



## CONFLICT OF ‘DAY’ AND ‘NIGHT’ IN ISAAC ROSENBERG’S POEMS<sup>1</sup>

### ISAAC ROSENBERG’İN ŐİİRLERİNDE ‘GÜN’ İLE ‘GECE’NİN MÜCADELESİ

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#### ABSTRACT

Isaac Rosenberg is an Anglo-Jewish poet who composed poems and drew sketches until he was killed in action in 1918. This paper concentrates on Rosenberg’s poems written before his poems about the war during the WWI in order to demonstrate a war poet’s disillusionment and melancholy can be traced prior to the destructive war experience with a social criticism in mind by referring to the poet’s poverty and Jewish origins. The paper focuses on the poetization of time in Rosenberg’s early poems. Thus, the study aims to analyze how time is perceived in such poems as “Present,” “Past Days are Hieroglyphs,” “In November” and “April Dawn” written between 1910 and 1915. To what extent the poems function as a purgatory place for soothing the alienation felt by the poet is another concern of the study. The poetic persona’s problematic relation to God in such poems as “God Made Blind” and “The Blind God” also underlines the poet’s concern of time. Consequently, although Rosenberg’s early poetry is an imitation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantics with its use of biblical language and idealization of nature, the poems as the products of his juvenilia pave the way for the complicated or multilayered imagery of his war poems and the emergence of a distinct voice out of imitation. The study concludes by suggesting that the essential force behind Rosenberg’s poetry, ‘melancholy’ does not derive from the poet’s bitter war experiences but from a speechless alienation/disintegration with the society he lives in, which leads him to a search for a ‘cosmopolitan sympathy’ long before 1915.

**Keywords:** Isaac Rosenberg, time, poem, melancholy, *Day and Night*

#### ÖZ

Isaac Rosenberg, 1918 yılında savařta öldürölene dek Őiirler yazmıř ve eskizler çizmiř Yahudi asıllı bir İngiliz Őairdir. Bu çalıřma, Rosenberg’in Birinci Dünya Savařından önce yazdıđı Őiirlere yođunlařmaktadır. Toplumsal bir eleřtiri olarak Őairin Yahudi kökenlerine ve maddi sıkıntılarına göndermede bulunan çalıřma, bir savař Őairinin yařadıđı düř kırıklıkları ve melankolisinin yıkıcı savař deneyiminden önce de takip edilebileceđini göstermektedir. Çalıřma Rosenberg’in ilk Őiirlerinde zaman kavramının Őiirleřtirilmesine odaklanır. Çeřitli Őiirler vasıtasıyla Őiirlerde zaman kavramının nasıl algılandıđının yanı sıra Őiirlerin Őairin hissettiđi yabancılařmayı rahatlatan bir alan olduđu da çalıřmanın konusudur. Őairin tanrıyla olan sorunlu iliřkisi de zaman ile ilintilidir. Neticede Rosenberg Őiiri 19.yüzyıl Őiirine öykünse de Őairin ilk eserlerindeki bu öykünme çok katmanlı savař Őiirlerindeki farklı sese zemin hazırlamıřtır. Böylece çalıřma Rosenberg Őiirindeki temel güç olan melankolinin acı savař deneyimlerinin çok öncesinde yařadıđı toplumdan kopukluk/yabancılařma olduđu sonucuna varır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Isaac Rosenberg, zaman, Őiir, melankoli, Gün ve Gece

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Isaac Rosenberg is an Anglo-Jewish poet who composed poems and drew sketches until he was killed in action in 1918. Besides being a war poet satirizing the greatness of Great War in his own style, Rosenberg wrote poems which had a more universal outlook for ‘the things’ around him by keeping a spiritual voice with the tendency to reach the unreachable. However, Rosenberg can be regarded as a Stoic in his endurance and an Epicurean in his perception of life since “the epicurean would keep himself away from the active life of the community in the company of a few select friends” (Alpakın Martinez-Caro 272) as Rosenberg’s letters to very few friends indicate. Accordingly, Rosenberg’s career as a poet can be divided into two periods as the one before he was enlisted in the army for joining in the WW I and the period when he was sent to battlefield for the active campaign.

