade from society. This rejection of the established literary society of rebellion in favor of a more individual more vital existence is very much in tune with Roethke the poet and Roethke the admirer of gangsters. Even when he was well established as a poet, Roethke seemed to enjoy the self image of the underworld conspirator, and there is more than a biographical relationship between gangster and poet. Seager astutely observes: "Poetry was akin to crime. Strange and unwelcome in middle-class America; the poet was a criminal. And since he was, he had better act like one."<sup>9</sup> Certainly by the time of Praise to the End! Roethke's particular brand of poetry was outside of the laws, undermining basic institutions of poetry and psychology, stealing away security. But one may go even further in this analogy. Jung notes: "A true criminal becomes a popular figure because he unburdens in no small degree the consciences of his fellow men, for now they know once more where evil is to be found."<sup>10</sup> The collective nature of criminality, more accusing in "Dinky", is here humorous and grandly inclusive. The poet is willing to relate the sins of his youth - because they are common cliches - yet he himself accepts responsibility.

The representative isolatto, only partly isolated

because only criminal in jest, sets the tone for the lighter pieces. The tone having been set, "Reply to a Lady Editor" continues it on a literary plane. The speaker, as lusty as the cupid he describes, cuts through the implied genteel portrait of Alice S. Morris and shows her that a human being is really involved in the creation of art, a human being concerned with sex and money (both lowly sub-literary pursuits) as well as with the dynamics of poetry. Unlike the previous poem, "Song for the Squeeze Box", however, a slight note of accusation, albeit modified by the humorous tone, has crept in.

O print it, my dear, do publish it, yes.  
That ladies their true natures never suppress,  
(113)

The poet, with his superior uninhibited knowledge of "true natures", accepts his responsibility as scapegoat, but desires also to teach the unenlightened. In "Dinky", however, the enemy is within, the poet accusing:

You're part of him; he's part of you  
You may be Dirty Dinky.  
(114)

The superior, accusing tone of the narrator shifts at this point. The narrator (who you may be) becomes the subject of the next poems. The Cow, The Snake, The Sloth, and The Bear are more and more superior, noncommunicative, idiosyncratic animals. The biologically superior cow is followed by the consciously deviant serpent who repels the company of others with its individualistic shrieking. The

Sloth is more idiosyncratic; he doesn't even shriek, but keeps a pregnant silence, "you just know he knows he knows" (116).

The limit to this amusing independence is reached when individuality is responsible for the death of another being. The attempt to communicate with the bear in "The Lady and the Bear" has no effect upon the bear; the necessity of his independent behavior disallows the bear freedom to change it. He must go "on fishing his way" (117).

It is interesting albeit ultimately inconclusive to compare Roethke's use of the bear here and in "Four For Sir John Davies". Certainly the bears exhibit similar behavior patterns - independence and joy. It is even possible to speculate that "The Lady and the Bear" is the other side of "Four For Sir John Davies", a humorous and more realistic look at a subject previously treated idealistically. In both poems the woman appears and disappears - one goes up to heaven and the other sinks. The second version may be the more likely, for in a sense in "Four For Sir John Davies", the woman herself is sacrificed to the ideal, despite her individual concern having lost herself to the protagonist's independence.

A similar situation is offered in the early love poems - the woman is sacrificed to the individuality of the protagonist. The title of the first poem, "The Dream", is

almost sufficient explanation in itself. It is the idea of love, and not the lover herself, which dominates the poems. Love in this sequence is first experienced as an emanation of the self, then an awareness of the existence of another human being, a subsequent fear of the loss of self in the other, and finally, a resolution, an acceptance of the separateness of other creatures. Most of these love poems, accessible except for the sequential significance, need be treated only briefly. Others, which mark a turning point, a conscious change of philosophy, such as "The Pure Fury", beg analysis, and must be treated more fully. The summary form then is not intended to explicate all the poems, or even their general significance, but only their sequential relevance.

The first love poems are quite clearly unified by similar image clusters, groups of images which reveal the progress of the protagonist very literally. "The Visitant" in The Waking first picks up these image clusters, although many of the images - stone, tree, fish, bird - appeared in earlier poems with slightly different connotations. The basic theme of "The Visitant", that if one is complete within the self, at one with the primordial, he will be rewarded with a transcendent vision which will not leave him bereft but renewed, is seen in the following lines:

Dearest tree, I said, may I rest here?  
 A ripple made a soft reply.  
 I waited, alert as a dog.  
 The leech clinging to the stone waited.  
 (100)

The tree is the fruit of the primordial world, now a sanctuary but once a representation of the corruption of the civilized world ("Double Feature") and the means for an entrance into the world of the higher forms of life ("Where Knock"). Nijinsky's image of himself saved from madness and evil by a tree was apparently never forgotten by Roethke.

