Chapter III
THE INTERIOR: AN INTIMATE VIEW

Stanley Kunitz, in his brief essay, "News of the Root," provides the groundwork for a critical appreciation of the greenhouse poems, which form the first section of *The Lost Son and Other Poems*. Of special value in this review is his observation on the imagery of the sequence: "For critical purposes the book needs to be examined as a whole: almost everything in it proliferates from a single root-cluster of images." The polarized pervasiveness of the imagery is very obvious in the entire book. The womb-grave dichotomy informs and unifies the work, and depending on the child's perspective, generates and resolves the poetic tension. It operates as a complex symbolism that reveals the progression and regression, the renewal and relapse, the dynamism and stasis, and love and revulsion of the child-protagonist's self. There are two kinds of regression: (1) the adult poet regresses to the greenhouse of his childhood, (2) the poet's self undergoes a further backslide into the collective unconscious in the re-living, through memory, of the child's experiences.

The movement of the sequence as a whole parallels the archetypal pattern of ascent and descent, although the rendering is not always spatial. Jarold Ramsey is the first prominent critic to perceive the cyclical structure of the work. He contends persuasively: "Its movement is cyclic as the poet's psyche attends to the organic 'goings on' in the forcing house, the carnation house, and elsewhere, it moves in clearly defined cycles of ascent and decline, bloom and wilt and bloom again." Even individual poems act out the spiral
dynamic of the self as they reflect the poet's ambivalence which indicates the possibility of conflicting interpretations of reality.

Dennis E. Brown refers to the polarity of the imagery while discussing the interaction between the self and nature in the Greenhouse poems:

The walls surrounding the traditional self have already begun to crumble: there is a new awareness of the reality of the modernist position—partly signalled by the influences of Bergson, Freud, and Jung. The resulting flux of interaction between self and nature is expressed either in terms of empathetic gusto or in terms of disgust and nausea where the interpenetrating of spheres may be expressed as a mutual rape.\(^3\)

A consideration of three poems in which the poet focuses on the agony of coming forth into life will illustrate the vacillation between empathy and withdrawal, between exultation and revulsion. In “Cuttings (later)” (\textit{CP} 35) the bare beginning of life presented by the sprouting of cut-stems fuses the subject and the object:

\begin{verbatim}
I can hear, underground, that sucking and sobbing,
In my veins, in my bones I feel it,—
The small waters seeping upward,
The tight grains parting at last
When sprouts break out,
Slippery as fish,
I quail, lean to beginnings, sheath-wet.
\end{verbatim}
The struggling plant symbolises the self’s renewal, the spiritual birth of the observer. In “Root Cellar” (CP 36) also there is the same tenacity and persistence to survive against the threats of non-being: “Nothing would sleep in that cellar, dank as a ditch, / Bulbs broke out of boxes hunting for chinks in the dark.” This time the child feels disgusted and not elevated by the heroic striving of the plants.

Shoots dangled and drooped,
Lolling obscenely from mildewed crates,
Hung down long yellow evil necks, like tropical snakes
And what a congress of stinks!

The difference in perspective is both spatial and spiritual. Tenacious self-survival on the ground elicits admiration; underground it causes recoiling in disgust. “Flower Dump” (CP 41) presents a bleak picture: on the top of a heap of rotting flowers, he sees “But one tulip . . . / One swaggering head / over the dying, the newly dead.” Here we find neither abhorrence nor admiration. The co-existence of life and death, of decaying organic matter and straining frail plants enlightens rather than horrifies the observer. Hence the tranquil mood remains undisturbed. An examination of these poems would prove that there is growth and that it is cyclical.

The interior movement of the individual poems deserves attention. Its direction parallels that of the dialectic of the sequence. However, the child-observer’s conflicting attitudes to the marvellous spectacles in the greenhouse have to be related to the mechanics of regression before we take up the poems for a close analysis. Sometimes he reaches out in empathy; at
other times, he backslides in fear and disgust. The first stirrings of life in the cut stems quicken the child’s spirit; the chaos or the mire from where they emerge nauseates him. Life once asserted is beautiful; its fiercest struggle before it finds release into light is odious. Kenneth Burke speaks of “submergence . . . envagination as home-coming.” The thrusting of the stems into the soil is emblematic of the act of procreation. The soil is the womb, the most secure home conceivable. If growth involves alienation from home, as Wordsworth believes, regression through memory takes us back home. But the boy’s first glimpse of the home repels him. It is like the haunted house in “Feud” (CP 4). Therefore, he stops short of entering it. In the present stage of the child’s growth, life can be accepted only when it differentiates itself into a visible, distinguishable form, and rises above the muck and the loll. In other words, the womb is indistinguishable from the grave.