The two periods are not exclusive of each other. On the contrary, they nourish the richness of the poems written during the war. In both periods, certain themes, images and even the choice of recurrent words can be traced back to the early poems of Rosenberg in spite of that they occur in totally different atmosphere and context. As Banarjee puts it,

He was drawn to the spiritual world of mysteries and uncertainties and adopted the symbolist mode as a poet. Though his early poems showed his original technical skill and firm linguistic control, they tended to be rather abstract, and often opaque. But the poems that he wrote after he joined the army achieved certain solidity because they grew out of his immediate experiences. (745)

Despite all the destructive effects of the war, Rosenberg’s participating to a battle which he believes in no way has created two advantages for his poetry. The experience has evolved the young melancholic post-Romantic poet into a self-reliant realist and has him gained a cynical simile towards the undefined parodies of life. In the poems before 1915, the date he decided to join the army, a whimpering voice is heard in an atmosphere full of darkness and melancholy. In these Blakean mazes, the poetic persona tries to find an outlet for his loneliness and isolation. Uncompromisingly, he has to return to the place he departs from.

This study aims to analyze the influence of temporal entities such as memories in the poems written between 1910 and 1915. The study also tries to demonstrate how the notion of time is perceived in the poems selected. To what extent the poems function as a purgatory place for soothing the alienation felt by the poet is another concern of the study. The poetic persona’s

problematic relation to God partially shapes his time-boundedness and paves the way for either a radical rejection or the claim of equivalence with God.

Rosenberg employs nature images and colours to reflect the conflicting emotions in his early poems. The images of light and darkness signify a spiritual yearning for a kind of revelation that would illuminate the darkness felt by the poet. But the conventional perception of darkness as negativity is reversed through arboreal imagery such as forest, tree and root.

Memory is a personified entity in a similar way to time in Rosenberg's early poetry. It functions as a momentary remembrance denoting the willingness for falling into pieces or becoming dust. In other words, Memory conveys the heaviness of the suicidal moments in the collapsing time. Accordingly, Rosenberg's love poems before his war period are balanced with a more universal concern. Time and memory demark the isolation of the poet from his phantom lover and society. Thus, Rosenberg poeticizes his own *Vita Nuova* as “*a form of diary, the autobiography of a young man*” (Alpakın Martinez-Caro 570) since like Dante, Rosenberg “*is still in his twenties, but he looks back on his life and work and tries to find their meaning*” (570).

Rosenberg's isolation originates from two sources. One is the self and the other is the society he lives in. His Jewish origin and poverty stand as two essential factors that cause him not to feel at home. He clarifies the origins of his melancholy on the way to Africa for a short visit to his sister in the spring of 1914. In his letter to Miss Seaton, who supported the poet as a patron and mentor for his art, Rosenberg expresses that

. . . I dislike London for the selfishness it instils into one, which is a reason of the peculiar feeling of isolation I believe most people have in London. I hardly know anyone whom I would regret leaving. . . but whether it is that my nature distrusts people, or is intolerant, or whether my pride or my backwardness cools people, I have always been alone. (200)

The difficulties Rosenberg had to endure continued during the war years and their quality did not change. On the one hand, poverty was replaced by the worse conditions of trench life. On the other hand, his lower-class origin, a considerable discrimination against Jewish descent, his physical weakness which is improper for a cruel war and constant rebukes from the authorities sharpened his satiric style. In a similar way, his relation to God before and during the war period underlines a spiritual isolation leading to rejection or replacement in the end. As Silkin

points out “*In ‘God Made Blind’ and ‘God’, man may be in rebellion against God but he occupies a rational position, in that if God is envious and cruel it is rational to resist His demands*” (277). To consolidate his argument, Rosenberg tries to rationalize Jehovah or God the father with a female God but the spiritual conflict in him remains unresolved.