Despite his desire to remain with the tree, the protagonist is reminded by the ripple in the water of the constant movement in life. Entirely out of control of his future changes, clinging leechlike to the chthonic unity of the "pit", wishing to move backward to the past, to wholeness, he awaits his vision.

In "The Dream", constant flexibility of motion in time and space is readily apparent. The "dream" of the lover is at one with the passive movement of life: "The water rippled, and she rippled on." (119) And the speaker allows himself to sound the depths of the water and test his freedom, the freedom of a stone, "I tossed a stone, and listened to its plunge" (120). The stability of the woman within the changeability of the world of time and space is a major feature: "She knew the grammar of least motion...", "She held her body steady in the

wind..." (120). Although it is the separateness of the speaker and his lover which allows her to bring him into a less certain realm than that of the stones, it is this feature which is potentially the source of danger:

She turned the field into a glittering sea;  
 I played in flame and water like a boy  
 And I swayed out beyond the white seafoam;  
 Like a wet log, I sang within a flame.  
 In that last while, eternity's confine,  
 I came to love, I came into my own.  
 (120)

The field-sea, which becomes a controlling image in Roethke's later verse, is introduced here. The field is used to represent external reality, Mitwelt, a traditional symbol since Langland's Piers Plowman. The sea adds a dimension to the field, wholeness and richness, annihilating individuality. But the field-sea is barely significant here. The speaker is involved in the flame of love and water of the sea, and thus avoids becoming enveloped by either flame or water. Yet the image of the "wet log" is fraught with danger. It suggests that the "tree" has been cut off from its source of life, and, although it has the freedom of driftwood, it will eventually be consumed. For how long can a log remain wet, in a simulation of life? When will the individual be

consumed by love or the world into which love has brought him? "The Dream" thus concludes paradoxically: Although close to destruction, the speaker proclaims, "I came into my own" (120) because he retains a child-like belief that love is the fulfillment and extension of life.

"All the Earth, All the Air" begins with this conclusion from "The Dream". Love is a further step in the individuation process:

I am!  
 A man rich as a cat,  
 A cat in the fork of a tree,  
 (121)

This exuberance releases a response to the other person as a separate being:

When, easy as a beast,  
 She steps along the street,  
 I start to leave myself.  
 (121)

Thus, although the lover is not quite a human being, she begins the process of release of the speaker from himself, and bestows a simultaneous incorporative power of the world into self, "The field is mine! is mine!" (122).

Although the freedom from self will soon become the enslavement to love, a midpoint between the two dangers is reached in "Words for the Wind", where neither of the magnetic fields have power over the self. Wind and motion, in opposition to the stone and motionlessness, become in "Words for the Wind" the key to the growth of freedom. In Part I, the protagonist is motionless, "She wandered;

I did not" (123), but as he remains with her, "...a garden stone/ Slowly became the moon" (123). Both his vision of her ("That woman I saw in a stone", 123) and his own identity have been linked to the mineral, the motionless; but it becomes linked to the wind and the moon, the cycle which allows him to move away from subjectivity and the stone's existence, and the inspiring wind of freedom. In Part I, the wind functions as a reminder, the carrier of a call to which the speaker cannot yet respond:

The wind creaks slowly by;  
 Out of a nestling's beak  
 Comes a tremulous cry  
 I cannot answer back;  
 (123)

But by the second part, the speaker accepts these symbols:

I walk with the wind  
 .....  
 Under the rising moon;  
 I smile, no mineral man;  
 (124)

The woman, "pleased to meet the moon" (124), also takes part in this growth, and provides the essential strength for the protagonist.

By Part III, the protagonist is "A step beyond/ the wind," and free in the wind, no longer in need of the gust of inspiration or the aid of direction, and able to proclaim, "I'm odd and full of love" (125). Whereas in "I Need, I Need", the protagonist mourned, "Even Steven all is less" (75), and has found in the beginning of "Words for the Wind" a return to the balance through love,

"All's even with the odd" (123), he has by Part III, again lost the unity of love, but gratefully so: freedom is now welcomed.

