

**Myth Making in the Poetry
of Isaac Rosenberg**

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"I am afraid my public is still in the womb.
(Rosenberg", "Letters", *The Collected Works*,
231).

"The Homer for this war has yet
to be found." (Rosenberg,
"Letters", *The Collected Works*,
250)

"I have recognized in Rosenberg
a fruitful fusion between English
and Hebrew culture, behind all
his poetry there is a racial
quality—biblical and prophetic.
Scriptural and sculptural are the
epithets I would apply to him." ⁹⁴
(Sassoon, *The Collected Works
Of Isaac Rosenberg*, ix)

Abstract

" Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918) has gained recognition as a talented poet only recently. Critics include him among the most important poets of the twentieth century England. Of all the World War I poets, he stands out as the most revolutionary and the nearest to the modernist spirit. The revival of interest in his poetry is mainly related to its technical mastery. This revival of interest in and reappraisal of his poetry is demonstrated in terms of two more up to date editions of his collected works: *Isaac Rosenberg, Selected poems and letters*, edited by Jean Liddiard(2003), and *The Poems and plays of Isaac Rosenberg*, edited by Vivien Noakes(2004) and republished in a revised edition (2005). This new wide recognition and recurrent

publication of Rosenberg's works parallel an interest in the man and his poetry; an interest founded more on the manner of representation than on the subject itself. It remains after all that Rosenberg's achievement as a war poet lies in the fact that he expressed his experience of war rather than of the war motif itself. At the same time, he dealt with that experience artistically. By transcending the historical context itself to present his own experience of war Rosenberg managed to a large measure to widen the scope of the lyric form by means of attributing to it some epic elements. Unlike his contemporaneous war poets who endeavored to demythologize war, Rosenberg was strongly willing to establish for himself a strategy of difference by means of mythologizing it. Depth and grandeur are outproducts of his mastery of myth making. Rosenberg's fascination with the employment of the mythical technique for the presentation of his personal ideology of war is exclusively limited to pre-Christian patterns of reference – Hebrew and classical as well. So, in his deliberate reconciliation of art to ideology Rosenberg seeks inspiration in the very ancient sources.

Of all the First World War poets, Isaac Rosenberg has grown into vogue very recently. Critics failed for a long time to properly evaluate the imaginative breakthrough that Rosenberg made in the last years of his trench life. Yet, his stocks have been rising progressively over the last two decades in tandem with the new revival of interest in the poetry of World War I, which got a boost either from the cold war context or from real conflicts in the hot regions worldwide. What is evidently observable, in this respect, is that Rosenberg and his poetry are gaining a wider recognition than his contemporaries are on various grounds. Several critics of World War I literature consider Rosenberg, at his best, to be "the greatest poet of the war", declares Neil Arditi (373). Arditi goes a little further to generalize that "Rosenberg may finally receive his due as 'one of the handful of distinguished poets to have come out of England in the 20th century,'" (373). The very fact that Rosenberg's poetry is increasingly gaining a wider reading public is in consonance with this opinion.

Isaac Rosenberg remains, undoubtedly, a fascinating figure to illustrate how difficult it was for a Jewish person without a privileged background to make his way in the Georgian art world. His poetic and artistic independence from movements made his inclusion in anthologies and literary journals difficult for a long time. In the words of Fred Crawford: "As early as March 1920, Eliot cited the neglect of Rosenberg as evidence that criticism was not performing its proper function," (202). This critical underestimation was parallel with the misfortune that attended Rosenberg during his lifetime and continued to "operate on his reputation after his death", states Crawford (202). This misfortune may be partly related to the critical scale that was greatly for the advantage of Owen for specific reasons. Poetry was appreciated more for its war subject matter than for the manner of representing the subject matter itself: Rosenberg, accordingly, has always been considered below the mark. War poetry, in general, and Rosenberg's, specifically, are objectively considered in different lights. "At least this background can allow greater appreciation and respect for the better war poets", in Crawford's words (11).

Rosenberg, however, is the most controversial and unique as well. Various reasons contributed to his poetic talent as a war poet: personal, cultural, and artistic. But the saving grace of his war poetry lies in the assumption that he managed to crystallize a wider vision of his experience of war rather than an expression of war itself. He departs, in this context, from most of his war contemporaries who got involved in a life task of mirroring the atrocities of war without, in the least, trying to depersonalize their feelings about it. His representation of the war experience, similarly, saves the lyric form from the static nature that characterizes most of the war poetry; rather, Rosenberg's approach adds a dynamic dimension to the form by means of loosening the temporal and physical limitations of the First World War to fit into the dictates of a determined ideological vision. It implies the presence of fundamental enlargement of the lyric vision in the process of continuity with a past tradition. An amalgam of epic dimension and lyric sensitivity is produced in this case. This renders Rosenberg's vision towering, complex, and thought provoking at the same time when considered within the general context of World War I poetry.

The term "War Poetry" is usually having more affinities with World War I poetry than with that written during World War II. Equally significant, in spite of the greater aftermath of destruction and death rate left by World War I, the uniqueness and suddenness of the experience of World War I leave a space for comparisons and contrasts. The affinities of the term "War Poetry" to World War I, in this context – at least in the reader's mind if not theoretically -- renders it in a way a "period concept" different from what came before and what followed, just to quote one of Rene Wellek's phrases used to describe the term "Realism" (*Concepts*, 224). The war poetry – as a trend of its own – becomes a period trend having qualities that make a literary period with a consciousness of its own, anchored in its historical condition, and, in a manner of speaking, distinct of what preceded and what succeeded. World War I produced, most importantly, a body of literature that gives insights into that experience and the consciousness that shaped it. Expectedly, the war context changed the subject matters, styles, and diction of poetry; that is, the war poets were forging changes in "diction and sentiment", says Childs (38). Equally significant, whereas World War I is integral to an understanding of the development of modernism, "the memory of World War One shapes contemporary understandings of personal and political identities in surprising ways", voices Jonathan Alison (20).

However, the problem with the term "War Poetry" is that it has become comparatively a flat one in the reader's mind. It is often stamped with a single impression; that is, one approaches that cult of poetry with preconceived sentiments, expectations and pictures established by a long series of comments and guidelines about the Great War and its literature. The consensus, in addition, was that the poetry of World War I fails to achieve an epic grandeur; it is rather involved in demonstrating the feelings of horror and disgust. The war poets themselves contributed in a way or another to the shaping of such a non-positive attitude in the reader's consciousness. Wilfred Owen's manifesto-like unfinished poetic Preface to what seems to have been intended as a volume of his war poems is a case in point:

This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them.

Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except war.

Above all I am not concerned with poetry.
My subject is War, and the pity of war.
The poetry is in the pity. (Quoted by R. P. Draper, 80).

The reader of anthologies or critical works dealing with war poetry finds himself grappling with a preconceived approach in which all the war poets are trapped in or highlighted from the standpoint of historicism. The war brought about "a shift from patriotic to polemical poetry... not because of any great literary influence but because of historical exigencies: the self-satisfied poetry of the recent past needed to be broken to cope with the brutal reality of the present." (Peter Childs, 41). The problem with that trend of poetry is the standard view about it as marking a dividing line between a myth-dominated to a demythologized world. Paul Fussel, for instance, in *The Great War and Modern Memory* sees instead a movement always the other way, "towards myth, towards a revival of the cultic, the mystical, the sacrificial, the prophetic, the sacramental, and the universally significant. (12-13)

In the process, World War I poetry has been subjected to a continuous defamiliarizing act as well as to an up-to-date orientation to consider war literature as a "canon" literature. Although "poetry and poets of the great war have been subjects of reviews, articles, monographs, and chapters of books for the past seventy years, the establishment of a war poetry 'canon' has been fairly recent", remarks Crawford (9). The post structuralist critical mainstream of criticism greatly supports this new attitude on the assumption that the "effort of reading must be constantly renewed because no one reading suffices.... Each new reading discounts and disqualifies all that preceded, but each fails to satisfy, says J. Hillis Miller ("preface", viii). The act of reading, in this manner, must always start again from the very beginning even in a reading of a work already read if greater insights into the literary text is to be attained. "Close reading reaches its limit in the constantly renewed experience of its failure to take you where you think you want to go and out to go", voices Miller ("preface", pp. Viii - ix). The fact remains always that a strategy of difference remains there among the war poets considering their ethnic, social, and political predilections. John Silkin, for instance, suggests a way for considering differences between the war poets in his important study *Out of Battle*. He divides them into four stages of consciousness: Patriotism (eg. Brooke); anger and protest against war

(eg. Sassoon); compassion (eg. Owen); and desire for change (eg. Rosenberg) (26 - 30).

Of the four types of consciousness mentioned above, Isaac Rosenberg remains the most involved, intriguing, and —above all— thought provoking. The way he visualizes war in his poetry is motivated by, and at the same time, interwoven into his religious and ethnic ideologies. War, therefore, is presented paradoxically throughout his poetry in a way that fits into the overall construction of his ideological culture and objective. This renders him akin to and at the same time different from the other war poets. The study of Rosenberg requires, in this context, a method akin to the post-colonial one if probing the depth and essence of his poetry and mind be possible. Rosenberg, in a sense, stands in sharp contrast with his contemporaries. His poetry is valuable in this context from the perspective that it bears witness to the ideological dilemma that psychologically entrapped, and is still entrapping, many thinkers and writers as well. Much of his poetry gains value, accordingly, from the standpoint that Rosenberg managed to make a reconciliation between the poet, the artist, and the visionary. He added to his war poetry an extra dimension that distinguished it from the poetry of the “shell-shocked” group of poets, widened his scope, and added depth to his artistic experience. Rosenberg, in so doing, transfers his poetry beyond the restrictions of the hissings of machine guns missiles. It transcends the limits of time and place to produce an ideological metaphysical vision that motivates, and itself motivated by, the dark recess of the poet’s subconscious.