The poems written before 1915, are post-Romantic in sense and style. In his letter to Seaton in 1911, Rosenberg informs about both his artistic background and the influences on his poetry,

You mustn’t forget the circumstances I have been brought up in, the little education I have had. Nobody ever told me what to read, or ever put poetry in my way. I don’t think I knew what real poetry was till I read Keats a couple of years ago. True I galloped through Byron when I was about fourteen . . . Poetical appreciation is only newly bursting on me. I always enjoyed Shelley and Keats. The ‘Hyperion’ ravished me. (181)

Unlike most of the Romantics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he does not find a complete consolation in nature and his concern is not towards the losses of a changing world, but towards a subjective dilemma which is resolved through the places in between. Being a marginal poet, Rosenberg ironically keeps away from the margins of time, his perception of memory dangles between the anachronic yearnings and a place between two dependent halves of time. For instance, in “The Present,” the poetic persona describes time as “leveller” (14) which leads us to the presence of an authority threatening the life;

Time, leveller, chaining fate itself to thee-  
Hope frets her eager pettings on thy sand,  
Wild waves that strive to overreach command  
Of nature, much in sight. Eternity  
Is but thyself made shoreless. Toward thy sea  
The streams-to-be flow from the shadowland  
Of rootless flowers no earthly breeze has fanned,  
Weave with the past thy restless apathy. (Rosenberg 14)

“The Present” in conventional Petrarchan sonnet form, argues how the persona perceives the notion of time in the octave. As it happens in the above poem, time is personified in most poems of Rosenberg both in his pre-war period and during the war. The folds of time are

conveyed through “leveler” (14) metaphor. Time as the agent to connect fate with the moment visualizes the existence of a forceful entity recalling the powers of God with the act of chaining. In the first line, Time tries to bring the “fate” (14) to the level of the present time. Thus, Time as leveller can imply a rebellious group, Levelers who are the “*member[s] of a republican and democratic faction in England during the period of the Civil Wars and Commonwealth*” (britannica.com). The name Levelers was given by enemies of the movement to suggest that its supporters wished to “*level men’s estates*” (britannica.com). Their basic aim was to equate the disproportionate classes but by taking their arguments from church and aristocracy they served to the authority of predominant rulers. The personified “Hope” (14) replaces the harshness of time with compassionate kisses on the “sand” (14) of the present. Fate’s bounding force and hope’s optimism create a situation in which mixed feelings overwhelm. Accordingly, the “wild waves” (14) trying to unchain themselves from the order of nature denote the struggle of transcending the self.

In “The Present” moment is conveyed through sea imagery and every abstraction such as ‘Eternity’ is dissolved in the density of momentary time. The last lines of the octave stress upon the relation between past and present. Rosenberg’s neo-Platonism is apparent in “*the streams-to-be flow from the shadow land*” (14). The present time describes his endeavour to reach the absolutes through the world of shadows; “*Rootless flowers no earthly breeze has fanned*” (14) represents the desire of breaking with the circles around the time and thus displaces time’s divine position. “*Rootless flowers*” (Rosenberg 14) come from nowhere and their existence depends upon functioning as a bridge between past and present. Rosenberg’s antagonism towards the notion of time is reflected with “*thy restless apathy*” (14). Being unsusceptible to any emotion does not offer a hope that would drop “*eager pettings on thy shore*” (14). The sestet maintains present’s place between binaries with “*Tho art the link twixt after and before*” (14). Although the moment conveys the despair for the persona in “The Present,” it also functions as a defense mechanism against the assaults of memory and the apprehensions of future as following lines denote, “*The loud roar/ Of life around me is thy voice to fate/ And Time-who looking on thee has grown hoar/ While thou art yet-and freedom is so late*” (14).

In the early poetry of Rosenberg, the act of waiting is both a self-confrontation and a source of sorrows. He does not reconcile with either present or past. Thus, the memories consolidate the persona’s loneliness and stoic endurance in the world. In this regard, “Past Days are Hieroglyphs” deals with the influence of the memories on the persona. According to the

poem, the experienced time is kept in the form of images in mind and each picture represents a certain moment like a hieroglyph as follows,

Past days are hieroglyphs  
Scrawled behind the brows  
Scarred deep with iron blows,  
Upon the thundered tree  
Of memory. (Rosenberg 79)