Throughout the poem, the woman has been linked to the tree, in a comparison with nature and the wholeness and protection it has provided. In the beginning she is "sweeter than a tree" (123). When the speaker asks early in the poem, "Are flower and seed the same?" (123), recalling the seed of "The Pit" and "Where Knock" and the experience of birth there, and comparing the love and the lover to the natural world, the flower, he comes later to answer:

The breath of a long root  
 The shy perimeter  
 Of the unfolding rose,  
 The green, the altered leaf,  
 The oyster's weeping foot,  
 And the incipient star -  
 Are part of what she is.  
 She wakes the ends of life.  
 (125)

Since she encompasses all of life: flower, stem, leaf, and root, as well as both aspects of the protagonist, the closed oyster and the potential transcendence, her love is no loss of self, but an expansion of it. Therefore the "freedom" of the wind is given to her. "A wind wreathes round a tree" (126), and the speaker's freedom to move becomes a voluntary orbit:

And I dance round and round,  
 A fond and foolish man,  
 And see and suffer myself

In another being, at last,  
(126)

Roethke's remarks in "On Identity" should be recalled:

It is paradoxical that a very sharp sense of the being, the identity of some other being - and in some instances, even an inanimate thing - brings a corresponding heightening of awareness of one's own self, and, even more mysteriously, in some instances, a feeling of the oneness of the universe.<sup>11</sup>

Karl Malkoff has compared this to Buber's "I-Thou" relationship in which "the individual's own full identity emerges in recognition of the self in another, of the self in the world."<sup>12</sup> There is certainly some movement toward this goal in the last line of "Words for the Wind". The other is not ideal, but human, a real, passionate earthly creature. However, the seeds of a fall are also here: for the other's major purpose seems to be to enhance the concept of self, and in the later poems this purpose makes love impossible and destructive.

Nevertheless, the recognition of the lover as a human being rather than a "dream", enables the earthly adoration of "I Knew A Woman", in which the protagonist parodies his former adulation in a mock pastoral. Not a dirty pun in which the real meaning is only known to a prurient few, the poem here attempts to incorporate both meanings: love is humorous, wanton, and romantic at the same time when it is not used to answer only needs for self fulfillment. The speaker can now laugh at his own limitations, at himself, as he could not in "For An

Amorous Lady" (OH) and can accept the greatness, the humanness of this love.

The next three poems, "The Voice", "She", and "The Other", bring the lovers closer together and distinguish the two individuals, until the two separate beings come into such close contact they must pretend to stare past one another to remain separate.

A child stares past a fire  
 With the same absent gaze:  
 I know her careless ways! -  
 Desire hides from desire  
 (130)

The purpose of individualizing the two lovers has been mistaken, for individuality has become the goal and destroys communion. "The Sententious Man" completes this direction bringing individualization through love to its ridiculous conclusion.

The proverbs of "The Sententious Man" collectively build up the philosophy which should respond to the problem avoided by the lovers in "The Other": how to retain the self and lose it in love.

Pride in fine lineaments precedes a fall (131)

A drunkard drinks, and belches in his drink;  
 Such ardor tames eternity, I think  
 (132)

Each one's himself, yet each one's everyone.  
 (132)

For water moves until it's purified,  
 And the weak bridegroom strengthens in his bride.  
 (132)

Both the tone and the neatness of the couplets put these fine solutions in question. The title, however, is the prime indication that the proverbs have limited value in the dilemma of identity. The first lines of "The Pure Fury", in this context, seem to be directed precisely against the conventional love that has developed in the first eight poems of the love sequence - a love that has developed the self despite the recognition of the other, and thus has only partially acknowledged existence of an external reality. "I'm tired of brooding on my neighbor's soul" (152) complains the sententious man. Others have become a bore, acknowledged only to be avoided, since they were only acknowledged initially because they helped to define the borders of the self. Individuation is a means to communication and transcendence; it is also a barrier. The former has been forgotten. Barriers of defense have been created, barriers which become the focus of existence.

"Stupor of knowledge lacking inwardness", the abrupt beginning of "The Pure Fury", is the turning point in the sequence. The suggestions of love as escape from the significant questions of meaning, suggestions which had appeared before and were avoided, are now faced in crisis. In "The Other", the protagonist complained of this and commented:

Aging, I sometimes weep,  
 Yet still laugh in my sleep  
 (130)