

Here are a few of my rather early poems.

SEMELE

Cretan Semele, your blood empurpled labyrinth is taken
And your not ill meaning hex is broken.
The Christian's legend was a lady's thread
Unravelled through thralled chambers of the dead.

Old goddess bitch we bring our brides to see,
Your voice when we have done with poetry.
Your heart when we have ceased to feel.
We will confess our sins with bread to heal.

Can I forget the guidance of your rule;
Lust, confusion, suspect guilt in school.
If I forgive you will it spare your host
Insanity or ennui or Holy Ghost?

To learn my life I lived with you awhile
In the bewitched kingdom of your faithless smile.
But I loved and I was loved
And despite our dealings my road was found.

So she will rule the sparing of the earth
Who quit the cross for the passion of her hearth
To save them for a mockery of heaven
From Hell's burning leaven.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

SLEEPING OUT

Stars bright as jewels
Swim in their schools.
Names old and bright
Glittering all night
Under the eaves of morning.

Cool breezes sweet
Lave at my feet,
Windows sparkle without sun.
Children disport
Natural as art
In the wings of the fountain of morning.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

MANDOLIN SONG

Play the mandolin awhile
And you will see your lady smile
And you will see her smile
Play with the rainbow.

Play the mandolin awhile,
Play it as well you may, my fond,
Until the teardrops start.

Zing went the zither
And it wasn't a broken string,
It was a teardrop.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

DEATH, MAD AND DRESSED IN BLACK

Death, mad and dressed in black
Hovered over the pews in church.
Silently, when the bells rang for transubstantiation
He disappeared altogether.

Who will he claim in place of me?
Who will we deck out in a coffin,
Weep for, kiss, and put away
Trying to think of something nice to say?

ROBERT JOSEPH ROSENBERG

A WOMAN'S HAND

A woman's hand is amorous, small and neat,
Her crowning glory is her hair,
Her humility, her feet.
Her tender heart will miss a beat
To have caught you in the snare
Of her charms so debonair.
Her eyes reflect man's sovereign gaze
And order all our childish ways.
Her lips form vows of perfect love
But seldom to the fruit of gave.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

THE SURREALIST

Begone planet, whirling dervish of a star,
Can't you disappear and leave us to the night?
The myriad stars, one for each beloved,
We'd see without your pious glare.
The pale, mysterious moon, we'd queen,
Whose resonant, harplike light fathoms our unbelief
And promises the cool peace of relief.

Begone exorcist, whose reason like a slide rule
Or carpenter's level, builds more and more insights.
I see and hear the demons come and go,
Leave us in peace to our magic show.

Words, words, each word a charm, a spell
To beget the passions that we know,
Like wonderful white horses in the foam
Or the inscrutable melody of a perfect poem.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

THE OLD MAN

The poor get in my blood and I would fain
Find faith and happiness and miracles again.
I cannot bear the strident voice
of vice. I make my choice
Of Virtue's Lady and my hopes and deed
Of Alms are hers. The seed
Of Truth has born its fruit in me
And I have practiced Charity.

The bad think of all things ill
Because it goes not to their will.
Our warmth they arrogantly chill
With decorous unbelief,
But Death, their master, like a thief
Will steal away their every thought
While I am praying, as I ought.

The good anticipate reward.
The bad end bad and they are bored
With their trite lines on their lying stage
While they claim for life they rage
Until in final senility
They have achieved an imobility
Whilst we gain Heaven, Grace and Love
From our true home, that is above.

THE COUPLE

Bedazzled by the pagan sun they stood upon the beach of Eve
And feared not death that havoc wrought
Nor for the sick nor wounded grieve
But felicitous rainbow sought
Who had won young love's reprieve.

They bedded down in honeysuckle by a tree,
The splayed lightning cracked around its crown.
They found amusement in a bewildered flea
While tide's tumult shook the waters down.

Who could join them? They are complete,
Correct, a unity short lodged of God,
Whose perfection of head and hands and feet
Is at evens, finding nothing odd.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

THE FLY

Fly upon Madonna's gown,
Do I see thee fret and frown?
"All is blackness here," I hear,
For the hem is black and dear.
"I do not like this art at all!"
It buzzed and flew across the hall.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

THE DAYS AHEAD

The days ahead are dangerous,
The days ahead are rude,
The days ahead are dog days, too,
Soaked in blood and brood.
The days ahead are numbered,
The days ahead are too few,
The days ahead are numbered
As the leaf upon the dew.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

AN IMAGINARY INDIA

The soldier's days like elephants pass
Building a temple of ivory time.
The elephant boy calls out the beat
And the elephant works like an ass.

The tiger years will disappear
After the hunt and the trembling spear,
The cold drinks in the pulsing shade
From a lady's slipper filled with fear.

Bwana Sun rules all the sky,
The fronds of the palm hang full as flesh,
The dancers bang on their tambourines
And rattle their bells to catch the eye.

The cobra kills, white plumed death
And the mongoose kills with fiery jaws
And the fakir sits in the sun and plays
With magic music, while the world draws breath.

The soldier dies on an evil day,
Letting the iron slip from his grasp,
Kissed at last with the final kiss
And sleeps away his retirement pay.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

PROVINCETOWN

An angel walking on the roof diminishes,
Frightens away the suicide's ghost.

The stationary stars scintillate in the black gel of the sky
Over the moonlit, racing sea full of cod speeding under the prows
Of fishing smacks, swishes around the piling of the wharves
And whispers an interminable nocturne, of art and love and pilgrimage.

In the doorway of the night I stand and eavesdrop on the dialogue
Of the actors of the Provincetown Theater.

When I was mad and ^{had} walked upon the beach

Together over the hardpacked sand from Haifa to Jaffa,
Sequestered by the booming surf, passed the tall minarets, the ruins
Of this orient town towards this love where the seas sweep
beneath the floor

And saw three ancient barques waiting in the sound,
Their patched red sails furled in the great dawn
Under the masonry of onrushing Heaven.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg

MANNEQUIN

Mannequin, your eyes are sudden blue.

You weep and I am weeping too.

Has divorce your beauty blighted?

The moth attacked your clothes?

Male mannequins must be cruel - -

Here is something for your nose.

Mannequin, you are an image,

A statue in your plumage,

With complexion soft as fruit.

Tell me, dear, am I the brute

That has caused two living tears to start

As raindrops on a rose that touch my heart.

Robert Joseph Rosenberg