The past events are conveyed through the action of scrawling. The scribbled notes on the memory are indecipherable, yet their pressure is felt strongly by the persona. The “*thundered tree/ Of memory*” (79) visualizes the image of being under threat. Rosenberg’s favourite image ‘root’ gains a functional meaning in the context of “*thundered tree*” (79). Since Memory is nurtured in the deeper grounds of the self, it operates like a tree taking its energy from the earth. But in the lines above the persona implies the existence of a possible destruction with “*iron blows*” (79) against the nourishment and growth of intertwined branches. The second stanza describes the role of tree image as an inscriber of the moments as follows, “*Marvellous mad beliefs/ Plain and time-unthieved/ Scratched and scrawled on the tree/ Of Memory*” (79). Similar to a thunderbolt burning trees, the past days leave a psychological scar on the memory of the poetic persona,

Time, good graver of griefs,  
Those words sapped with my soul,  
That I read as of old and whole,  
What eye in the world shall see  
On this covered tree? (Rosenberg 79)

The reproachful tone of the persona is continued through the last stanza, Time as an active agent in the recording of sorrows is likened to a xylographer who meticulously cuts “*those words*” (79) that is to say, hieroglyphs on the hard surface of the ‘soul’. Furthermore, the lines “*What eye in the world shall see/ On this covered tree?*” (79) refer to the experience’s idiosyncrasy and visualizes the persona’s isolation with the image of tree concealed with leaves and branches.

Rosenberg’s use of nature as an element of melancholy appears in dreams mingled with memories. The happy moments of certain memories are balanced through the consciousness of

past days. “In November” describes a romantic remembrance of the dreamy past. The contrast of autumn and spring denotes two prevailing opposition between the death and life. This love poem attributes the features of “*a day in June*” (Rosenberg 45) to the persona’s beloved one through several similes such as “*your face was like a day in June*” (45) and “*your eyes seemed like thoughts that stir/ To dream of warm June nights*” (45). This languorous atmosphere is contrasted with the second stanza as follows, “*The dead leaves dropped off one by one,/ All hopeless in the withered sun*” (45). The poetic persona finds a shelter in the memory of a particular meeting with the lover. The simile of “*My pulse shook like a wind kissed torch*” (45) in the third stanza reflects the powerful change and warmth felt by the persona.

Your voice was like the buds that burst  
With latter spring to slake their thirst,  
While all your ardent mouth was lit  
With summer memories exquisite. (Rosenberg 45)

The last stanza of “In November” presents the beloved one as the source of light and renewal. The hopeless atmosphere of November is also counterbalanced with the hopeful ending, buds waiting for the right time to blossom. “Torch” (45) image is developed with “*your ardent mouth*” (45). The triggering force again is the memory that waits like bud to be flourished in the dreams that “*too sweet you seemed for anything/ Save dreams whereof the poets sing*” (45).

“A Warm Thought Flickers,” contrary to “In November” eradicates the traces of bliss with the temporariness of the experience, which offers another source for the melancholy of the persona in such lines as “*A warm thought flickers/ An idle ray-/ Being is one blush at root*” (Rosenberg 56). The verb “flicker” (56) represents the tempestuous mood of the persona and also the ungraspable nature of thought in a similar way to the act of burning unsteadily. Time’s controlling force as “*hours’ ungentle doom*” (56) demonstrates the perception of time by the persona as follows,

For the hours’ ungentle doom  
Where one forsaking face  
Hides ever-hides for our sighing  
Is a hard bright leaf over clover  
And bee-bitten shade. (Rosenberg 56)

The lyrical poem “A Warm Thought Flickers” denotes the reason for the painful hours with the lines “*Forsaking face/ hides ever*” (56). The darkness of doom is transformed into “*a hard bright leaf*” (56) which refers to the same darkness. “Clover” (56) as the image of luck and prosperity does not convey its meaning due to the ironical brightness of leaf. “*Bee-bitten shade*” (56) suggests that the serenity of darkness is destroyed with the puncturing light. “*While one opaque thought wearies/ the weary lids of grief?*” (56) at the end of the third stanza combines the suffering with the bodily pain in a total darkness of “*what moons have hidden/ Their month-long shine*” (56). In the darkness, the persona has to endure the brunt of “*one thought too heavy/ For words to bear/ For lips too tired/ to curl to them*” (56). Similar to a covered tree image, the persona is exhausted by a mystery that is revealed in isolation and without the possible means of communion.