The recent revival of interest in the poetry of Isaac Rosenberg coincides, in effect, with an emerging ideological attitude undercurrent in the mainstream of world politics at the threshold of a new millennium. War is both glorified and highlighted by a new generation of thinkers and politicians as well as foreshadowing the forthcoming of a New World order. This renders an examination of Rosenberg’s war vision against the new historical and cultural background a must. A close connection can be found, therefore, in Rosenberg’s and the new Western fundamentalist ideologies’ recurrent allusions between World War I and a biblical prophecy of the “last battle” at the end of history as a quintessential struggle between good and evil preceding the “Second Coming” of Christ and

the end of terrestrial life. World War I seemed to raise in Rosenberg's mind the ancient biblical prophecy of "Armageddon."

Actually, the paradoxical war images presented by Rosenberg naturally emerge from a similar religious and ideological background. Such images, likewise, form an important aspect of the collective consciousness of a whole ethnic group that strongly believe in "race suicide", "destructiveness", and "fertility", as Rachel Duplessis displays it (139). This orientation is interpreted by Duplessis within the context of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in terms of "a set of materials" that suggests that "there is a secret Jewish government with a well-activated plan to achieve world domination, taking over Gentile states by fomenting political unrest, subverting morality, and inciting to class warfare" (149).

An important fact about the nature of Rosenberg's war images is the influence of his ideological and cultural background. The poet's establishing connections with pre-Christian cultural outlooks and predilections, it is mostly observed, mainly inspires his war vision. Old Testament themes and hermeneutics, Jewish history, and ancient Greek mythological allusions greatly and predominantly inform his poetry; an aspect that contributes to the involvement and polemic of his vision of the reality and transcendence of what war is. Such a paradoxical perspective feeds, and itself fed by, a certain religious set of notions and understandings which helped Rosenberg to add to his poetry a mythic dimension, according to Draper (87). Rosenberg possesses the historical sense that helps the poet to reconcile the past and the present in a way that gives insights into the complexity and depth of the historical moment and the consciousness apprehending it. Rosenberg remains absolutely different from other war poets, including even other Jewish figures such as Siegfried Sassoon. Avi Matalon sums up the whole matter as follows:

That Rosenberg wanted desperately to be in the land of Israel but was denied, while Sassoon was sent there even though he had no interest in the place, is only a tiny indicator of the vast difference between the two. Rosenberg's biography and poetics are radically different from Siegfried Sassoon's, even as both can be (and are)

categorized under the global experiences of being British, Jewish soldiers, and poets. Difference is in the details, and in the text of poetry. (30)

What distinguishes Rosenberg, accordingly, is the sense of difference that he possessed and maintained to his poetry. This difference is a twofold one, ideological and artistic as well.

Ontologically, Rosenberg's main task as a war poet remains mainly to contextualize his war experience within an ideological framework. His attitude differs immensely from that of other World War I poets who indulged themselves in "romantic fantasies of honor, sacrifice, self-redemption, and immortality", states John Johnston (18). Rosenberg in a letter to Edward Marsh written in 1915 refers to this fact by saying: "I never joined the army from patriotic reasons" (*The Complete Works*, 305).

Artistically, Rosenberg is to be grouped with the modernist trend - developed by Eliot, Williams, and Pound - that rejected the Georgian inheritance and successfully drew upon other resources. His mode of representation, as far as his experience of war, poses another aspect of difference. His poetry is to be rightly related to the modernism that ensued from the new experiences that the war generated. Whereas his contemporaries did divorce their poetry from the poetic traditions extending to Georgian poetry, Rosenberg revealed a sharp separation from that tradition. He managed, accordingly, to innovate a new poetic form fitting for a new consciousness for which traditional art forms seemed quiet inadequate. There is, accordingly, a constant effort to modify the scope and perspective of lyrical and narrative forms towards an "impersonal" and "detached" view of war. The poet, in his case, shifts from a static form of lyric to a more "dynamic" one; hence his ceaseless undertaking to bridge the gap between what he says and how he says it. Rosenberg was strongly willing to straddle the fence of modernism. This might give the reason why he managed successfully to escape sentimentality, "idealism", and "shell-shocked" feelings; aspects distorting the artistic experience of most of his contemporaries. What distinguishes Rosenberg, after all, is the impression that he speaks with a voice that remains, undeniably, his own. Andrew Motion conceives of that by stating that "Rosenberg ... challenged previous poetic orthodoxies"(5). Hence, what really renders Rosenberg different and

difficult in achieving his task as a war poet is an unmistakable distaste for the sentimentality of the soldier poetry currently in vogue. As Arditi conceives of it: "By contrast, Rosenberg's great trench poems are not about war or anti-war heroes. Rosenberg's heroism was merely, or more purely, literally: that of a poet who pushed his art forward in the midst of terrible chaos" (385).

Rosenberg's different voice emerges, in effect, from the ability to fuse his gift of lyrical expression to his determinist philosophical war vision to produce a vast design textured into a whole fabric of mythical allusions. His imaginative power becomes well organized and oriented towards highlighting the significance of Scriptural parables for decoding the deep meaning of his war poetry. Rosenberg is willing, in this manner, to raise "the lyric poetry of World War I to its highest and most nearly tragic level", comments Johnston (211). It is part of the poet's intention to make his poetry through the help of powerful and stately myth to symbolize "war and all the devastating forces let loose by an ambitious and unscrupulous will", reveals Rosenberg ("Letters", *The Complete Works*, 379). Poetry is developed in his case into a kind of prophetic note that seeks to leave a sufficient evidence of its truthfulness. In a lecture on art, delivered in Cape Town immediately before the outbreak of War in 1914, Rosenberg highlighted his awareness of the precarious position of art and civilization even before the war: "Art is now, as it were, a volcano. Eruptions are continual, and immense cities of culture at its foot are shaken and shivered. The roots of a dead universe are torn up by hands, feverish and consuming with an exuberant vitality -- and amid dynamic threatenings we watch the hastening of the corroding doom". (*Collected Works*, 294). "Rosenberg's plight, however, is that of Cassandra, doomed to offer accurate prophecy to deaf ears", comments Crawford (202).

Rosenberg adopted and developed a wider vision of tradition in which art and the poet's cultural background are wittily synthesized in the single poem; single poems, similarly, integrate to form a coherent vast design. Thus, in his resort to a wider cultural tradition with its inexhaustible reservoir of mythology and religious parables, Rosenberg secured his poetry a deep-seated connection between the part and the whole, between the artist and a larger cultural context to which he is closely related. He revealed, accordingly, a strong desire

to relate himself, his personal experience, and his art to a moral whole motivating, and itself, motivated by them.

Myth-making stands out as a main aspect of Rosenberg's artistry. The already present mythological patterns of reference as well as mythologized religious and historical motifs represent the poet's means of giving shape to his consciousness. They turn out, moreover, to be the ultimate of his objective to reconcile art and conviction in the long chain of his poetic process. This interrelationship is underlined by Desmond Graham in his illuminating remark that:

For Rosenberg, war was not only at odds with poetry because it distracted, tired or killed the mind that made poems. Poetry itself, war could not touch, because poetry for him was not allied to beauty or hope or inherited versions or order. Poetry was an expression of truth as the mind perceived it. (136)

War represented for him no more than a framework for literary and artistic creativity. This preliminary framework itself is finally transcended to reveal an interest in a larger one stimulating the poet's imagination and illuminating the dark areas of his subconscious symbolizing the collective unconscious of a whole ethnic group. "His poems of war were a natural extension of the art he was making before he entered the trenches", according to Graham (136).

As an artist and myth-maker, Rosenberg is to be included with the original and innovative generation of modernist poets and artists who stand firm amid the war atrocities and are mindful of a larger cultural context even when dwelling on particular horrors. Henceforth, "they impose order and personality as these things are threatened; they insist on performing acts of the imagination when faced with barbarism", declares Motion (5) in Rosenberg's case, myth becomes the type of shelter and mould that provide peace and consciousness. A close examination of Rosenberg's myth-making reveals that it has a twofold function, ideological and artistic as well. Margot Norris, for instance, conceives of "a new vision of reality" that is in the case of Rosenberg becomes culturally and ideologically contextualized:

" And for the soldier-poets who saw mechanized combat on both sides of the trenches, this challenge was

not merely aesthetic, but also ethical and ideological. The problem of inventing new forms for a new reality was further intensified by the immense volume of poetry stimulated almost instantly by the outbreak of World War I." (137)

Ideologically, therefore, myth-making represents Rosenberg's means of seeking shelter as well as gaining moral and psychological support in the face of local horrors; it assists him to "see war as an element in the universal predicament of mankind", to quote Paul Fussell (900). The notion of Rosenberg's quest for a moral and psychological support should not, however, eclipse the fact that Rosenberg could not divorce poetry, even his best poetry, from his ethnic and religious background. Adam Newey in one of his most illuminating remarks about Rosenberg and his poetry observes that "Rosenberg's experience as an enlisted man as well as his religion (his poetry shows a growing awareness of and confidence in his *Jewish identity* [italics mine]) set his work apart from that of officer poets" (54). Though Newey alludes parenthetically to the interrelationship between the nature of Rosenberg's art, war and ideology, he himself, as other critics also have done, more outspokenly highlights such a relationship. "When war broke out, ... 'Isaac Rosenberg greeted [it] with enthusiasm'" (54). Margot Norris may be also illuminating in his observation that "we consider the ideological inflections of literary and cultural enterprises as carriers of value and ethical judgments that may be particularly charged and consequent in a wartime atmosphere" (p. 138). This short note is valuable for understanding why myth making is having an ideological power, as it will be revealed shortly after.

Myth-making is having, likewise, an artistic value without which a proper recognition and evaluation of his poetry is impractical. Rosenberg approaches modernism through it. However, Rosenberg's efforts in this domain greatly depart from romantic traditional methods of mythical representation. His poetry relies more on the technique of myth rather than its acceptance of it as a form of story that may be taken for granted. Myth is valuable in as much as it is an embodiment of a kind of vision that perpetually infuses life into the experience and that form that moulds. It becomes in Rosenberg's poetic world the sole way of reconciling the temporal and the timeless in a single coherent whole. Hence Crawford's view that

"Rosenberg was less a war poet than a poet at war. Like [Edward] Thomas, he brought with him a talent which had been developing long before the war began" (194).

