

## THE EARLY PART OF THE WAR

The anarchist forced his rosary into the monk's ear, shattering  
the tympanum.

Little children singing nursery rhymes bobbed the nose  
of the Virgin Mary.

They burned the churches, women hitherto pious threw  
their beads and missals,  
Their candles, crucifixes and holy water receptacles,  
Pictures of saints, statues and pious reading into the flames  
Of communal fires, chanting revenge.

Atheistic revenge consisted of burning priests alive  
and burying them alive

And sisters and brothers and simply the pious  
Whose piety offended, who wore clean collars to the rich  
man's funeral,

And some were simply shot for daily communicants.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

AT THE VILLAGE GATE

The trembling of a lamp, the sentimental horn moans,  
A black bull of a man in a ruffled shirt offers his tenderness,  
His essential loneliness to the moon goddess.  
The subtle gray shadows orchestrate a splash of violins,  
A horn protests the shortening days, chewing the cud of melancholy.  
Rose leaves pressed in a novel, withering, lovely blood of thought,  
The wonderous winged stars drifting in their burning frames  
Are the silence of what might have been.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

THE TANG HORSE

Aiee! Blood sweated hands, each crisscrossed line singing with pain  
So I can hardly grasp the sword.

My hat lined with monkey fur is blood spattered, too, so much  
red paint.

The harlots have fled with the baggage.

We are at the Pass of the Black Jade.

The snow covers the corpses of young men and fallen horses  
covered with smoking entrails.

A man's hand clutches for his sword,  
The fingers frozen in a lover's knot.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

ASYLUM

The little gray mice leap from sack to sack in the cellar  
of the madhouse.

The mullato attendant with the little mustache declaims  
the fall of Lucifer

That beautiful morning, I scrub, I scrub

The sick excretions from the immaculate linoleum

With strong ammonia that makes me cry.

The faeces like little, bitter candies.

They go to work on another one, the face, the groin,

He is like a pulp before their white uniforms.

I must keep silent or they will <sup>find</sup> out about me,

Cross section of an eroded city or a blue world in vortex.

The silent spiked sun beyond the world and almost the orient -

The handsome blond belts me in the stomach

I bend double over the raop bucket and cough.

Cold, greasy water flows through the ringer.

Mickey Mouse is smiling through his tears.

I see him clearly.

The brown river gods are rolling cigarettes of broomstraw

And smoking; Mekong, Indus, Iriwaddy.

No matter, soon I will be running messages for the Heavenly  
Intelligence.

Röbert Joseph Rosenberg

## MUSEUM

A leaf descending like a bird, whirled into the snow.  
The chops and cuts of my silken yellow dog.  
A weed of frost, the sweat of crystal.  
My friend has become a silhouette of black felt,  
A clandestine valentine for dogs and birds!  
Once the laughing Roman maiden of golden hair sucked his white throat  
But she is, oh, no more, lust and dust swept under the hard cot  
And he is become a silence, keen as a stiletto,  
A dagger of the inmost mind where the old man and his wheezy horse  
Wearing gas masks emerge from the limestone cave  
And the woman with the many breasts is ugly again, sitting  
    on a red stool  
And the young lord reclines, concerned for his purity,  
    which is a vapid lie.  
After having betrayed his love, the entire company and the  
    sylvan star.  
  
The thin arm of the great, mad general, brandishing a flashing  
    cutlass  
Arrouses the brown horses to fly in battle  
Across the charging horde of the levantine desert.  
His arm wears a blue sleeve torn at the famished elbow,  
Sporting gold lace, imperious command to rise up,  
Ride again through the brown dust.  
Round, smooth creatures shaped like tiny blimps with grotesque  
    faces wait in roofless cellars.  
Two ruined china dolls with staring darklashed eyes recline,  
Their springs broken, their joints empty  
An angel will leave a silver ring set with four turquoises

MUSEUM (cont.)

for my mother.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

## THE LACKEY OF LOVE

The clatter of a leash of steel,  
The spokes revolve and tear the breast,  
Where were tears when tears were real  
And to love meant my heart's rest.