Unlike the conventional meaning of light as the source of knowledge and positive feelings, the light image suggests a loss and diversion from the inner self in Rosenberg’s early poetry since it presents a chaotic mixture of the moods. This neutral space is given through dawn. In “April Dawn,” for instance, certain dreams appear in a languid mid-place without apocalyptic revelation. “*Pale light hid in light/ Stirs the still day-spring;/ Wavers the dull sight with a spirit’s wing*” (Rosenberg 88) visualizes a melting pot in which every element is dissolved to produce a unique harmony. But temporal boundedness is conveyed through another verb “*waver*” (88) similar to “*flicker*” (56) in “A Warm Thought Flickers.” The second stanza of “April Dawn” draws a picture of the dreams as a highwayman taking the advantage of foggy air and waiting for stealing from the persona as the line “*dreams, in frail rose mist, lurking to waylay*” (88) describes. However, the atmosphere is so dense with mist that dreams have to come away empty-handed in the “*pool of pulseless air*” (88). “*Spirits are in flight,/ And my soul their lair*” (88) closes the poem with a struggle trying to evade from the dreams as unfavourable force. Thus, the persona’s inner self welcomes melancholy as the continuous feeling of sadness for his ambiguous moods.

In “At Sea-Point,” Rosenberg rejects the stillness of “April Dawn” by uprooting and disintegrating every stable object into pieces as the lines “*Let the earth crumble away/ The heavens fade like a breath/ sea go up in a cloud*” (58) visualize. The persona yearns for a new beginning by destroying all the earthly and heavenly existence. The poem emphasizes the transience as an uncontrollable fastness and the persona wishes from God to “*all things annul*” (58) by destroying the traditional sense of time “*since one shape passed like a song*” (58).



The momentary reception of the transitory nature of life in the lines “*A lie with its heart hidden/ Is that cruel wall of air/ that held her there unbidden/ Who comes not at my prayer*” (58). demonstrates incompleteness and the broken link between the lovers through external forces, of which memory or time predominates; “*she flew ere my soul was aware,/ But left this thirst in me*” (58). In a “Ballad of Time, Life and Memory,” Rosenberg evaluates the broken harmony between the lovers in accordance with time and memory. In the first three stanzas, he draws the image of a divine lady resembling the one in the courtly love tradition in order to destroy the image with a torturesome man who “*gives her of the spices and the myrrh/ And wonderful strange fruits, / He gives her more of tears, and girds her round/ With yearning bitterness*” (Rosenberg 7). The maiden stands as the source of revival and reincarnation from death in opposition to the lover “*with fears that kill the hopes they feed upon*” (7). In the lovers’ imbalanced relation, Memory and Time as two personified forms function to clarify the repeated attacks occurring in limbo as below,

And by her side, whose name is Memory,  
The ghosts of all the hours,  
Some smiling as they smiled within the sun,  
Some, stained and wan with tears.  
To those she gives the roses as they fall,  
And bids them tune the praises of their prime.  
To these their tears and dust.  
And those are happy loves and wreathed joys.  
And these are sorrows pale. (Rosenberg 7)

Memory as a ghost haunting Time reflects the fluctuations of melancholy. The repetition of plural third-person pronoun and the demonstrative determiners underlines the changing mood of the persona from one point to another on the linguistic level. The beloved one performs as if officiating at a ritual by chanting “*them tune the praises of their prime*” (7). Her reactions to these silhouettes differ in accordance with “*happy loves*” and “*sorrows pale*” as offering “*roses*” and “*dust*” (7). However, “*She*” (7) makes the whole atmosphere gain a celestial nature in which certain moment is a respite before reverting back to the terrestrial life,

Even as she sings so Time himself makes pause,  
Even Time, Death’s conqueror,  
And Life’s reverted face grows tenderer,  
While the soul dreams and yearns,

Watching the risen faces of the hours,  
And shriveled Autumn change her face to June's  
And dead wine live again  
And dust discrowned know Life it knew before  
Touched with a softened light. (Rosenberg 7)

Time is “*Death's conqueror*” (7) in “A Ballad of Time, Life and Memory” since it is a notion “*through change unchanged still*” (7). The power of art is implied with its neutralizing effect. Furthermore, “*Risen faces of hours*” (7) refer to the certain experiences remembered and in the case of Memory entangled with “*dreams and yearnings*” (7), art functions as a healing elixir that makes the soul assuage in ecstasy. June's replacing Autumn, dead wine and dust springing to life by means of a “*softened light*” (7), consolidate the curing power of the dreams that create an alternative but sometimes nightmarish world in the early poetry of Rosenberg.