Myth represented for Rosenberg, accordingly, the technique that helped him to bridge the gap between art and ideology. The mythical pattern of reference, nevertheless, turned into a proper means of cloaking his convictions into a fine art. It is the art of "depersonalizing" his feelings as a poet with a vision. In a letter to Mrs. Cohen, the wife of his editor Joseph Cohen, Rosenberg made clear his view that "poetry should be approached in a colder way, more abstract, with less of the million feelings everybody feels; or all these should be concentrated in one distinguished emotion" (*The Collected Works*, 237). It is an anticipation of T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent". Myth represents Rosenberg's highly detached effort to feel in the war significance for life as such, rather than to see only its convulsion of the human life he knew.

Mythical references and myth-making, on the other hand, are part of Rosenberg's awareness of a tradition greater than the poet and his poetic experience. While they secure him a sense of difference from the other war poets, they provide him with the historical sense that Eliot felt, later on, too indispensable to any one aspiring to be a great poet. The most specific experience could be skillfully handled through the most general. The myth functions in this manner as an objective correlative for the poet's complex vision of a corrupt present in comparison with a more glorious and inspiring past heritage. The historical sense, equally significant, proves to be the main merit in Rosenberg's poetry and represents the main reason behind the revival of interest in his poetry, which is fundamentally regarded as avant-garde modernist. According to Trudi Tate: "War, like writing, shapes perception... Modernism, like other writings of the period, attempts to make the war 'readable' and to write it into history" (4). Thus, throughout Rosenberg's war poetry one observes that out of a nightmarish vision of history, flung out of chronology into an anachronism, a violent network of images are textured into the general structure of his poetry to present a mythical vision of the close relationship between the most recent and the most ancient.

Concerning the manner in which mythologization takes place in Rosenberg's war poetry, it is observable that eye witnessing, imagining, and prophesying are deliberately transformed into various myth types. The war act, the soldiers, and the battlefield are usually mythologized by means of transforming them into paradoxical patterns in which the past and the present dialectically conflict together in a wider ontological context. A form of intertextuality in its wider sense is recognized as ever present throughout his poetry. The individual poems gain their meanings cumulatively within the context of his whole poetry. The poetry in its holistic form feeds on a wider cultural context; an intertextuality that should be realized so that the deeper meaning of the poems be attained. This method of myth making is intended to highlight the poet's vision of a deliberate recurrence of a historical process. The mythical pattern, in this manner, is deduced to provide the poet's own understanding of history as moving towards a final triumph of a superior race and a fulfillment of a Biblical covenant of a "chaos recreated". The war and the soldiers are no more than agents of destruction preceding the final "reorganization and reshaping". In a manner of speaking, Rosenberg's mythical patterns of reference form a vast design instilled in his presentation of paradoxical images of accepting disaster as the sole means of gaining triumph and glory.

Throughout Rosenberg's war poetry, various types of references are deliberately inspired by a pre-Christian cultural context. They are mainly attributed to the Hebrew and ancient Greek cultures. Both types, moreover, are either to be given explicit utterance, or to be employed obliquely as subtexts. Rosenberg's task is distinctly related to the general conception that:

Our most intense experiences are those we find most difficult to communicate.... The writer may seek relief from his experience by facing it within the safe area of art, creating a new context, to some extent controllable. He may be driven by such intensity to find new means of expression. Whatever the personal and finally knowable motivation, art intervenes between the privacy of

our distinct experience and the shared world of communication (Graham,12).

In his explicit recourse to myth, Rosenberg guides the reader into the presence of a prophetic, invocatory, and incantatory myth-based poetry. The poems gain in a tragic quality in their capacity to arouse pity, fear, and catharsis. "There is a spooky pleasure in this, and one might accuse the poet of casting a spell to hasten the blood-dimmed tide, just as some have attributed to Yeats a predatory glee in 'The Second Coming,'" voices Neil Ardit (376). A greater part of Rosenberg's mythical references operates obliquely. The poem's message, in this process, is unfolded through the ability to decode the connotation of a subtextualized pattern. The infra-structures of the subtextualized stories and motifs demonstrate the poet's awareness of "the tropological dimension of literary language, to the way figures of speech turn aside the telling of story on the presentation of a lyrical theme", says Miller ("Preface", p. ix). Miller illuminates further that "the exploration of this turning gradually leads to the recognition that all works of literature are parabolic", thrown beside "their real meaning. They tell one story but call forth something else" (ix).

It is worthwhile observing that, though other war poets—notably Owen—presented few biblical hints in their poetry, Rosenberg's approach and intention remain greatly different. This sense of difference is obviously felt when considering, for instance, Owen's biblical reference in "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young". The biblical reference is employed mainly to raise sympathy and sentimentality for the dead soldiers. In contrast, Rosenberg's parabolic use of language is intended essentially to be performative. As Miller describes it:

All parables... are essentially performative ... in terms of what Kenneth Burke calls "symbolic action". Parables do not merely name the "something" this point to by indirection or merely give the reader knowledge of it. They use words to try to make something happen in relation to the "other" that resonates in the work.... They want to make the reader cross over into the "something" and dwell there ("Preface"; ix).

Rosenberg, in so doing, transforms the language into a sort of "secular parable" as different from parables spoken by the Divine Himself. It is, rather, "spoken by some all-too human person casting out figurative language toward something across the border from any direct seeing, hearing, or understanding", according to Miller (145). Yet, the matter gains in an extra ideological dimension in Rosenberg in the sense that gradually there is a fusion between the secular and the religious beyond distinction so much that it is difficult to distinguish between the dancer and the dance.

Thus, in examining Rosenberg's war poetry, it becomes of prime importance for the reader to consider the recurrent process of inter as well as subtextuality. The reader becomes "concerned with moments in the poems when the medium of poetry becomes an issue," voices Miller (227). The problem that Rosenberg's reader sometimes faces is that throughout Rosenberg's poetry he presents a series of organized images and mythical patterns whether explicitly or parabolically structured together in a circular pattern "around an absent center", as Miller usually describes this oblique manner of representation (227). It is then a recurrent process of interchange between a latent abstract text and visible concrete one in which certain "abstract" insights can be exposed. Miller illustrates that this "interchange is related to the way both abstractions and figures here are catachreses, 'improper' terms for an evasive centre, the essential poem at the centre of things" than can never be named directly, (227).

The recurrent allusions to Hebrew history and motifs represent a main aspect of Rosenberg's poetry identity. An underneath relationship is established between modern destruction, Jewish suffering, and Jewish dreams; all through an awareness of the power of myth. In the poetic world of Isaac Rosenberg, World War I poses for the sensitive consciousness of the sensitive artist an opportunity to establish connections between the reality and the dream of a specific ethnic group. The Jewish corrupt present is highlighted in terms of recurrent pre-Christian motifs and patterns of references. The various recurrent mythical allusions represent, most importantly, an immense task to glorify a past that suggests a primordial golden age in the Hebraic history and the dream of realizing a similar historical cycle in the modern history of the Hebrew ethnicity. Myth and ritual turns in the hands of the Jewish poet, in Rosenberg's case, into a bridge

between the glorious past and the corrupt fallen present. This attitude inspired him with a strong desire to join the war out of no patriotic convictions. Matalon, in this respect, underlines Rosenberg's strong tendency to relate art to ideology by stating that "there is something Jewish in Rosenberg's poetic text – that is to say, Isaac Rosenberg did evince a strong interest in Jewish history, and used Judaic imagery and intertext in his poetry, plays, paintings, and diaries" (30).

Old Testament stories, proper names, and names of particular places conceived of in the collective unconscious of the Jewish ethnicity as part of their culture inspire much of the images and ideas evoked in the soldier poet. World War I becomes part of the temporal conditions and is thought of as a recurrence of a primordial one. The very ancient stories are made to fit into the very modern experience: an act that reveals the poet's intention to understand the secular through the Scriptural and vice versa. Hence the significance of recontextualizing literary texts vis-à-vis the Scriptures out of which they emerge if a decoding of such texts be possible. As Sugirtharajaha points out, "Scriptures are not simply texts ... but narratives and scenarios for episodes of life, and along with reading, these invite and call for a more varied expression of interpretative avenues..."(95).

What happens in Rosenberg's manipulation of Jewish themes and images is that the original language of Scriptures is often transcended and a reality beyond it is visualized or sought after. In doing so, the poet is bent on subverting narratives. Hence Sugirtharajaha's warning that:

anyone who engages with texts knows that they are not innocent and that they reflect the cultural, religious, political, and ideological interests and contexts out of which they emerge.... The negotiated code is about how an event, action, or experience is interpreted or rearticulated to meet new theological or ideological situations (79).

This warning is, in effect, illumination of the way Rosenberg's poetry operates within cultural and religious contexts. Terry Eagleton, henceforth, views that the "text can no more be conceived as directly

denoting a real history than the meaning of a word can be imagined as an object correlated with it. Language...certainly denotes object; but it does not do so in some simple relationship"(*Criticism and Ideology*, 70). It is worth observing, in this respect, that in a great portion of his war poetry Rosenberg fails to liberate his war vision from the restrictions of his ethnic and cultural frame of reference. Thus, Wilfred Carnwell's states that the "basic question is not about Scripture, but is about us" (242). The main problem in this form of close intertextuality between literary texts and Scriptures is failure of the former to guarantee an ontological or semantic autonomy. So, the various paradoxical images of good and evil, death and life, annihilation and survival seem to be generated by an ethnic ideological orientation rather than a humanistic perspective.

Throughout Rosenberg's poetry Hebrew history and motifs inspired his experience of war in two ways. They represent the poet's method of celebrating an ancient glory of a pre-Christian Jewish historical cycle, on the one hand. They are also means of expressing the poet's horror and disgust at the effect of holistic wars that brought about the decline and downfall of a Hebrew golden age, on the other hand. The horror of the present Great War is intensified through the power of myth by means of establishing affinities between the decline and fall of modern civilization and that of an ancient Hebrew nation. In his endeavour to achieve this task, Rosenberg seeks to secure his poetry a systematic circular pattern in consonance with the cyclical movement of history. A tragic pattern of climax and anticlimax undergo the overall structure of the single poem as well as over the whole poems. A tragic effect is sought after in this case.