In terms of psychology, regression can reach the earliest phases of phylogenetic infancy, where, as in “Weed Puller” life may be seen to emanate from dead organic matter. “River Incident” (CP 47) which occurs in section three of the present volume points to the possibility of such extreme forms of regression. This kind of plunge into the abyss is fraught with perils as Roethke indicates: “To begin from the depths and come out—that is difficult; for few know where the depths are or can recognize them; or, if they do, are afraid.” Roethke refers in the title poem of the first volume Open House to the need for being naked. He has to divest himself of the encrustations of civilization to achieve the primal, primitive simplicity and innocence. The sensed kinship
with the minimals can be acknowledged only then. Reference has already been made to the implications of "The Bat" (*CP 15*). The human status in that poem appears as a garment worn by the self: "Something is amiss or out of place / when mice with wings can wear a human face." Thus, the images of the womb, home, and clothing coalesce in the poetic of regression. Allan Seager records the strange behaviour of the poet during the period when he was at work on these poems:

> On days when he was not teaching, he moped around Shingle Cottage alone, scribbling lines in his notebooks. Sometimes, he told me, drinking a lot as a deliberate stimulus (later he came to see alcohol as a depressant and used to curb his manic states), popping out of his clothes, wandering around the cottage naked for a while, then dressing slowly, four or five times a day. There are complex 'birthday-suit' meanings here, the ritual of starting clean like a baby, casting one's skin like a snake, and then donning the skin again. It was not exhibitionism. No one saw. It was all a kind of magic.

Removing of the clothes is a symbolic act signifying the abnegation of the last vestige of civilization, the purgative process preceding baptism in primal waters. It also calls attention to the nature of the conflict found in the poetry; it is evolution versus regression, civilization versus premitivism, the human versus the subhuman. W. D. Snodgrass notices an attempt on Roethke's part "to lose his large human form in an identity with small forms." Another kind of tension sometimes creeps up from his attachment to the human form when
the spirit hankers for oneness with the subhuman. The womb-grave dichotomy objectifies both these conflicts: the temporal oscillations and the attitude towards home.

In “Cuttings” (CP 35) the child-observer marvels at the quickening of the cuttings, at the barely perceptible, frail pulses of life. The concentration is on the “invincible becoming,” and not on “the intricate tracery of a leaf, or the blazonry of the completed flower.” The poem is cited entire:

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;

One nub of growth

Nudges a sand-crumb loose,

Pokes through a musty sheath,

Its pale tendrilous horn.

Despite the suppression of “all possible human implications,” the reader senses a corresponding awakening of the observer’s spirit. The steady gaze on the striving plant as it reaches outward from under the soil-crust suggests the human presence. Roethke has little hesitation in affirming the analogy although the affirmation is not explicit. There is a vague hint at the opposition between the infant and the womb in the third line describing water being drawn up from the earth: the infant fascinates the observer, but the subterranean realm, which nourishes the infant, is abhorred. In this poem,
however, the poet's gaze does not go beyond the phase of infancy into that
dark, mysterious region of origins.

The first thing we notice in "Cuttings (later)" (CP 35) is a clear shift from an objective, detached observation to an internalization of the phenomenon described. The empathetic oneness, which the child-poet experiences, results in the breakdown of the barrier between the subject and the object. In the first poem the poet's eyes are fastened on the frail, striving sapling. In the second they are turned inward. "Cuttings (later)" opens with the poet's response to the miracle of growth:

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?

In his view this glorious act of survival elevates the tiny plants to the status of saints. The paradoxical juxtaposition of survival and martyrdom, of life and death draws attention once again to the womb-grave dichotomy that operates throughout the Greenhouse sequence. What is significant in Roethke's paradigmatic comment is that despite his recognition of the borderline nature of the experience, he chooses to ignore the subterranean phase of the struggle. The first part of the poem, which serves as a paradigm for the internal drama, hints at an important prerequisite for renewal or resurrection. The metaphor of the saint emphasizes the need for willing acceptance of death as a precondition for the rejuvenation of the spirit. Death, here, is viewed not as physical annihilation, but as an extreme form of regression into
the grave which is also paradoxically the womb. The heroism of the plant is not just a reassertion of its being, but the sublime act of self-denial that precedes the struggle for rebirth. The implication for the poet is that he should undertake a dangerous voyage down the path of civilization and progression in search of the womb and gather from there enough nourishment for a triumphant return.

