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## Recurrence: A Prose-Poem

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# RECURRENCE

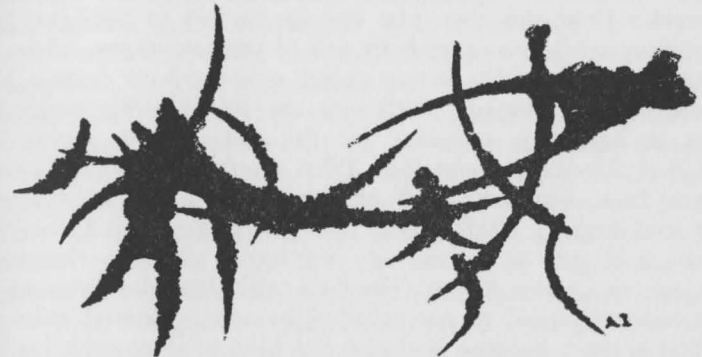
## A Prose-Poem

BY NIKOS STANGOS

Fast, fast, faster, to the closed, tightly closed-eyes of the corpse. Faster, faster to dig the flesh, to dig the life away in dirty earth-muscles. Devour, devouring everything: the black mothball-smelling formal dress of the funeral, the stiff white shirt and the collar, the white clean underwear, all. But first to the eyes, the nose, the lips; this is where the worms first rush; the corpse lying there always quiet, calm and in peace, in the breast and the blood of the first and last womb, undressed, tortured, made fun of by the worms, devoured and calm. Nothing, nothing to bother about, no annoying tickling in the nostrils and the corners of the eyes, no worms to tickle the limbs, and the naked, candlenaked shoulders. Deep, deep, deeper buried in eternal resignation and pleasure, deep in the mud from which we are or are not created but for which we always secure a repressed admiration, deep buried the corpse breathes a breath of its own, a calm breath of seadreams, an eternal breath singing and laughing, covering the whispering of friends and relatives who plant flowers and sigh over the graves. Sleep, sleep, always sleep, sleep sweet death and the dead. My lover's corpse has taken a sleeping-pill of necessity.

He lifted his eyes up and looked at the coffin-lid. It was a very regular coffin-lid, wooden and regular like the forehead of a young boy that has fallen asleep with a finger in his mouth. A red shadow, though, with a shape like the breast of a dead prostitute; and what to think when there are people who can never understand and they never will because they are mere accidents, accidents. O, who ever heard of the existence of somebody else when there is no way of knowing, when the child is asleep and there is no way of knowing whether he is asleep or not. And then the dream. A lake of green shadows rapping your thighs, and the red shadow on the coffin-lid without any meaning but the meaning of itself. There are no meanings perhaps; and always trying to find one. Whoever thought of something having a meaning, and when we impose meanings on things because of our unsatisfied wishes, when we impose meanings

there is nothing left of the object that the meaning has been imposed on. Nothing left, because meanings have no colors or anything else. They don't even have mouths, and they cannot speak, they cannot cry, they have no tears. And what can you do without tears, how can you take all the fire and the force which curls and fights in the



breast . . . And just imagine that he pretended that he had no idea about it. He pretended as a mouse pretends that he has not seen the cheese on the trap. I could have blown his face up and then he would have to smile facelessly. His smile would be a mere meaning; how ridiculous. Maybe a public scandal would be better . . . But how can one receive the unexpected kindness which is sincere for sure, but, again, the doubt, a swollen aberration of a doubt; pity? Love? Spite? Which?

Down in the valley there are naked women washing their clothes, and the grass is growing, the grass is growing, and where can the kiss be, the sweet kiss of the Mayflower, and the Maymoon, and all the Maylittleloves which wander above and beyond in pools of light. And the sea grows all the fish in her eyes, the sea, my love, a million years' passion, the moving force which is an eye and a womb and a body and a breath and all, all, all the redblue pulses of

my blood. Kiss me, kiss me as you walk over the clouds, and he answered that he was not walking over the clouds because it was going to rain. But the rain is weeping, he remembered some lines from an old little play when he was waiting for the people to love and cherish him in their dreams as his mother and his lovers used to do; or didn't they? O light with a thousand hands and a thousand eyes and a thousand loves, love me. And as he walked down in the street with the curves and the danger waiting in every one of the curves, he played with a little god of a chain in his right hand, and the left hand was full of all, of all the nothingworthwhilessofar, and we will consider your case again, we will give you a definite answer in a week's time and then you can go to hell or you can go on masturbating while young girls fly out of your windows. Little, little to think about, and little to cry about, and much to despair about, and you despair, despair, until you are full of little sympathetic cancers to keep you company for the rest of your death. What would Berkeley think about that. What would he think if I were to persuade him that there isn't anything but myself, and this self higher and higher, 400,000 feet above everything and everybody, but still, and yet, or rather not, not lower all these thousand in depth, no, no, never, never. The hell with Berkeley who tried to distort nature instead of the so-called humans. Material substances, like objects, exist, because Berkeley too used to sleep with his finger in his mouth when he was a boy two feet tall and a heart empty of tears and full of nothing; he didn't even know that he had a finger afterwards, he gave up the idea of his finger and he took up the idea of his soul as if one could suck or play with a soul.

He squeezed his breath: Sweet river kiss my lips and never forget me. He would get out of bed and walk barefooted toward a window. The sun would be licking everything outside: the trees, the pavement, tired people hurrying to their dull work. Two birds would be sitting on the rail of the small veranda out of the window. Two sparrows tasting the first drops of the spring which dropped down from the new buds of the old trees. The two birds would be talking to each other in a high tone, the sun, the trees, the drops of dew, the morning with a hundred sleepy eyes and a heart made of wrinkled clouds. There would be no danger to fly down and start picking at the slice of bread which the old spinster had left out of her window for them. There would be no danger at all; but they would consider it seriously, with uplifted eyes and uplifted voices, swearing at the old spinster for not having thrown the bread a little further on the ground where it would be much easier to get without any fear or trouble. Spinsters are always doing the wrong thing in essence and

in action and they could never become existentialists because they have no existence to precede their action: the cold bed in the winternights the cold bed asking for somebody to wrinkle it with his dirty feet and his smelling breath and the nauseating odor of next morning; the cold lonely winternights when essence precedes existence, and always the same, recurring eternally, leaving its traces on every furniture in the tidy room, on the ceiling and the walls with the worn-out romantic paintings of a satyr raping a plump virgin, the lamp with the old decorations of grapes and another satyr hiding his nakedness behind the ripe purple, though not exactly purple, of the fruit. The ripe fruit, a pure condition of existence, a condition without essence, quite contrary to what a poor old spinster would expect to ever achieve: the neat bedspread covering the sinful sheets and the pillow, and the wishdreams with their washed away fauvistic colors, the vase, wreathed-flower vase, a necessary consolation, fading-shadow of old expectations of weddings and the pleasure of throwing away the bouquet to the ugliest of the girls. But no such pleasures, everything old like an old pair of shoes discovered after ten years in a cupboard with old things in it. The two birds flew away and hurried to make love at the top of a tree, an ancient, prehistoric revenge for old spinsters who always lack imagination because their imagination has faded away with all the orgiastic exertion repressed down to the center of a featherpillow.

Pavlo among the nightingales his father used to call his when there were visitors at home. The nightingales are queer birds, he used to sigh, they sing unceasingly without having any comprehension of the real problems of life, like the wife who has to be satisfied at least two times a week. And Pavlo was now deep buried in an unwelcomed grave. Thinking and breathing, looking at the red shadow on the coffin-lid, and where is hell or paradise, though there is an eternal life, a nauseatingly eternal consciousness of death or life, or both, deep buried in the bones of the corpse. How can there be an eternal life which is linked to the soil and the waters and the spade of the sun after the rain, but still, but still, never before have I embraced the soil so tightly, feeling its fertility between my thighs, and the taste of dead and eternal birds on my lips, and the taste of the sea forever forgotten in an ancient dream with curtains welcoming the white waves and their softpalmed love on the shell of one's heart. Who can embrace so tightly that earthly eternity but the corpse, my love a corpse, more alive in the eternal clutches of an eternally recurring earth. This is where eternity is: in the deep cycles of the water or the dream, in the feminine movement of the sea where Pavlo was drowned when he was twenty years of sun. Nothing to

please as one wants to be pleased, nothing to last eternally but the deep cycle of death which is the cycle of life and of recurrence. Death in the breast of the sun, and Pavlo loving the element like an eternal mistress, in her deep thighs the eternal orgasm, the eternal moment, death, life in its highest point, an absolute and unalterable everything. Lying drowned and alive at the bottom of the sea, between two black rocks, the water green around him, the taste of salt on his lips and the embarrassed eyes of the fish deciding his eternal fate. Naked, beautiful and calm he would have watched the procession of fish and mermaids approaching him, playing through the locks of his hair, singing his songs in the echo of empty seashells.

But the drops of the dream on the dry wishful lips never come, they never cool the passion which howls in the dark secrets of the blood.

Drop — never a drop to dissolve  
And never a dream in a drop to  
Dissolve  
The drop always hanging  
Never reaching, never dissolving  
But hanging from the fountainmouth of the sun  
Dropdrop the dream on the green eyelashes  
Dropdrop the moon spreading her hair in the forest  
Drop in a drop the dream  
Never a drop but a movement

and Pavlo swollen in the sea looking straight in the sun's eyes. Waves lulling his swollen flesh, winds whispering between them in horror, the rotten flesh projecting its shadow on the faceless sky.

The sailor with the angry hands looked at the sea lovingly: Mother, God, Virgin Mary, how beautiful she is, how false, how deceiving, moving her hips between my thighs, O, Mother, God, Virgin Mary, when she knelt and buried her head between my loins; she looks calm now but the tempest is hiding in the center of her breasts . . . those breasts, when they jumped and whirled excited on my face, and into my mouth, and on my breasts, like the sun that is rubbing the belly of the sea now, and there could be no God who created all this beauty, but beauty itself, the sun, the sea, her belly on my belly and our thighs clutched together in the promises of death; there can be nothing like her lips, a pear, a mouthful of sea when there is no tempest in it, when there are no corpses of dead horses.

Years without number, and years without meaning, years under the sun penetrating the surface of the earth and of the sky; all ages drowned in the sea, the cradle of eternity, of existence, of everything

which we have or haven't known, the kiss, the tempting arms of men and women, the tempting sky, fish with their dead eyes and dead eyes of young decomposed lovers who loved and hated and suffered from life, in life, creating and annihilating life in one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, numberless eternal moments. Eternity rolling on the sea, from wave to wave, from shore to shore, from color to color, from body to body, from sailor to sailor all of them with angry hands, all of them brothers of the light and of the night, watching the element, eternally watching the element and eternity rolling on it.

Detached.

The sailor detached and the swollen corpse detached from the sailor until they meet and they surprise each other. The sailor lifts the body, the boat hasts toward the shore, the policemen, telephone calls, relatives with heir swollen eyes and empty hearts, the *consumatum est*, tears, the soil, the flowers, the incense burning holes in the nostrils, the coffin, and the coffin-lid heavy with artificial mourning, and then darkness, the eternal darkness, motionless, eight feet down in the breast of the earth full of worms and sterile imagination.

Pavlo among the nightingales, his father used to call him, and when his father died burying forty years of meaningless handshakes in a dark cool grave, Pavlo waved his joy to the long black hair of his young mother: maternity on top of the sun, on top of life, on top of everything meaningless, maternity like a seaweed in the eternal womb of the sea, the big black eyes and long black eyelashes.

Nobody has ever known the name of what I carry at the bottom of my being: a dream perhaps, the desperate fingers of the creator, the eyes of a mother searching the forehead of a newborn child, the newborn child older and younger than everything, everything new, everything different for everybody, everybody different, dragging behind him the unknown, nameless, faceless, motherless something at the bottom of his being. And who can understand? Who can ever melt the unknown name, his unknown name, into the unknown of another? Who can ever say: this is the beginning and this is the end, when there is no beginning and no end? Who has ever seen his self springing from the orgasm of a man and a woman who unite, love hate, and are destroyed in the clutches of a meaningless boredom? And the sun setting in his eyes, the sea, his hands, his yellow face, those eyes, my eyes, o, have I ever seen, have I ever touched the existence of all these things, the anxiety of this age, time, the present and the past linked together? Is there no beginning and no end? Pavlo? (Or is he?) The coffin-lid? The sea? The worms? The red shadow? The maternal rose? What?