However, the recurrent attempts to mythologize Hebrew past and motifs are sometimes motivated by a strong sense of inferiority. In a considerable part of his war poetry Rosenberg partly reveals his preference for Jewish patterns of reference out of a defensive mechanism against what is in the collective unconscious of a whole ethnic group an expression of a long history of persecution and suffering. In his poem "Invisible Ancient Enemy of Mine" Rosenberg celebrates a long history of suffering that motivates him to glorify and welcome war as well. A full-length quoting from this poem may be illuminating in this context:

Invisible ancient enemy of mine
My house's foe
To rich my pride with wrongful suffering
Your vengeful gain
Coward and striker in the pit lined dark
Lie to my friends
Feed the world's jealousy and pamer woe.

O that the tortured spirit could amass
All the world's pains,
How I would cheat you, leaving none for life,
You would recount
All you have piled on me, self-tortured count
Through all eternity. (*The Collected Works*, 60)

The lines, undoubtedly, shed light on part of the dark area in the poet's consciousness that outspokenly or crookedly motivate him to texture his Jewish heritage into the general structure of his poetry. The same notion is strengthened by a great sense of exile guiding his technical approach. In his poem "The Exile" Rosenberg makes clear his cultural affiliations unequivocally. Being physically European represents for him a form of spiritual exile. His real existence, his paradise, usually belongs to a different culture:

A northern spray in an all human speech
To this same torrid heart my somewhat reach,
Although its root, its mother tree
Is in the North.
But O! to its cold heart, and fervid eyes,
It sojourns in another's paradise,
A loveliness its alien eyes might see
Could its own roots go forth.

O! dried up waters of deep hangering love!
Far, far, the springs that fed you from above,
And brimmed the wells of happiness
With new delight.
Blending ourselves to rob another's sun
Only its scorching glory have we won,
And left our own homes in bleak wintriness
Moaning our sunward flight. (66)

The systematic mythical structure of Rosenberg's Hebrew pattern finds echo in the poetry written before the war. The two attitudes motivating such Hebrew references are initiated, for instance, in his two poems: "Ode to David's Harp" and "Zion". The former is a celebration of a Hebrew national hero; the latter is a representation of Zion, or "Jerusalem" in terms of a beautiful but unattainable Jewish bride queen.

"Ode to David's Harp", written as early as 1905, highlights a collective desire to regain an old glory that is strongly believed to have existed once in an ancient historical era. In the opening section of the poem the apostrophe and metonymy are highly connotative:

Awake! Ye joyful strains, awake!
In silence sleep no more;
Disperse the gloom that ever lies
O'er Judah's barren shore.
Where are the hands that strung thee
With tender touch and true?
These hands are silenced too. (*The Collected Works*, 2)

The lines, it is observed, represent a lamentation over a dead past. They also expose a suppressed desire and a hope to have a David-like hero capable of writing the modern history of the Jews after the model of David's Psalms. The close relationship between attaining such a dream and the happening of a great war is alluded to in the second section of the same poem. In as much as David found in the ancient conflicts and tribal wars an opportunity to rally the Hebrew people about him, modern civilization is strongly sensed to give birth to a new Hebrew cycle:

The harp that faster caused to beat
The harp that throbbed for war,
The harp that melancholy calmed,
Lies mute on Judah's shore.
One chord awake – one strain prolong
To wake the zeal in Israel's breast;
Oh sacred hope, no more, how long?
'Tis vain, alas! In silence rest. (2)

Understandably, the celebration of war, the expression of its value and inevitability is a distinguishing quality of a good part of Rosenberg's war poetry and its mythical technique.

The closing section of the poem is a striking note of the forthcoming cosmic destruction; it anticipates Yeats's images of the blood-dimmed tide anterior to a "Second Coming" of a new historical cycle. Like Yeats after him, Rosenberg's manner is triggered to arouse in the reader feelings of pity, fear, and suspense:

Hark! The harp is pouring
Notes of burning fire,
And each soul o'erpowering,
Melts the rousing ire.
Fiercer – shriller – wilder fear
Than the iron notes of war,
Accents sweet and echoes sweeter,
Minstrel – minstrel, steeds fly fleeter
Spurred on by the magic strains. (2)

Commenting on this very poem Matalon views that: "Such imagery of Israel's glory in slumber, awaiting its reawakening or renaissance, was already standard in modern Hebrew poetry.... The 'Ode to David's Harp' is one of several instances of Rosenberg's appropriation and development of conventionally Eastern European Jewish themes in writing and painting" (30). The nostalgic mood presented in this poem is evocative of Rosenberg's understanding of history as moving in cycles; a turn of thought that anticipated Yeats's doing in "The Second Coming". In his poem "Creation", for instance, Rosenberg gives clues to this way of mythologizing history to serve his ideological purposes. The Christian historical cycle followed the Hebrew one – including the Greco-Roman civilizations --. Following the same hermeneutic method, Rosenberg visualizes that it may be a time of a second Hebrew cycle:

Moses must die to lie in Christ,
The seed be buried to live to green.
Perfection must begin from worst.
Christ perceives a larger reachless love

More full, and grows to reach thereof.
The green plant yearns for its yellow fruit.
Perfection always is a root.
And joy, a motion that death feed
Itself on light of its own speed,
And round its radiant circle runs,
Creating and devouring *suns*. [Italics mine] (*The
Collected Works*, 50)

Evidently, the passage gives insights into the collective unconscious of a whole ethnic group involved in a hermeneutic process of understanding the movement of history within the context of Scriptures. It is an inclination related to his general tendency to write about his experience of war rather than war itself.

In "Zion" a similar tendency to represent the present in terms of the very ancient is a glaring characteristic; a tendency deliberately pushing itself into his war poetry afterwards. The paradoxical images of war leaving behind various forms of corruption, decline, and fall of an ancient Hebrew glory are inspired by the very temporal state of affairs. War in this, and other poems, is represented ambivalently, to be hated but accepted at the same time. This celebration and lamentation of that ancient glory lost foreshadow the nature and function of a great deal of his war poems; the temporal and the timeless are reconciled, accordingly, to produce a magnificent form of expressing the personal and the collective as well. This becomes Rosenberg's familiar method of expressing his sense of horror and rejection of the corruption and ugliness of the present. War, in this manner, is both universalized and eternized at the same time. Ambivalence is stated within the course of the poem, however. Whereas war is portrayed in "Zion" to be the motive behind his sense of melancholy owing to the suffering and pain of "Jerusalem", he paradoxically conceives of war as the way to the solution: "The gates of morning opened wide / On seeing dome and steeple. / Noon gleamed upon the mountain -side / Throng'd with a happy people". (3)

In the last two quatrains of the poem, the speaker gets involved in moments of flashback to reveal his mixed feelings towards the holy city that has always been victimized by the oppressive wars over its long history:

Girt with that strength, first born of right,
Held fast by deeds of honour,
Her robe she move with rays more bright
Than Heaven could rain upon her.

Where is that light – that citadel?
That robe with hoofs of glory?
She lost her virtue and she fell,
And only left her story. (3-4)

Generally speaking, the two attitudes highlighted in “Ode to David’s Harp” and “Zion” represent the main framework within which operates much of Rosenberg’s war poetry that has affinities with his Jewish background. Both attitudes find more echo in other early poems notably: “Dawn Behind Night”, “The Dead Past”, “A Ballad of White Chapel”, and “Day.” The dominant motif in these poems is more developed and modified by the war experience itself afterwards.

As for the poems inspired by and written during the war itself, many poems stand clearly as instances of Rosenberg’s Hebrew interest in general. This long series of poems resting on Hebrew images and motifs is initiated by “Marching”, written late 1915. The poem, in a way, is a good model for his group of poems that reveal a predilection for oblique rather than direct statement. It relies for its effect on the metaphysical image of the movement of the soldiers’ hands as similar to the movement of the hands of the clock as moving back and forth to connect the past and the present together:

My eyes catch ruddy necks
Sturdily pressed back-
All a red brick moving glint.
Like flaming pendulums, hands

Swing across the khaki-
Mustard-coloured khaki-
To the automatic feet. (95)

In this poem, the movements of the hands of soldiers in khaki in a highly expressionist style related to the swinging of the pendulums that can set the clock back to revive the ancient glory of the poet's ancestors. In the second part of the poem the speaker becomes more straightforward in expressing his inner thoughts and feelings:

We husband the ancient glory
In these bared necks and hands.
Not broke is the forge of Mars;
But a subtler brain beats iron
To shake the hoofs of death,
(who paws dynamic air now).
Blind fingers loose an iron cloud
To rain immortal darkness
On strong eyes. (96)

Actually, in his allusion to the "ancient glory" and "the forge of Mars" and the strong desire to "shoe the hoofs of death", Rosenberg turns the poem into a form of parabolic performative. According to Matalon, "Rosenberg's concept of time included a Jewish past, Jewish present, and Jewish future that he considered to be different from other temporal systems. The poetic expression of 'Jewish time' is exemplified by the poet's recurring reference to Jewish history" (p. 31). Hence, in "Marching" the shift from pictorial description, in a pendulum-like movement, to link the soldiers marching with the movement of history is connotative of a suppressed desire to revive an "ancient glory". Thus when "describing the realities of military life, Rosenberg refuses to sermonize or moralize on their brutality of nature, but rather spotlights its '*reshaping*' and '*recreative quality*', states Crawford [*Italics mine*](p. 196). Thus, Rosenberg deliberately transforms the experience of war into a vaster vision of the necessity and inevitability of war itself. He is, in his process, more than a trench poet. Even his trench life taught him to assimilate his relationship with humans and objects alike in the course of crystallizing this vision. " We can see this process at work most impressively in the poems that fuse those sights taking place in front of him with the farthest reaches of his historical imagination. Here

the Hebraic themes and invocations...have been transformed into a mode of comprehension", comments Jacobson (566).

The movements of the soldiers' hands in "Marching" evoked the poet's hope and nostalgia. "The Jew" generates feelings of anger, dissatisfaction, and satire. Though a private soldier, Rosenberg takes pride that he is related more to Moses rather than modern commandship. He hopes that the current war may give birth to a modern Moses and a new Jewish cycle as well as stop abuses against him as a Jewish soldier:

Moses, from whose lions I sprung,
Lit by a lamp in his blood
Ten immutable rules, a moon
Far mutable lampless men.

The blond, the bronze, the ruddy,
With the same heaving blood,
Then why do they sneer at me. (101)

Clearly enough, the poem is inspired by the poet's war experience that generated in him a feeling of pride and superiority. The poet, accordingly, employs Moses as a symbol of an era of revelation and unity in the Jewish history. As a saviour from captivity and enslavement he remains a source of inspiration for the poet in his position as soldier and poet alike. The allusion gains greater value when related to the character of Moses in Rosenberg's verse play "Moses"; Moses is presented as a Jewish rebel hero rather than a revealed prophet, which is highly connotative:

I am a rebel, well?
Soft! You are not, and we are knit so close
It would be shame for a son to be so honoured
And the father still unknown.

So with these slaves, who perhaps dreamt of freedom,
Egypt was in the way; I'll strike it out
With my ways curious and unusual.
I have a trouble in mind for largeness,
Rough-hearted, shaggy, which your grave arduous lack.
Here is the quarry quiet for me to hew,

Here are the springs, primeval elements,
The roots' hid secrecy, old source of race,
Unseasoned reason of the savage instinct. ("Moses", *The
Collected Works*, 150)

Understandably, the representation of Moses in secular terms is highly suggestive in this verse play and in Rosenberg's poetry as well. The prophetic power of old Moses that emancipated the ancient Jews may be transformed into a modern force; a modern secular Moses can be found in a like manner. Divinity is restricted to Moses but heroism may be a proper substitute. This notion is to be related to the second part of "The Jew" whose speaker is oppressed by "The Blonde, the bronze, the ruddy" who follow Mosaic law and drive from Moses' stock, but who persist in sneering at the Jew. It is part of the notion of the Gentile's debt to and contempt for the Jew. War, in this way, intensified his sense of difference, personal and cultural, the matter that left its marks on a great deal of his poetry.

The group of poems described by critics as Rosenberg's vermin poems remains almost the finest aspect of his war poetry. While alluding obliquely to Rosenberg's images of the Jews and the non-Jews as related to the Jewish collective unconscious, they bear witness to his artistic power. "Break of Day in the Trenches", "The Immortals", and "Louse Hunting" are the three main poems in this group of vermin poems.

In "Break of Day in the Trenches" the speaker, a typically Jewish person, considers the situation and his ethnic background through the inward eye of a rat: "It seems you inwardly grin as you pass". The poet-rat autism is established and strengthened through the employment of the dramatic monologue. The rat stands for the speaker from the perspective that both are the scavengers of the trenches and the world; yet they are usually the oppressed and underestimated:

Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.
Now you have touched this English hand
You will do the same to a German
Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
To cross the sleeping green between. (103)

The Jewish speaker, impersonating himself in the form of a rat, is further given utterance in Rosenberg's play "Moses". The protagonist, as a Jewish rebel and hero, is described as "the rat who stole your last crumbs, / And gnawed the whole in your life which made time? Wonder" (148). The speaker-poet-rat relationship is to be understood in this context. The poem seems to hide more than it reveals accordingly as far as the images of the "self" and the "other" are concerned in Jewish terminology. Hence Donald Davie's statement that the poem is considered "a first-hand and faithful witness to a moment in the national psychology" (quoted by Childs, 46). The poem, in this context, unfolds a good part of its meaning parabolically. "Despite its brevity, the poem is replete with varied meanings and suggestions, all growing naturally out of a central incident.... The tone is quiet and unpretentious, reflecting the awakening consciousness rather than the reaction of an experienced and disillusioned observer", remarks Johnston (234). The reader of the poem, in this case, becomes a central element of the conflict represented as well as the mingled mysteries of violence, brotherhood, beauty, and death. The rat is employed symbolically to illustrate that war has always been a human activity. The rat, a non-aligned creature, is an eyewitness to the evilness of the supposed to be more "superior creatures", or "races". The weaker, the oppressed, and the downtrodden creature, while likely to be unobserved, seems to be more capable of arousing pity and sympathy. So, in spite of the superficial simplicity and commonplace of imagery, as based directly upon the trench life, it is obliquely employed to be thought provoking about the Jewish folkloric motif of an emasculated and oppressed "ethnic group" experiencing a modern Diaspora. As Johnston illustrates it:

On his own [Rosenberg's] testimony, however, he did not regard such productions as "Break of Day in the Trenches" as ends in themselves; he spoke constantly of grander projects in which the experiences captured in the lyrics would be incorporated.... Rosenberg seemed to disdain poetry of the "small-holding type".
(235 - 6)

“The Immortals” represents a variation on the same theme. It considers the poet’s conceptions of the “Self” and the “Other” from a war dialectical relationship between soldier and enemy. Rosenberg, in this and other similar poems, exercises one of his favourite devices of myth making; that is, his exploitation of language parabolically and his creation of subtexts within the framework of the single poem. Old Testament stories are skillfully transformed into modern Jewish terminology concerning the conceptions of Jews and Gentiles. The speaker, a true Jewish soldier, keeps the reader in suspense before he finally makes his meaning clear. Before that, he obliquely hints at an uphill struggle between two forces:

I killed them, but they would not die.
Yea! All the day and all the night
For them I could not rest nor sleep,
Nor guard from them or hide in flight. (107)

The conflict is turned into a struggle between good and evil, humans and non-humans – or vermins. The deeper meaning of the poem is to be reached in terms of fathoming the depths of the surrealistic images employed. Hence, the effect is greatly heightened in the second stanza:

Then in my agony I turned
And made my hands in their gore.
In vain – for faster than I slew
They rose more cruel than before. (107)

Crawford identifies this scene to be “one of carnage that could, have come from the Old Testament, a slaughter of thousands which ‘made my hands red in their gore’,” says Crawford (201). In the next stanza the speaker grows sarcastic and hardhearted in his confrontation with the enemy:

I killed and killed with slaughter mad;
I killed till all my strength was gone.
And still they rose to torture me,
For Devils only die in fun. (107)

In this part one of the most Jewish favourite terms is added to the previous ones. So, “slaughter” is mingled with “hands red” and

“slew” to heighten the poem’s effect. In the following stanza, the misconception of the demonic nature of the non-Jews – Gentiles—is intensified by the introduction of their non-human aspect:

I used to think of the Devil hide
In women’s smiles and Wine’s carouse.
I called him Satan, Balzebub.
But now I call him, dirt louse. (108)

The old/new representation of the non-Jews is revealed ironically in the closing lines of the stanza. This mock-heroic manner of character sketch is created by synthesizing the very ancient motif with the very modern notion with the object of deflating the “other’s” image in a highly oblique manner. The very fact of the intentionally defamiliarizing Old Hebrew motifs and excluding New Testament parables is highly connotative in this context. In Graham’s view accordingly:

The myth of the militarists have been redefined and answered by the facts of experience. For the central myth of “the Enemy” we have lice; for the belief in the effectiveness of aggression we have a fury that is unending and impotent; for the celebration of the joy of killing we have the tormenting nightmares of slaughter. A wisdom has been gained but it is not the discovery of glory or nobility. It is the mastery of disgust (152).

“Louse Hunting” gains a deeper meaning in its relation to “The Immortals”. The poem’s mood and connotation are greatly intensified by means of reconciling the temporal and the very ancient in one and the same context. The conflict undergoing the poem’s meaning and structure turns out to be a reflection of that between two divergent outlooks of good and evil:

then we all sprang up and stript
to hunt the verminous blood.
Soon like a demon’s pantomime
The place was raging.
See the silhouettes agape,
See the gibbering shadows

See the gargantuan hooked fingers
Pluck in supreme flesh
To switch supreme littleness. (108)

In these lines, Rosenberg “describes soldiers fighting lice in a macabre revel, and although the poem is laden with irony, there is also appreciation for the activity that the battle inspires,” comments Crawford (201). The complexity of language, the metaphysical nature of imagery, and the poet’s recurrent reference to the past in terms of the present and vice versa, all add to the poem’s merit. What Rosenberg does with the language of poetry is similar to the protagonist of his early short story, “Rudolph”, conceives of colours and painting: “My ideal of a picture is to point what we cannot see. To create, to imagine. To make tangible and real a figment of the brain. To transport the spectator into the other worlds where beauty is the only reality (*The Collected Works*, 227). A similar notion of the nature of the language he usually prefers for his writing is expressed in a letter to Miss Winifred Seaton, a schoolmistress he had met in 1910; he tells her of “genuine poetry, where the words lose their interest as words and only a living ...idea remains (*The Collected Works*, 230).

In “Returning, We Hear the Larks”, written during the Summer of 1917, Rosenberg reveals a sense of skepticism, pity, and disgust by linking the story about creation from the Book of Genesis to the present situation of mass destruction and mass slaughter. The story of the first seduction, the failure to subdue one’s desires, the serpent/Satan relationship are mixed in a way that incarnates the poet’s fear and his vision of a post-war type of life:

Death could drop from the dark
As easily as song—
But song only dropped,
Like a blind man’s dreams on the sand
By dangerous tides,
Like a girl’s dark hair from the dreams no
Ruin lies there,
Or her kisses where a serpent hides. (109)

The lines are highly ominous. The future of humanity is a one evoking the ancient story of the first fall of man and the original sin. So, the nature of "death" invoked in the first line is to be interpreted within the context of an

employment of implicit mythical pattern as related to the collective unconscious of humanity in general concerning the "song that only dropped". The whole context raises the Scriptural image of the beginning and end of creation through trumpet blows. The Satan/Eve relationship, furthermore, is presented as an evil omen added to the Old Testament prophecy of the end of life. The poem "ends as ominously as it began, with veiled threats in the closing similes", comments Crawford (202).