“*There is no leaf upon the naked woods/ No bird upon the boughs/ And Time leads Life through many waste places, /And dreams and shapes of death*” (8) in the last stanza of “A Ballad of Time, Life and Memory” distract the optimistic air of the previous part in which the defining forces of time, fate or life come to an end with the enchanting voice of the beloved one. A deserted place is emphasized with “*no leaf upon the naked woods*” and “*no bird upon the boughs*” (8). Moreover, the ending lines of another poem, “Past Days are Hieroglyphs,” “*What eye in the world shall see/ On this covered tree?*” (79) are reversed with a total nakedness in “A Ballad of Time, Life and Memory” but leading to the same isolation with an outlet confined to only “*waste places*” (8). The poetic persona feels himself as if stripped off his defensive armours by being surrounded by Time. As the lines “*Yet is the voice of Summer not quite dumb/ Although her lips be stilled and silenter*” (8) signify, the crumbs of hope shed scattered rays over the soul by piercing the dark clouds summoned by Time. However, “*Summer not quite dumb*” and “*although*” (8) convey the diverging mood of the persona. In the last three lines, the rejuvenating role of Memory is enunciated since performing as divinity, it makes ‘her’ voice heard again in the “*palace of the soul*” (8) where the powers of Time and Life are annulled and they have no access to interfere as follows, “*For Memory bids her rise/ To sing within the palace of the soul/ And Life and Time are still*” (8).

“The Dead Past” broadens the relation between the loss of the beloved one and time through an anachronic yearning. The poetic persona deliberately states past's shaping influence over the future with images similar to “A Ballad of Time, Life and Memory” with such lines as “I

*know you are dead long ago and hid in the grove I made/ Of regrets that were soon forgotten, as snow is forgotten by/ June*” (Rosenberg 9). But “The Dead Past” also demonstrates the persona’s struggle both to reconcile with the past and to extricate himself from the despair and oppression originated in the past as poeticized in “*You little buds that have died- and blossom in memory/ Will I meet you in some dead land and see your face in hosts*” (9). Thus, as “*Little buds*” images and their “*blossom[ing] in the memory*” (9) indicate, the poetic persona recreates the past experiences on a different level in which all temporal entities are inverted from their conventional receptions.

Conflict of ‘Day’ and ‘Night’ is represented as two opposite poles attempting to gain an ultimate pressure over each other. In some poems such as “I have Lived in the Underworld Too Long”, the poetic persona tries to unchain himself from the darkness formed consciously as expressed in “*hid in the grove I made*” (9) of “The Dead Past” and employs the contrasting natures of darkness and light to delineate the borders of the paradoxical situation he is in. The poem opens with a yearning to reach the “*creature of light*” as follows, “*I have lived in the underworld too long/ For you, O creature of light,/ To bear without terror the dark spirit’s song/ and unmoved bear what moves in night*” (Rosenberg 73). The persona is visualized as a pilgrim undergoing a period of stoic waiting. Time in these lines functions as a means for the hopeful revelation stated in “*without terror the dark spirit’s song*” (73). Dark spirit is the exact reflection of the self described in the second stanza as “*strange, undelightful, obscure,/ created by some other God, and bound in terrible darkness impure*” (73). Besides a self-deprecating attitude, the persona describes how he is alienated from the ‘normal’ society and its structures by asserting to have been “*created by some other God*” (73). The last stanza with the lines, “*Creature of light and happiness,/ Deeper the darkness when you/ With your bright terror eddying the distress/ Grazed the dark waves and shivering further fled*” (73) suggests a mood in which discordance and paradoxical harmony of magnetic polarity exist.