The second part is a dramatic rendering of the child-observer’s experience of absolute identification with the struggling plant. He feels within himself the frail, barely perceptible stirrings of life, which he first perceives in the cuttings. This experience of oneness involves regression. But it is to be noted that the backward journey stops at the threshold of the grave. In this poem the poet is wary of carrying his excursion beyond the grave, into the abyss. The images in the poem also, as John D. Boyd illustrates, refer to the poet’s regression:

... the sliding of the metaphorical images by which the plants are rendered, backward along the phylogenetic scale (or, more in keeping with the poem’s metaphor, downward along the chain of Being): from martyred saint, to sucking and sobbing infant (a “submerged” metaphor, literally and figuratively, in line 5), to poet’s conscious design or not, conveys the idea of a psychological, perhaps, Jungian journey, one that provides the main organizational plan of the later and longer experimental sequences.

Roethke exploits the metaphoricity of language to embody the primeval nature of the experience. The last three lines of the poem substantiate the
point: "When sprouts break out / Slippery as fish, / I quail, lean to beginnings,
sheath-wet." The word "fish" fuses the plant and the poet, the observed and
the observer as its function is not merely figurative. Combined with wetness, it
suggests the starkly rudimentary, the bare, primal form of life. William
Meredith's comments on Roethke's aesthetics as revealed in this sequence of
poems seem to be specially relevant in this context: "Along with the new
freedom of form in this book, perhaps underlying it, is a freedom of
association, an openness to metaphorical suggestion, and the fearful
possibility, entertained to the last moment, that an order inimical to man's
spirit might be discovered, or no order at all."11 The order is inimical because
it shakes us out of our complacency. It jeopardizes the socio-cultural
constructs that organize civilized life. As Roethke puts it in "The Bat" (CP 15),
"we are afraid of what our eyes have seen." The cardinal principle in his
aesthetics from this book onward seems to be the idea of association.

While analysing "Root Cellar" (CP 36), George Wolff posits an
emotional crisis in the poet's life to account for the images of enclosure in the
poem. It is their ambiguous, dualistic function that makes him resort to this
assumption. Sometimes they appear fecund and protective as a nest,
sometimes threatening as a grave. "... when the speaker sees himself as a
'lost son' who lacks a father-creator and who is 'to death devote', images of
threatening enclosure predominate; in the speaker's rare moments of thrust,
the container images become protective or fecund."12 Wolff's concern is
more with the manifold ramifications of the enclosure image than with the
womb-grave dichotomy. Hence, he relates the preponderance of these
images to the traumatic experiences of Roethke's childhood. In fact, the womb-grave-home symbolism underlies the aesthetic of the entire volume *The Lost Son and Other Poems* and determines the thematic as well as the structural development of the poems. This image-cluster will yield better results if linked to the poetic of regression. Roethke's ambivalent attitude to the marvel of growth and decay, which he finds in the greenhouse, accounts for the dichotomy. The duality reflects his frequent shifts between loathing and admiration for the vegetal dynamism.

Malkoff emphasizes the sexual suggestiveness of the images in the poem. "The obvious sexual implications of such poems as "Root Cellar" and "Orchids" should alert the reader to the Freudian possibilities of the entire sequence." The atmosphere of the poem, moist and hot, and the central theme, which is the emergence of new life out of the dead and the decaying, provide the context for such an interpretation. Malkoff says further: "... the shoots that dangle and droop, 'lolling obscenely', like snakes, clearly qualify as Freudian symbols." In a poem that openly deals with birth the suggestions of sexual fruitfulness cannot be ignored. It may especially be noted that the cellar with its lubricity and fertility is suggestive of the womb. The rich sensuous imagery, visual as well as tactile and olfactory, strengthens the case for a Freudian reading of the poem. Yet, focusing exclusively on the sexual implications has the effect of restricting the multi-layered complex of the poem's meanings.

It is difficult to determine the tone of the poem. It ranges between hatred and love. The living and the non-living not only co-exist and lie
interwined, but a distinct borderline cannot be fixed at all. The rotting roots and decaying stems are but inseparable from the bulbs “hunting for chinks in the dark.” It is so bewildering an experience that he is hard put to it to determine his attitude. He wonders whether he should praise the tenacious struggle of “everything” in this “dank ditch” to survive against the threats of extinction or loathe the nauseating pile of dirt. He cannot help extolling the rich fecundity of the moist cellar. Nor can he help condemning the disgusting process of decay. The opening line: “Nothing would sleep in that cellar, dank as a ditch” is evidently an expression of amazement at the remnants of plants struggling to remain alive. The line “And what a congress of stinks!” reveals his abhorrence.

“Weed Puller” deals overtly with the disturbing order that his regressive journey has brought him to confront. He shrinks back in horror at the perception of this order. As in the poems already discussed, paradox is the chief device employed to express the startling discovery. He helps his father by pulling out the weeds under the concrete benches. He finds his work amid the muck and the filth demeaning and degrading: “Tugging all day at perverse life: / The indignity of it!” He despises the ignominious job; he detests to work among “grubs and snails and sharp sticks.” At the same time, what arouses revulsion and sickness is a vaguely felt kinship with these lower forms of life. His elevated human status clashes with this affinity he feels with the subhuman. The paradox indicated at the beginning is that the weed puller is staggered by the discovery of a deep analogy between him on the one hand and the weeds and the repugnant minimals on the other. The last three lines
epitomize the central paradox: “Me down in that fetor of weeds, / Crawling on all fours, / Alive, in a slippery grave.” The physical act of crawling is an acknowledgement of the kinship. It is, also, symbolically an approximation towards the subhuman state. If crawling represents, as Malkoff points out, the foetus in the womb, the last line makes the paradox more complex. All this results in the fusion of the womb and the grave. “The word ‘grave’ at the close of this scene,” observes Louis L. Martz, “of primitive vigor and struggle, reminds us that death is never very far away in these scenes of growth; as in any vision of pastoral innocence, the strength of the life-giving imagery cannot be felt without the constant sense of struggle against some threatening, antagonistic force.” Although Roethke dwells on physical death in this sequence as in “Flower Dump” (CP 41), he is more concerned with the symbolic death caused by the intuitive glimpse of a primeval tie between him and those creatures of a lower order. Even in “Flower Dump” death does not have the finality usually associated with it. Out of this decay emerges new life.

This argument points to a new brand of romanticism noticed in the works of Theodore Roethke and Galway Kinnell. Nancy Lewis Tuten sums up the distinctive features of this version of romanticism:

Sensitive to the concerns of the modern individual and, at the same time, deeply rooted in the Emersonian tradition, Kinnell’s poetry illustrates a twentieth-century brand of romantic poetry that emphasizes humanity’s need to renew its kinship with the non-human. While the nineteenth century romantics looked in nature to discover a spiritual link which allowed them to transcend human limitations, the contemporary romantic insists that
individuals delve deeply into the quotidiant—especially into the
unavoidable physical realities of humanity—and come to terms
with mortality. Both Kinnell and Roethke urge this new kind of
romanticism, and their poetry expounds upon it by employing
similar images from the non-human world and by using the
journey motif to trace the individual’s efforts to find renewal
through regression to a primordial state.17

This passage underscores two important characteristics of the Greenhouse
poems, viz. (1) they present the protagonist’s endeavour to seek renewal of his
kinship with the non-human, the grubs, snails and worms; (2) the way
adopted for the re-discovery of this primordial link is that of regression.
Kinnell elaborates on this idea of a deep relationship between man and
nature:

We have to feel our own evolutionary roots, and know that we
belong to life in the same way as do the other animals and the
plants and stones . . . The real nature poem will not exclude man
and deal only with animals and plants and stones; it will be a
poem in which we men re-feel in ourselves our own deep
connection with all other beings, a connection deeper than
personality, a connection which resembles the attachment an
animal has for another animal.18

This romantic streak in the work helps explain the womb-grave dichotomy.
The character of the image mirrors Roethke’s response to “the disturbing
order.”
If the interior of the root cellar is repulsive, particularly the sight of the stinking mire and the rotting roots, the loathsome contents appear fascinating in “Forcing House” (CP 36). The poet’s breathless amazement comes out in a long sentence that constitutes the poem. If death and decay seem threatening in the previous poem, with the inseparability of the living from the disgusting inanimate, the protagonist marvels at the inter-relationship between the living and the non-living in the present poem. In this spectacle of growth,

All pulse with the knocking pipes
That drip and sweat,
Sweat and drip
Swelling the roots with steam and stench,
Shooting up lime and dung and ground bones.

In this reversal of perspective Roethke does not demarcate the muck from the revitalized plant which owes its life to it.

According to Rosemary Sullivan, Roethke views even orchids as “ruthless, vicious life.”

Behind a delicate pose, they are ‘devouring infants’, part of the Darwinian universe where the law of survival reduces even the loveliest natural growth to ‘Nature red in tooth and claw’. The closer one comes to the instinctive world, the more violent the urge to shy away from it. Sexuality drags the human being back into the sultry abyss and therefore Roethke rejects it as perverse and voracious, a degradation to the spirit.19
Obviously, Sullivan takes pains to account for Roethke's mystification of the orchids. The poet, she contends, witnesses violent, fierce, chaotic growth in the root cellar, and she attributes his withdrawal from this scene of horror to the sight of this relentless Darwinian struggle for survival. The orchids also represent the aggressive act of self-assertion. Hence he "shies away" from it. Then she brings in the libido to link the poet with this primordial struggle of the plants. A close reading of the sequence would prove both these postulates to be baseless. In the cuttings poems we notice no uneasiness in the child-poet as he gazes at the resurrection of the "cut stems." Nor does he betray any symptom of nausea when he watches "One swaggering head / Over the dying, the newly dead." Even in "Orchids" (CP 37) there is no suggestion that the poet shrinks back from the plants in disgust or horror. The images in the poem cumulatively emphasize the incipience of life. They are soft as reptiles; then limp and damp "as a young bird's tongue;" at night they look like infants; then their very physicality is doubted: "Lips neither dead nor alive, / Loose ghostly mouths / Breathing." Instead of progression, as John D. Boyd and Jay Parini have shown, we have here a sense of growing diminution in regard to the concrete, physical existence of the orchids. In the child's view they have not fully blossomed forth into life or clearly separated themselves from the rotten organic matter which is not explicitly mentioned in the poem. The poem does not spiritualize the orchids. They are reduced beyond infancy to the prenatal state. The opposition is between being alive and being more alive by attaining spirituality.

Two poems in the sequence deal with guilt. But indirectly they, too, form part of the dialectic of the protagonist's progress towards an acceptance
of nature through love and loathing. The dialectical play of the dominant images is also felt beneath the surface. In “Moss-gathering” (CP 38) the poet cuts out patches of moss from the earth’s surface and feels afterwards guilty of having “committed, against the whole scheme of life, a desecration.” The conflict is between primal simplicity and artificial culture. One of the consequences of man’s advancement in terms of civilization is his alienation from nature. When, as a dutiful son, Roethke helps his father by pulling off big chunks of moss, he represents the civilized man’s utilitarian attitude to nature. But the overwhelming remorse results from his awareness of the unbreakable tie between him and nature. He says in “On Identity:” “Everything that lives is holy. If the dead forebears can come to our aid in a quest for identity, so can the living and I mean all the living things, including the subhuman. This is not so much a naïve as a primitive attitude: animistic, maybe. . . .” 22 So in “Moss-Gathering,” he describes his feelings in the aftermath of the crime on nature:

And afterwards I always felt mean, jogging back over the
logging road,
As if I had broken the natural order of things in that
swampland;
Disturbed some rhythm, old and of vast importance,
By pulling off flesh from the living planet;

The problem with Roethke is that even when he regresses to the primeval state beyond the beginning of phylogeny, he sometimes carries over him traces of the encrustations left by the evolutionary process. Thus his responses to nature are governed by the degree of purification he has achieved. The
womb and the grave symbolize the two extremes between which he vacillates. Jenijoy La Belle refers the reader to Wordsworth’s “Nutting” which is also concerned with a similar experience. Wordsworth describes his deep sense of guilt:

Ere from the mutilated bower I turned
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky.

Despite La Belle’s brilliant argument a distinction needs to be made between the two poets’ attitude to nature.23 What Butterworth says in this regard is of considerable significance:

There has never been another western poet who has achieved the same kind of feeling of oneness with nature in his poetry that Roethke has. Thoreau’s Whitman’s, and their transcendentalist forbears’ sense of communion with nature is spiritual, in that all partake of godhead, and quite different from Roethke’s literal and concrete kinship.24

Wordsworth’s guilt arises from the sense of having defiled the spiritual presence that animates nature. But the implications, for Roethke, of this act of violation are different. It signifies the sundering of a primeval link that he has just begun to glimpse, between nature and him. This is painful. Roethke cannot do as his father does or would have him do. His father might “drown a bug in one spit of tobacco juice,” (CP 40) but if he tries to imitate his father, the result will be an unbearably deep sense of guilt.
In "Child On Top of a Greenhouse" (CP 41) the elevated position of the child contrasts with the spiritual relapse, and the sense of triumph and liberty with that of guilt and despair. The boy has escaped from "the fetor of weeds," and "the congress of stinks." The act of seeking release from the greenhouse amounts to a denial of his kinship with the minimals. Jay Parini observes an interpenetration of the subject and the object in the Greenhouse sequence: "Nature is not simply acted upon; it reacts, participating in the interplay of subject and object so crucial to romantic poetry." The child observes the reaction of the flowers and plants:

The wind blowing out the seat of my britches,
My feet crackling splinters of glass and dried putty,
The half-grown chrysanthemums starting up like accusers,
Up through the streaked glass, flashing with sunlight,
A few white clouds all rushing eastward,
A line of elms plunging and tossing like horses,
And everyone, everyone pointing up and shouting!

Roethke says what the greenhouse means to him: "They were to me, I realize now, both heaven and hell, a kind of tropics created in the savage climate of Michigan, where austere German Americans turned their love of order and their terrifying efficiency into something truly beautiful." Roethke is obviously referring to the womb-grave dichotomy. The greenhouse, the growing plants, the filth out of which life springs, appear repugnant to him at this point.
“Flower Dump” (*CP* 41) offers a resolution of the conflict. Once again, as in “Root Cellar,” the poet is bound to accept even decay as part of life:

Cannas shiny as slag,
Slug-soft stems,
Whole beds of bloom pitched on a pile,
Carnations, verbenas, cosmos,
Molds, weeds, dead leaves,
Turned-over roots
With bleached veins
Twined like fine hair
Each clump in the shape of a pot;
Everything limp
But one tulip on top,
One swaggering head
Over the dying, the newly dead.

The germination of a frail plant from a heap of rotting flowers, roots, and leaves does not horrify or sicken the poet. What the poet has learnt is that it is impossible to fix a distinctive borderline between the dead and the living. Thus the education, the process of maturation of the poet-child’s mind is completed here.

“Carnations” (*CP* 41) celebrates the equanimity that the poet has achieved. A mood of tranquillity and peace dominates in the poem. Here is the triumph of the daring adventures he has undertaken. The serenity and stasis we notice in this poem appear striking in view of the fatiguing,
harrowing experiences that the poet has undergone. It may be noted that it is
the absence of a verb in the last three lines that produces the sense of stasis:
“A crisp hyacinthine coolness, / Like that clear autumnal weather of eternity, /
The windless perpetual morning above a September cloud.” The terms
“eternity” and “perpetual” should alert us to the mystical nature of the
experience. These terms are not meant to be applied to the flowers he is
gazing at. What Roethke means seems to be that life is invincible, continuous,
and eternal. Individual flowers fade, fall and decay, but life will reappear in
new forms. Thus the sequence illustrates Roethke’s theory of cyclical
regeneration:

I believe that to go forward as a spiritual man it is necessary first to
going back. Any history of the psyche (or allegorical journey) is
bound to be a succession of experiences, similar, yet dissimilar.
There is a perpetual slipping back, then a going forward; but there
is some ‘progress’.”27
Notes


8 Kunitz 223.

9 Ramsey 40.


14 Malkoff 48.

15 Malkoff 52.


18 Qtd. in Nancy Lewis Tuten 139.


20 Boyd 419.


24 Qtd. in Nancy Lewis Tuten 139.

25 Parini 75.

26 Qtd. in Malkoff 63-64.

27 Theodore Roethke, Selected Prose 39.