In fact, Rosenberg's war poetry textured into Hebrew history and motifs reaches a climax with his poems: "A worm Fed on the Heart of Corinth", "The Burning of the Temple" "The Destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian Hordes", and "Through These Cold Days". In the four poems the poet is having recourse to one of his most effective ways of expression, the intertextuality of literary text and cultural context. The sufferings and pains that, in his belief, his forefathers experienced in war are to be related to his own personal sense of loss and suffering as World War 1 soldier/poet. The mass destruction of Hebrew ancient cities and monuments is having close affinities of the modern situation; a modern cosmic Diaspora is also imminent.

In "A worm Fed on the Heart of Corinth" Rosenberg relates the First World War experience to the wider view of the movement of history. He places the present war into an historical perspective that includes Corinth, Babylon, Rome, and Troy, whose fall was not the result of Helen's abduction but of "this incestuous worm":

A worm fed on the heart of Corinth,
Babylon and Rome;
Not Paris raped tall Helen,
But this incestuous worm,
Who lured her vivid beauty
To his amorphous sleep.
England! Famous as Helen
Is thy betrothal sung
To him the shadowless,
More amorous than Solomon. (105)

Evidently, England is related to pre-Christian civilizations and historical contexts; this gives insights into the dark area of the speaker's consciousness. "After placing falling cities and nations in the context of an eternal impulse towards chaos and decay, Rosenberg addresses his own country", notices Crawford (200-1). The seemingly imminent downfall of modern Western civilization is, obviously, justified in terms of the speaker's ideology. The affinity established between England, Babylon, Helen, and Solomon is, undoubtedly, revealing of a strong desire to revive a specific historical era. Arditi may be illuminating in his view that: "this pairing is rich in implications, coming as it does from a poor Anglo-Jewish soldier poet with an increasingly acute sense of exile and captivity. In a letter from training camp, Rosenberg wrote that "no one but a private knows what is to be a slave" (*Collected Works*, 378). The lust that led to the end of Solomon's empirical cycle of forty years is the same sin leading to similar repercussions in the modern age. Thus, Rosenberg waywardly tries view conflict "in a vast and impersonal perspective", sees Crawford (201). The poem remains after all a clear expression of what Rosenberg conceived of as Jewish themes through his short life; he "did so in every medium of his expression. He drew heavily on Biblical and Jewish historical motifs to represent 'a notion of a fallen Jewish present," declares Matalon (31).

The "Burning of the Temple", likewise, reveals Rosenberg's ability as a mythmaker. He mythologizes the modern Great War by means of connecting it to the general fabric of the very ancient Hebraic history and motifs. The poem becomes an effort to universalize the Jewish sense of pain and suffering:

Fierce wrath of Solomon
Where sleepest thou? O see
The fabric which thou won
Earth and ocean to give thee—
O look at the red skies.
Or hath the sun plunged down?
What is this molten gold—
These thundering fires blown
Through heaven—where the smoke rolled?
A gain the great king dies. (115-16)

The mood of the poem, undoubtedly, is part of that generally shared by a whole ethnic group in its tendency to attribute world events to its own specific history. In the process, the recollection of the falling of power, grandeur, magnificence, and glory of the closing years of Solomon's rule is quiet connotative of the nearby decline and fall of a modern civilization involved in a cosmic holocaust. The destiny and dreams of modern man are closely linked to that of his civilization. The closing lines of the same poem obliquely highlights this fact in terms of establishing affinities between modern man and modern civilization, on the one hand, and the ancient Hebrew people and Solomon's regime, on the other hand:

His dreams go out in smoke,
His days he let not pass
And sculptured here are broke
Are charred as the burnt grass
Gone as his mouth's last signs. (116)

The evocation of Solomon and his enviroing glory is highly connotative in relation with the rise and fall of civilizations as preceded by great wars. Solomon is cited, in this context, to be a good symbol of the rise and fall of powers, past and present. "The Burning of the Temple", henceforth, " is one of the very last things he [Rosenberg] managed to scribble down. In it, Jerusalem and the ghastly landscapes of the Western front become one – and the great king, Everyman", comment Jacobson (566).

In "The Destruction of Jerusalem by Babylonian Hordes" the Jewish poet's saddest memories are greatly revived as a consequence of the mass destruction and mass slaughter brought about by World War I. Babylon is usually associated in the Jewish collective memory with an ancient epoch of captivity and enslavement by the Persian emperor Nebuchandenezzar. This period is that following the destruction of Jerusalem after a long period of flourishing and welfare. Then, "it was taken and utterly destroyed, its walls razed to the ground, and its temple and palaces consumed by fire, by... the king of Babylon", illustrates M. G. Easton (588). The images of Jerusalem's destruction are skillfully associated with those of modern warfare and the destruction of modern metropolis. The sense of horror and disgust is inspired in intensified by the images related to the present and the past as well:

They left their Babylon bare
Of all its tall men.
Of all its proud horses;
They made for Lebanon.

And shadowy sowers went
Before their spears to sow
The fruit whose taste is ash
For Judah's soul to know. (16)

The lines are, no doubt, inspired by Rosenberg's concern with the "Jewish time"; a concern demonstrated by an unending interest in "expressing the war through biblical imagery in terms of Jewish history. He linked the hopeless battle in France and the Flankers to Jewish history", observes Matalon (33). Equally significant, the above lines portray a deep sense of exile that the ancient Jews experienced after the destruction of Jerusalem. The same feeling, while extending to bosses the Jews in the present age, is more characteristic of the poet himself as a trench poet whose sense of exile is threefold: as a Jewish private trench soldier. Similarly, "the hopeless soldiers of 1918 look forward to a familiar exile", adds Matalon (33). The next part of the poem evokes more horrible images that arouse feelings of pity and fear in the speaker and reader alike:

They washed their grime in pools
Where laughing girls forgot
The miles they used for Solomon.
Sweet laughter! Remembered not.

Sweet laughter charred in the flame
That clutched the cloud and earth
While Solomon's towers crashed between
The gird of Babylon's mirth. (116)

The poem's biblical imagery and motifs, while invoking a past that the poet conceives of as related to him, provide him with the medium that enables him to express and mythologize his dense of horror as a First World War soldier. A degree of detachment and impersonality is also partially attained in this way. This tendency to associate the present to the past in the same composition is further inspired by, and

at the same time motivating Rosenberg, his strong desire to be sent to Jerusalem as part of the Jewish Battalion. As Matalon explains it: "The invocation of biblical Israel expressed a deep desire of Rosenberg's; unlike Sassoon [also Jewish], he wanted nothing more than to be posted to Palestine," (33). Rosenberg, in this respect, was obsessed with a strong desire to make the very modern Great War an occasion to make-up for a past glory lost. In "Girl to Soldier on Leave", for instance, the meaning becomes clear:

Pallid days arid and wan
Tied your soul fast.
Babel cities' smoky tops
Pressed upon your growth

Weary gyves. What were you,
But a word in the brain's ways,
Or the sleep of Circe's swine?
One gyves holds you yet.

It held you hiddenly on the Somme
Tied from my heart at home.
O must it loosen now? I wish
You were bound with the old old gyves. (115)

Rosenberg's last war poem "Through these Pale Cold Days," which dates two days before his death in battle, is inspired by the same feelings of loss and exile. It skillfully fuses the poet's wartime melancholy with Jewish history and his sense of a corrupt and fallen present:

Through these pale cold days
What dark faces burn
Out of three thousand years,
And their wild eyes yearn,

While underneath their brows
Like waifs their spirits graze
For the pools of Hebron again—
For Lebanon's summer slope.

They leave these blond still days
In dust behind their tread
They see with living eyes
How long they have been dead. (117)

The lines clearly present the speaker's mixed feelings of hope and despair about the past and the present. The ancient sorrows experienced by the old Hebrews are foreshadowing the modern dilemma of the Western world in general. Hence, "Rosenberg speaks not for himself but for his generation and the extremity to which it had been brought. The mood of the final year of the war is characteristically evoked in terms of the ancient sorrows and hopes of Hebraisms", declares Johnston (248).

In addition to Rosenberg's concern with "the Jewish time" in his war poetry, the recurrent allusions to classical myths add another dimension to his war vision. A sense of balance is secured to his poetry in this manner; its scope

is being widened, and a more interest in Western civilization is more obviously noticed. The main ideological fabric, nevertheless, can never be claimed to be broken, or the desired effect be weakened. All the classical mythical allusions are skillfully synthesized with and reconciled to the references to Hebrew motifs and Jewish history. So, the classical mythical references are variations on the same theme of the tragic vision of war as involved in dichotomies and paradoxes. In the process, most of the classical figures and places referred to represent an effort of enacting the poet's ideology of an inevitable process of "destruction and reshaping, recreation, reordering, regeneration, or rebirth".

What is remarkable about Rosenberg's recourse to an ancient-like vision of the universe and things in terms of dichotomies and paradoxes is that the division seems to be final and unchangeable. Hence, insight is somewhat needed in considering the way such mythical elements are textured into the poetry to form subtexts. The systematic method of Rosenberg's employment of classical mythical allusions can be traced in a passage of his early poem "Dawn Behind Night", written as early as 1909:

In the golden glare of the morning, in the solemn serene of the night,
We look on each other's faces, and we turn to our prison bar;

In pitiless travail of toil and outside the precious light;
What wonder we know not our manhood in the curse of the things
that are?
In the life or the death they dole us from the rags and the bone of
their store,
In the blood they feed but to drink of, in the pity they feign in their
pride,
Lies the glimpse of a heaven behind it, for the ship has left the shore,
That will find us and free us and take us where its portals are opened
wide. (4)

Throughout Rosenberg's war poetry, in effect, there are recurrent allusions to forms of the ancient Greek creation and fertility myths with the main "destruction & recreation" and "birth-death-rebirth" patterns. Two attitudes are to be traced in so doing. Firstly, a strong desire to reveal the negative effect of war as one bringing about what T. S. Eliot later on described in terms of a waste land. Secondly, this mythical technique is effectively employed by Rosenberg with the object to represent heroes and heroism within the framework of his vision of a nearby apocalypse. This classical pattern of reference is lacking in the Hebrew context; yet, Rosenberg endeavors to synthesize it with his Hebrew pattern of reference to form an integral whole. "The extreme desperation of his personal experiences, however, fostered a determination to deal—tentatively, at least—with material that he felt should be refined and enlarged to more significant proportions; hence the experimental nature... of much of his war verse", in Johnston's words (220).

As for Rosenberg's employment of an ancient Greek pattern of creation myth, the feelings of gloom, loss, and sense of formlessness are conveyed through this pattern of reference. Strangely enough, though the Old Testament book of Genesis contains similar stories of creation, Rosenberg seeks an authority in the very pagan. Rosenberg, in this respect, initiates this effort very early in his poem "On Receiving News of the War", written in Cape Town in August 1814. The sad news of war cast a dim light on the poem's mood. The reversal of seasons appears natural and reasonable as well in this case. The early news of the war find echo in the ominous images that evoke a sense of a nearby disaster and destruction; all to be related to the Greek creation myth:

Snow is a strange white word;
No ice or frost
Have asked of bud or bird
For Winter's cost.

Yet ice and frost and snow
From earth to sky
This Summer land doth know,
No man knows why. (75)

Rosenberg's power of evocation through myth, or his myth making, is quite felt in these two passages. It is an endeavour to wed the Greek creation myth to that of Persephone. "Snow", "ice", and "frost" are related at that very time to summer rather than Winter, which evokes the rape of Persephone – the queen of death – by Hades – the god of the underworld and death. Persephone in another story is herself a thief who has stolen Adonis from Aphrodite. These schemes are evoked by the poem's statement of the August "snow", "ice" and "frost" to be ominous of the return of "some spirit old". The poem is to be also obliquely related to the very ancient stories of deluge, destruction, and chaos. Underneath the surface structure of the poem, the Scriptural story of Noah's deluge is utterly felt to be synthesized with the pagan myth of creation. The war throws about a somber mood about this interconnection. The Great War is hoped, accordingly, to end the Hebrew modern Status state of inferiority terms of bringing about a form of cultural and political chaos having an effect similar to Noah's deluge that brought about a Semitic historical cycle.

The reversal of seasons employed in the poem turns out to be an instrumental tool in the poet's hand. It enables him to highlight the fact of the seasonal recurrence of war as part of the human experience since time immemorial. It is also functional in giving insights into the poet's latent desires, emotions, and hopes. The effect of war on man and civilization is concisely presented in third and fourth stanzas in a manner preceding that of T. S. Eliot in *The Waste Land*:

In all men's hearts it is.
Some spirit old
Hath turned with malign kiss
Our lives to mould

Red fangs have torn his face.
God's blood is shed
He mourns from his lone place
His children dead. (75)

In the closing stanza of the same poem Rosenberg invokes a pattern akin to that of the fertility myth. It connotes the eternal recurrence of war throughout the history of mankind:

O! ancient crimson curse!
Corrode, consume.
Give back this universe
Its pristine bloom. (75)

The lines are, in effect, highly suggestive of the poet's imaginative power that informed his myth transforming and myth making; it also reveals the absence of "patriotic sentiment and its refusal to exaggerate the need for an English victory", views Crawford (194). Rosenberg's ability to reconcile Scriptural imagery to classical mythical patterns of reference, moreover, heightens the poem's effect. "His conception of the evil of war is primordial, universal, almost apocalyptic; it is the 'ancient crimson curse' that so pervasively haunts the annals of Hebraism", states Johnston (222). Equally significant, it is at this stage of his poetic career that Rosenberg orients his artistic energy to project his sense of the presence of the timeless within the temporal historical reality. A desire to be more impersonal and detached in his approach to a war in which he is partly involved – at least as an English citizen— is quietly sensed. However, the prophetic vision inspired by the dreams and hopes of his ethnic group is not weakened, or marginalized.

"Lusitania" introduces to Rosenberg's war poetry one of the classical mythical terms, "chaos". It is partly revealing of the poet's strong belief in an imminent cosmopolitan destruction and anarchy prior to a process of "reshaping":

Chaos! That coincides with this militant purpose.
Chaos! The heart of this of this earnest malignancy.
Chaos! That helps, chaos that gives to shatter

Mind-wrought, mind-unimagining energies
For topless ill, of dynamite and iron.
Soulless logic, inventive energies.
Now you have got the peace-faring Lusitania,
Germany's gift - all earth they would give thee, Chaos.
(99)

This short poem is inspired by the accident of the sinking of the British passenger ship Lusitania with the loss of 1, 198 lives. "It is generally conceded that the sinking of the Lusitania was the first violation of neutral rights swing America's opinion away from isolation", illustrates Ian Parsons (*The Collected Works*, p. 99). The "chaos" attending this "militant purpose" does not seem to be all evil, as the poem really suggests. An undertone of welcome is, moreover, sensed in Rosenberg's conviction that it is a chaos "that helps", "chaos that gives to shatter/ Mind-wrought, mind-unimagining energies"; it is "Germany's gift" to "all earth". The conception of chaos gains, in addition, an ideological value textured into the context of an ancient Greek myth. Hence, the vision of "chaos" and "destructiveness" "recreated" and "reshaped" becomes deliberately constituted. This accounts for Rosenberg's celebration of "chaos" in Lusitania.

The mythologization of the Lusitania's accident in terms of the Greek myth of creation seems in consonance with Rosenberg's determinism displayed in the representation of a divine interference in the human affairs. It evokes the Promethean myth. Here is present an underneath conviction that the course of war may be determined to bring about another Hebrew historical cycle. In "Sleep", written 1915-1916, this touch of determinism is strongly felt; man has to accept Prometheus' fate:

What though the cunning gods outwit us here
In daytime and in playtime,
Surely they feel the gyves we lay on them
In our sleep.

O' subtle gods lying hidden!
O' gods with your oblique eyes!
Your elbows in the dawn, and wrists
Bright with the afternoon,

Do you not shake when a mortal slides
Into your own unvexed peace? (96)

The lines, in effect, evoke a tragic atmosphere similar to that created by ancient Greek tragedy. Humans are subject to suffering and punishment as a consequence of their daring and challenge of the wills and “ways” of gods. The tragic climax and anti-climax take place in the course of the modern Great War. What is expected, accordingly, is the final downfall of modern Western civilization so that a New World order be born. The poem, in this context, is a good model for Rosenberg’s way of interpreting historical events, on the one hand, and to create subtexts in his poetry, on the other hand; hence the value of his myth-transforming and myth-making. The poem may be interpreted within the context of Rosenberg’s conceptions of making and creation presented in other poems. “Creation”, written 1913, is a case in point. The poem considers Rosenberg’s conception that: “Perfection must begin from worst” (50). Shortly after, he elaborates on the idea by illustrating that:

A sun, long set, again shall rise,
Bloom in annihilation’s skies
Strong – strong—past ruin to endure,
More lost than bliss – than life more sure.
This universe shall be to me
Millions of years beneath the sea
Cast from my rock of changelessness
The centre of eternity
And uncreated nothingness. (50)

The echo of creation following nothingness and chaos governs, no doubt, the war poet’s thoughts and feelings. The poem is explanatory of the meaning of performative that is at the basis of Rosenberg’s employment of mythical patterns in general.

The image of creation following destruction as inspired by classical myths is portrayed more unequivocally in “At Sea-Point”, written in 1914. The poem’s speaker invokes God’s wrath so that annihilation and recreation may take place. The opening lines of the poem are highly connotative in this respect:

Let the earth crumble away,
The heavens fade like a breath,
The sea go up in cloud,
And its hills be given to death.

For the roots of the earth are old,
And the pillars of heaven are tired. (58)

As the lines demonstrate, the speaker is obsessed with a deep sense of dissatisfaction with Western civilization. Things seem to be falling apart, the centre cannot hold, as Yeats expressed it two years later in "The Second Coming". Rosenberg, however, conceives of the solution ideologically. It does not lie in the Second Coming of some divinity but rather in full annihilation and recreation out of a new cosmic void after the model of the Greek myth of creation. This sense of nothingness is, undoubtedly, generated by his socio-cultural background and inflamed by the war action.

Similarly, Rosenberg's skillful employment of a technique very like that of the fertility myth is a significant aspect of his modernism. The myth is not used in this context as a set of beliefs but rather as a pattern that recurs regularly in human life in various forms. Rosenberg exploits the fertility myth in two ways. First, there is a process of reversal of the cycle of seasons with the object to highlight the destructive impact of war on the different levels of human life. Rosenberg, in addition, discovers in the pattern of myth a great source of inspiration and a fitting framework for his conception of heroism and immortality; that is, his paradoxical images of accepting disaster and death as the sole means of gaining salvation and a final sense of triumph. Rosenberg's group of poems: "Midsummer Frost", "April Dawn", "Spring 1916", "The Dead Heroes", and "Dead Man's Dump" stand out clearly as models for Rosenberg's mastery of myth making as far as the fertility myth pattern is concerned.

In "Midsummer Frost" the seasons are presented as losing their genuine qualities so that the sense of order and balance is quite violated in the present conditions; the human consciousness is itself losing its balance and direction as well:

A July ghost, a ghost at the strange winter,
Wonders, at burning noon, (all summer seeming),
How, like a sad thought buried in light words,

Winter, an alien presence, is ambushed here.
See from the fire-fountained noon there creep
Lazy yellow ardours towards pale evening,
To thread dark and vain fire. (85)

Loaded with the Great War atrocities, the last part of the poem makes for a reconciliation of the fertility myth pattern and Hebrew memories of pain and suffering as latent in the poet's subconscious. The gloomy and somber atmosphere that the winter weather cast on the brightness and loveliness of summer is new feelings obsessing modern Western man similar to those created in the Jews in ancient Babylon:

Underneath this summer air can July dream
How, in night-hanging forest of eating maladies,
A frozen forest of moon unquiet madness,
The moon –drunk haunted pierced soul dies;
Starred by its Babel folly, lying stark,
Unvexed by July's warm eyes. (85)

The stanza is deliberately intended to arouse the reader's feelings of horror, pity, and sympathy as harmonious with those feelings generated in the poem's speaker as related to the ancient Jewish history and as a modern Jewish wasteland refugee.