Whips lash from the harlot's breast,  
Painted eyes and hennaed hair,  
Borrowed love from Sister Pest  
Tears a good man down, arse bare.

Lechery's a hungry food,  
Flesh alone won't satisfy,  
Weary of what we knew was good  
Hungrily embrace the lie.

Putrid, as most corpses are,  
Who could love thy bitter jest,  
Who forgive thy crimson pride,  
Know the heart within thy breast.

Who could take thy hand with love,  
Kiss the tears away that run  
Like saliva from above  
That the wicked looms have spun.

Who embrace thy rotten waist,  
Tell thee thou wert all to him,  
Kiss the gelid lips that taste  
Carnal as the Devil's whim.

THE LACKEY OF LOVE (cont.)

Find me such, he would I find  
To forgive our fantasy,  
Our nightmare of the bitter mind  
We ate and knew twas sophistry.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

THE SHADOW OF THE WAR

The shadow of the war moved across the campuses,  
Dim death would cut down all our flowering,  
Would kill us wherever we hid,  
With foulest breath of machines would kill us all  
Death's fingers tear mother from child, spouses apart,  
And striding across the seas in a minute or two,  
Blasphemous or silent minion,  
Choke the song in the poor man's throat,  
Steal away the honeyed kisses, drown us in hot hysteria,  
So all men may be poorer, until our strength gone  
We whisper no more.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

LEWIS CARROL

Alice, adventure is for thee,  
Chess becomes monotony.  
Kitten-cat is very warm.,  
Sleep becomes thy little form.

All the jo of fantasy  
Dyes my little melody.  
String I my instrument  
At your consent.

Each episode is made and stands  
"Not the work of other hands",  
Men criticize and spoil my joy.  
I have made a children's toy.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

PREMONITION

The rain in silver cadenced streamers runs.

The brittle stars blaze in awful fear.

The end of all things, I await, is near.

Who walks down the thundering sea,

In beauty more ardent than the blazing sun?

The eagle in his eyrie waits,

In patient solitude I give my thanks

This peace will bring a blanket of the stars.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

JESUS, SAVIOUR OF OUR RACE

Jesus, Saviour of our race  
Can I look you in the face,  
Was your agony my own,  
Did you suffer all alone?  
John and Mary standing by  
While cruel men did you crucify  
And you conquered Hell and Death  
With your last forgiving breath.  
My poor soul too would he save  
Though I've been both fool and knave,  
Grant me Hope and Faith and Love,  
That are tidings from above.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

CURLY HAIRD CRIMINAL

As a mirror subtly distorts, the image shimmering upon silver,  
So your heart outfoxes itself in the pursuit of truth,  
For you are as a glass reflecting the Image without soul.  
The tattoo cross on the forearm escapes your perspective, hidden  
in the liquid of your soul.  
Curly haired criminal! Say rather this was an early Christian,  
And a martyred one, surely.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

TO TERPSICHORE

Terpsichore, you pleasure me  
Though I have never learned to dance/.  
Your fairy rythms of romance  
Are endless  
What set them all dancing  
So close, boy to girl?  
Gentility enhancing  
In the dances whirl.  
In a circle, couples or alone -  
King David danced before the throne of God,  
Some dance till they are overcome  
And Death dances with the crowd.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

## INNOCENCE

Children gay as little flowers dancing on the grass  
Under the smooth garment of Heaven  
Beyond the arrow of a river,  
Blue vein of a river, it's heart, mother the sea,  
  
In a circle round in bright colors they dance  
Beyond the bread of the woods and the dust of crossroads,  
What innocence is mine to have seen their sport!  
  
Soon they will disappear, leaving me alone,  
To wonder at so much gaiety

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

## GARDENS

June brought all life reincarnate again  
The spring rains had washed the winter gone  
And old leaves burnt in a magic flame  
As nature salted in our town.

The roses bloomed upon the branch of thorns  
Followed by daisys that adorn  
The walks of lovers and the corn  
Victorious and waiting to be shorn.