In “None Have Seen the Lord of the House”, the arboreal image of darkness hiding in the forest is sustained with the opening lines, “*Stealth-bushed, the coiled night nesteth/ In woods where light has stayed*” (82). The descriptive lines demonstrate the mystifying and staggering nature of the darkness. “*The coiled night*” (82) refers to a temporal progressiveness that leads to a gradual disclosure as “*She is the shadow of soul*” (82). The reason for the colour of darkness is given through the personification of it as a fearful concubine waiting anxiously in the nuptial bed of the harem, “*A virgin and afraid,/ That in the absent Sultan’s chamber resteth,/ Sleepless for fear he call*” (82). In this symbolic confrontation scene of the persona and his inner self embodies the discouragement felt

in the night. The tyrannical image of “Lord” in the second stanza denotes the yearning for the unreachable light with “*Lord of this moon-dim mansion,/ None know thy naked light*” (82). The fear of a divine entity wavers between day and night and thus the persona cannot definitely position the place occupied by “*Lord of this moon-dim mansion*” (82). The state of ecstasy is conveyed through a romantic emulation, “*As of the soul is night/ O! who would fear when in the bourne’s expansion,/ With Thy first kiss we fade*” (82). The persona in the last stanza ascribes gender roles to the night as a ruined maid who “*shivers/ palely wastes and dies*” (82) and through female nature of the night, the persona defines the day’s gender as “*A wraith under day’s burning hair, And his humid golden eyes*” (82). The break of the day indicates the end of a kind of sexual intercourse in which night is disintegrated. Accordingly, the last lines, “*He has browsed by immortal meadowed rivers/ O! were she nesting there!*” (82) signify a soft transition from the eternal one that is personified with the night. Furthermore, the negative reception of darkness leaves its place to a hidden sacred “*immortal meadowed rivers*” (82) that nourish the soul.

Unlike the negative description of darkness, some early poems of Rosenberg such as “At Night”, “Night”, “The World Rumbles by Me” and “Creation” idealize darkness as a recourse in which the soul moves as being free of all suppressing forces of ‘the world’. Night image appears as a woman in the early poetry of Rosenberg. “At Night”, for instance, opens with “*Crazed shadow from no golden body/ That I can see, embraces me warm; All is purple and closed/ Round by night’s arm*” (Rosenberg 61). Although the source of darkness is problematic, its function transforms the conventional implication of coldness and despair into bodily warmth. The “*crazed shadow*” (61) as a haunting phantom appears only in the “*purple*” (61) of the night. “*... closed/ Round by night’s arm*” (61) signifies a circle providing a holistic integration with nature. As Roberts points out another poem, “*‘Night’ mixes erotic and religious imagery as the speaker’s ‘heart is full of brimless fervid fancies’ inspired by the ‘nestling hair of the night’*” (326). In other words, darkness functions as an ink for the pen of the soul that rejuvenates old memories through the night. The opening lines of “Creation”, “*As the pregnant womb of night/ Thrills with imprisoned light*” (Rosenberg 50) denotes the constructive power of night, standing for the source of creative power and mysteries.

In conclusion, Rosenberg conforms to the conventions of Petrarchan sonnet form in his early poetry with regards to the unrequited love for a divine beloved one. But within the frame of an idiosyncratic hopeless love, the poet recounts the influence of the temporal boundaries paradoxically both emerging as the focus of pressure and suggesting an alternative space for the

attempts of transcending them. Rosenberg who openly rejects the existence of God in some poems such as “The Blind God” also yearns for a reconciliation that would fill in great part he felt to have lost. Although his early poetry is an imitation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantics with clear reflections from the choice of vocabulary to an old biblical language and the idealization of nature, the poems as the products of his juvenilia (because of his short life, it is better to divide his poems as pre-war and wartime poems) pave the way for the complicated or multilayered imagery of his war poems and the emergence of a distinct voice through imitation. The study concludes by suggesting that the most essential cause and moving force behind the early poems, ‘melancholy’ is not derived from his bitter war experiences but from a speechless alienation/disintegration with the society he lives in, which leads him to a search for consolation in-betweens and the melancholic voice prevailing in his war poems is an exact reflection of the earlier universal worries he felt with a ‘cosmopolitan sympathy’ before 1915.

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