In "April Dawn" a similar sense of loss and lack of harmony is deliberately highlighted:

Pale light hid in light
Stirs the still day-spring;
Wavers the dull sight
With a spirit's wing.
Dreams, in frail rose mist,
Lurking to waylay,
Subtle-wise have kist
Winter into May. (88)

In "Spring 1916" Rosenberg's reverses the very pattern of the fertility myth to demonstrate his anger, fear, scorn, and even loath in a way that anticipates T. S. Eliot's endeavours in *The Waste Land*.

Rosenberg, therefore, maintains the fact that the spring of 1916 is different from its habitual recurrence:

Slow, rigid, is this masquerade
That passes as though a difficult air;
Heavily --heavily passes.
What has she fed on? Who her table laid
Through the three seasons? What forbidden fare
Ruined her as a mortal loss is? (102)

In this stanza the speaker wonders what "forbidden fare" "has ruined Spring (using the Persphone myth)", recalling former seasons, and wondering how "spring has become 'so ghastly'", voices Crawford (196). The rape of spring by the other three seasons is reminiscent of the rape of Persphone by Hades, the usurpation of beauty by death. The poem's closing section strongly echoes the concluding lines of "On Receiving News of the War":

Who lured her vivid beauty so
To be that strained chilled thing that moves
So ghastly midst her young brood
Of pregnant shoots that she for men did grow?
Where are the strong men who made these their loves?
Spring! God pity your mood. (102)

Understandably, the lines in their evocation of the sense of destruction, loss, and ugliness are anticipating Eliot's representation of the post-war Thames.

Another aspect of the fertility myth pattern is exploited to reveal Rosenberg's visions of heroism, death, and rebirth; all are also to be synthesized into his images of destruction and recreation. The life of heroism as the sole way of gaining salvation and immortality, for instance, is often recurrently dramatized throughout Rosenberg's poetry in this mythical technique.

"A Ballad of White Chapel" initiates this tendency to apply the pattern of the very ancient myth to modern states of affairs. In the poem's opening quatrain, the "bliss" succeeding pain, suffering, and "grief" is obviously alluded to:

God's mercy shines,
And our full hearts must make record of this,
For grief that burst from out its dark confines
Into strange sunlit bliss. (5)

The life of sacrifice becomes a sure way of achieving a form of immortality and peace of spirit: "For I could catch the glimpses of God's grace, / And desire awake." (6)

The meaning is developed further in "the Dead Heroes", written in 1914. Glory and immortality are represented as rewards awaiting those who are ready to sacrifice their lives for the supreme good of their causes. The opening stanza is greatly striking in its dominant apostrophe:

Flame out, you glorious skies,
Welcome our brave,
Kiss their exulted eyes;
Give what they gave. (91)

Heaven is represented in these lines in terms of a goddess waiting for her great heroes to resuscitate and immortalize them in return for their greatness. Hence, the implicit presence of the destruction-recreation, or death-rebirth orders.

The earth's image in "Dead Man's Dump" is more definite and suggestive of the presence of the fertility myth pattern:

Earth has waited for them
All the time of their growth
Fretting for their decay:
Now she has them at last!
In the strength of their strength
Suspended---stopped and held

What fierce imaginings their dark souls lit
Earth! Have they gone into you?
Somewhere they must have gone,
And flung on your hard back
In their souls' sack,

Emptied of God-ancestral essences.
Who hurled them out? Who hurled? (110)

The whole poem is structured, in fact, into a metaphysical image of earth as a mother's womb receiving its sons back before endowing them with a new form of life. Peter Childs illustrates that by "simultaneously looking to images of mortality and immortality, Rosenberg points to the end of the war and the kinds of death and rebirth envisaged in Eliot's postwar analysis in *The Waste Land*" (52-3). The image is inspired, in fact, by trench life itself where the living and the dead were located in the earth's bowls. "The earth is where the dead are (or will be) buried, but it is also the place in which the living are located –literally in and under the ground- in trench warfare.... Yet, the earth is often the only place of safety in trench warfare and is figured as a welcoming, encompassing, safe place". reveals Trudi Tate (88). Earth in this poem should be related to a similar one in "Break of Day in the Trenches". In the latter, the speaker finds connections between the "bowls of the earth" in "the torn fields of France" and the ritual in the fertility myth:

It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes
Less chanced than you for life,
Bonds to the whims of murder,
Sprawled in the bowls of the earth,
The torn fields of Franc. (103)

Here earth is represented as a goddess waiting for her lovers before giving them immortality. However, "Break of Day in the Trenches" does equal "Dead Man's Dump" in strength and magnificence. Rosenberg in the latter transcends human weakness emerging in moments of crisis and catastrophe and approaches epic grandeur and mythical composure and greatness.

The effect of "Dead Man's Dump" is greatly heightened when juxtaposed to its sequel poem "Daughter of War", written before May 1917. The poem reconciles the ancient Greek myth to the Old Testament story of the "Sons of God and the Daughters of Men". Crawford points out in this concern that "the Daughters of war are Amazons who lust after mortals" (199). The Amazons in old Greek mythological stories are female warriors whose land was reigned by

the beautiful Queen Hippolyte. The mentioning of the Amazons, similarly, evokes Hercules' strength and courage. Hercules conquered the land of the Amazons, was welcomed by their queen who willingly offered herself to him, but out of mischievous scheme he slew her. The story is as important to Rosenberg in as much as it synthesizes the ideas of supremacy, oppression, and persecution in the single text. Hence the reconciliation of the Greek and the Hebrew, or art and ideology is highly connotative in this, as well as in many similar contexts.

The poem opens with dramatizing the Amazons' physical and spiritual peculiarities:

I heard the mighty daughters' giant sigh
In sleepless passion for the sons of valour.
And envy of the days of flesh
Bearing their love with mortal boughs cross--
The old bark burnt with iron wars
They blow to a live flame
To char the young green days
And reach the occult soul; they have no softer lure
No softer lure than the savage ways of death, (112).

Rosenberg, in this poem, is caught up in a biblical/pagan attitude towards enemies: to be captured and enslaved. "Through a story of Vakyrie-like women who take their lovers from fallen warriors, he conveys the wonder and fear of this sudden metamorphosis from vitality to death", illuminates Graham (153). But the ceremonial way of receiving, preparing, and celebrating the Amazons' new lovers is greatly consonant with and integral to the "Dead Man's Dump" where Earth is envisioned as a place to which the dead soldiers return before being resurrected by the Amazons:

We were satisfied of our lords the moon and the sun
To take our wage of sleep and bread and warmth--
These maidens came--these strong ever-living-
Amazons,
And in an easy weight their wrists
Of night's sway and noon's sway the sceptres brake,
Clouding the wild - the soft lustres of our eyes.
Clouding the wild lustres, the clinging tender lights;

Driving the darkness into the flame of day,
With the Amazonian wind of them
Over corroding faces
That must be broken- broken for evermore
So the soul can leap out
Into their huge embraces. (112-13)

The poem, by invoking the Amazons' images, also invokes that of Hercules himself. The power and valor of that mythical figure is endowed to those dead soldiers who visit the Amazons' land after heroic actions and death. The relationship between the Amazons and the dead soldiers become firm; the other connotations of the very ancient story are similarly evoked. According to Graham, in "the passion of these women, Rosenberg had found an equivalent force to that of the destruction death brings. Within the myth he portrays, however, it is not the women who matter but the removal of men from the reach of purely human tenderness" (153).

At the end of the poem, one of the Amazons speaks in explanation of what they do. She would excuse such destruction in the same way Rosenberg himself accepts it:

My sisters force their males
From the doomed earth, from the doomed glee
And knowing of hearts.
Fail hands gleam up through the human quagmire and
lips of ash
Seem to wail, as in sad faded paintings
For sunken and strange.
My sisters have their males
Clean the dust of old days
That clings about those white hands
And years in those voices sad.
But these shall not see them,
Or drink of them in any days or years,
They are my sisters' lovers in other days and years. (113)

The lines, while caught up in the fertility myth pattern, are revealing of the inner structure of the Hebrew consciousness that denies those who are killed or become weak. In a sense, Rosenberg in this poem "strives to get that sense of inexorableness the human (or inhuman)

side of this war has. It even penetrates behind human life for the 'Amazons' who speak in the second part of the poem is imagined to be without her lover yet, while her sisters have theirs, the released spirits of the slain earth men", reveals Rosenberg in a letter to Edward Marsh, July 30, 1917, (*The Complete Works*, 260).

Accordingly, Rosenberg has managed to texture Jewish history and motifs as well as classical myths into the general fabric of his war poetry. He could integrate the classical creation and fertility myths into the general structure of his poetry. Both are skillfully manipulated to fit into his situation as a war poet advocating and celebrating the conception of heroism and immortality. They are also reconciled to his Jewish belief in the idea of Apocalypse succeeding destruction and chaos.

As has been shown above, Rosenberg is a war poet with a different water. His war vision is thought provoking as well as questionable since it gives insights into succeeding historical and ideological changes on both sides of the Atlantic as far as the conception of the clash of cultures is concerned. The ideas of destruction and reshaping, The Second Coming of an Apocalypse succeeding overwhelming anarchy, and the superior / inferior race dichotomy find clear echoes in Rosenberg's war poetry. His poetry, in this context, relies for its effect on myth making. A pre-Christian pattern of reference stands as a remarkable aspect of Rosenberg's poetry. Old Testament stories, Jewish history and motifs, as well as ancient Greek myths inspired Rosenberg's technical achievement. This manner of myth making widened the scope of his poetry, on the one hand, and enabled him to establish a strategy of difference from the other war poets, on the other hand. It is part of Rosenberg's insistence that war has no real significance unless it is viewed in terms that are larger and more universally valid than those of patriotism, humanitarianism, or simple personal involvement. The scope of lyric itself has been widened so much that the lyric only partially sufficed for the expression of this awareness; awareness that seemed to demand, in virtue of its profundity, a fuller and more objective expression in narrative or dramatic form. In this way, Rosenberg's poetry, it is recommended, should be considered in relation with the ideological framework that informed both its war vision and the pattern of reference adroitly textured into this vision itself.

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Myth Making in the Poetry of Isaac Rosenberg

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