The crown of tulips first to blossom  
And flags we collected in our passion  
And strawberries so red and sweet  
Are spreading in the weeds the summer's heat,

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

A DREAM OF STALIN'S GHOST

Up from the grave rose Stalin's ghost  
And all the demons kissed his stole  
For he did betray the Sacred Host  
And learned men that had no soul

In form of gass, cloud he rose  
Like a balloon, treason to preach,  
To add to all the poor men's woes  
Revolt in deed and speech.

Those he claimed were marked for Hell,  
Those he insulted martyred.  
He claimed for his own the hypocrite swell,  
The treacherous and chicken hearted.

Like a stench in that graveyard dark  
He disappeared on his mission,  
To brand the lost sheep with fiendish mark  
And save them from the Christian.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

1965 (cont.)

At least a year's more peace I pray  
And let the old year wither away,  
Like fruit outward fair and sweet  
Attractive but poisonous to eat.  
I realize the whole shebang may be destroyed  
This is a time when we are all annoyed  
I, myself, do not wish to survive the act  
That revealed our sordid nightmare as a fact.  
I'll leave to others the sacred fire  
And join the general funeral pyre.  
For still the brittle game of death goes on,  
The battle of negotiations, the cuckold's crown  
And still the traitor casts his money down.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

MADHOUSE

If there is no Hell, whence comes this strength to destroy my life,  
Or was history invented in a madhouse?

I can well imagine God Omnipotent is there,  
He never ate nor slept and showed me his penis which was a black snake.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

## THE ASH TREE

The king he saw a beauty fine  
And wanted her for concubine.  
To clasp her round he's undertaking  
And take her to his castle quaking  
But up there sprang a hero bold  
And stole her from that dotard old  
and hid with her in a fairy wood  
And ate the ash berry for their food.

The king pursued in hot desire  
And for our hero in hot ire  
He sprang with his enchanted sword  
And killed the two without a word.  
Their blood spilled round the gray ash tree  
That had given them their privacy.

The king returned to his angry hill  
Lamenting oer so sad a kill  
For in his fiery jealousy  
He had foresaken sweet mercy.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

## BAPTISM

Take this candle, hold it in your hands.

Ascend like the Southern Cross

Across the broad seas of this world.

Take this Host, let it cleave to your palate,

This candle is Christ also.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY

Let us praise the Infant King  
Bread and wine to worship bring.  
Let us kneel upon the stone  
Before the Infant's marble throne.  
Worship here the baby King  
Whose hol praises ages sing.  
Our humble gifts to Heaven ascend  
Our sickness to heal and our faults to mend.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

THE SNOW IS DISAPPEARING

The snow is disappearing now  
Like troubles from a wrinkled brow,  
The road is full of holes and ruts,  
The squirrels are seeking hidden nuts,  
A bluejay saw I on a roof  
And take his rasping song as proof  
That soon my birthday will be here  
Because his voice is very near.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

## THE BAY OF WHALES

Each friendly whale, his great hide pulsing with blood  
Stands in the waves. Broken on the waves the ships  
Where we hurried to get undressed, destined to sink  
Under aerial bombardment. The rising sun of blood,  
Its bloody rays in sunset, the brassy flies in  
The tropic evening buzzing as we run to fulfill  
Our obligation As we run with our wounds open,  
Frothing a little at the mouth, drytongued remembering  
Our madness, remembering our ennui, suddenly like ice  
In our mouths. For old times sake we write.  
For old friends some of whom have become beautiful.

How fat you have become, Sara, who married a very black,  
Or several. How you are pretty You are tired of  
That old chauvinistic game, yet human life is at stake.  
Chop suey and tea under the great Ming Dynasty.  
I am recognized. Once I was in the dress business.  
A circus is appearing in the parking lot of the shopping center.  
Oilcloth flags are buttering the breeze.  
The stale clowns, the sexual acrobats. Even the endless elephants,  
Though pretty, are tiresome.  
How the children are roaring over their coloring books!  
Now I must really buy some neckties, with my inheritance,  
For the wedding. What have you to say to whales, fat and cherubic,  
The friend of children.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg