

SYMEON VOLCHKOV – ETERNAL LOVER OF BEAUTY

CYPRIT SONNETS

(2)

p. 138

*My longed-for dream awakes and strides
Across the ocean's wide expanse,
O'er the waves my swift craft glides,
And leads me on to unknown lands.*

*Musical as chords from an instrument,
One from the engine, one from the sails,
How can your dreams not soar on wings?
My thoughts become birds on Parnassus.*

*The blessing of your vastness, Lord!
Here, far from life's futility,
Lighthearted, joyful, free, your son
Writes poems of his Motherland.*

*O, rejoice in this moment, my soul,
While the flame still burns within!*

WHEN THE SOUL'S SACRED MUSE SINGS

(1)
(Excerpt)

p. 140

*All here is in bloom, and sweetly fragrant,
Paradise sings in the very stones.
Yet flight cannot sooth the pain I feel,
with heart and soul I mourn for my Home.*

*Wistfully, I gaze upon the world,
There, where heaven's bright diamonds glow,
And the sacred Muse sings sorrowfully
Of life's false treasures here below.*

*Conversing with the blazing sky
I am compelled the cosmos to enfold
And from a far-off sapphire star
Mindfully I radiate signals to a friend.*

*Until the source of life has dried
I will believe in friendship and my sacred faith.*

ALBATROSS

(Excerpt)

p. 142

*What seek you far in ocean's depths,
Strange emissary of the gods themselves?
Traveller with a pilgrim's soul,
Escaping dull routine's ordeal.*

*Evening voyager on mighty seas,
Foreteller of storms, of Destiny,
I am your brother! I suffer like you,
I live like you in a world of dreams.*

*One half of me in Russia,
The other rooted in mother Ukraine,
I was born to be a Christian
And like the albatross, my quest is Freedom!*

O, MY HAPPINESS, SWEET BROWN EYES!

p144

*O, my happiness, sweet brown eyes!
Of my springtime the crimson dawn!
Caress me with your love so pure,
Let me in Greece's holy passion burn!*

*You light at dusk our humble home,
your glance as bright as emeralds burns,
With radiance greater than the poet's light,
Illuminating the pure heart of songs.*

*Outside, with hues of amethyst
The flowering lilac beckons us.
To its beauty one day I'll devote a verse,
And rouse myself from the apathy of age,*

*Singing of those eyes
which shone with rare beauty.
To ensure that our love is not forgotten,
I will burn in the flames of creation.*

*For I failed to revive my treasure,
Though I wept bitter tears as I prayed.
But before my sweet brown eyes left me
She forbade me to weep for yesterday.*

(9)

VIOLET CLIFFS

p. 146

*When waves at sea in tempests break,
Violet cliffs appear suddenly
And rise through pearly mists like ghosts,
Guarding their secrets silently.*

*And in the storm, with red-hot fire,
Kindled by Neptune in his wrath,
The mighty rocks rise up at once,
To quell the apparition's breast*

*And crags on cliffs invincible,
Witness events beneath the waves,
The hidden mystery of unknown graves,
'Neath the emerald thread of eternity*

*And forever and anon the wave,
Uncompromising, fights them with rage*

P147

*The red gold fire of maple leaves,
An autumn carpet of gold and green,
Beside the river the emerald elms,
Our meadows and woods adorned by these.*

*Roads run far off on the horizon
And beckon me to my nebulous fate,
The horned moon in the sky looks down,
Peeps through her fingers, and all but weeps.*

*The ears of corn anxiously whisper,
Bow down to the earth again and again,
As if paying tribute to one who lies there,
Deeply hidden until the new dawn.*

STAVROVOUNI

p.148

*The road winds sharply around the curves
And leads me up to an abbey on high,
A monastery on magic nests of clouds
Floats above the world, close to the sky.*

*High on the rock, on the impassable road,
In violation of all earthly law,
Crouched among thorns on the precipice,
The sight fills pilgrims' hearts with awe.*

*I enter the sanctuary of the cells
Of sainted monks in robes of black,
Obedient sons of the omnipotent Lord,
And the crucifix sinks into the azure realm.*

*There, where in faith we kneel to the Creator,
Eternal symbol of our faith in life.*

*Recently in my dream I saw the steppes,
And a train rattling rhythmically along
In a nameless myth by a new Homer,
Setting out for the station's glimmering town.*

*So madly in love, and so deeply,
That only your soul can know,
In the light of the magical moon,
When your breath is snared in your throat.*

*Captives of a love deeper than earth,
by shining stars alone canopied.
O, what tenderness and passion I felt,
When I touched you by chance before we wed.*

*O, the pity of it, that the train of life
Carried us so far from the station of dreams...*

THE SEA

(16)

p. 152

*I yearned for the sea long before I saw it,
And in the most magical way,
My soul was fired by images and tales
Of Black Sea tempests, with mighty waves.*

*Like life itself, the sea casts spells,
Its mystery moved me from the very first day,
And as I grew I gave myself to it with fervour,
despite the demon's protests, it held me in its sway.*

*At heart an artist, at naval school,
I was not far from attaining my dreams,
But everything turned upside down
When I met Her, the love of my life.*

*Destiny united us on the sea's salty highway
Who would deny such a crown of happiness?*

ONLY IN LOVE IS BEAUTY BORN

*With so many graces were you born,
Only one of these I could not describe,
Your words became harmonious deeds,
You lived not in wealth but in sacrifice.*

*Flashes of joy and warmth of love!
Without these, life is meaningless
Without them, all is vanity and hate.
Only in love is Beauty born!*

*Only in the commingling of two souls
Can life be lived in beauty and joy.
Indifferent to life's tedium,
Love will repair and heal all your ills.*

*In honesty I say and cry aloud:
Only your soul mate can bring you joy.*

LARNACA 'S VIOLET BAY

(Excerpt)

p.164

*Larnaca's violet bay
Melts into a cobalt sky
Which scatters diamonds far and wide.
And a vision comes to me:
A mysterious dialogue begins
Between the frigate's lights
And a voice divine.*

SCENT OF LILACS

pp. 168-9

*Scent of lilacs,
peaceful night,
gold drips from the moon,
Mysterious shadows,
Beauty's glow,
and you, my sweetness, asleep in the dusk.
"Awake! The lilacs are in bloom!
And in the garden await us!"*

*What a wonder, my beloved!
This world,
Which intoxicates us,
This beauty, which bewitches us.
Hold tight to every moment,
For this frenzy
Which maddens us
Will pass like a dream.*

*What happiness!
To love your sweetheart
On such a night
as May runs riot!
To sip with your heart
sweet balm from her eyes,
And feel the flood
of joy arise.*

BEAUTY

(Excerpt)

p170

*You are found in all things, earthly beauty!
You are eternal as the universe,
You are pure and innocent as children,
You are our deepest heart's desire.*

*On earth I find you wherever I look,
You bring both joy and sorrow to my soul.
You are the star I can never grasp,
Which beguiles all things, and enchants.*

*This precious gift was granted to us all,
Nature's beauty and mystique,
Intoxicating as sweet-scented wine,
True passion, joy and punishment.*

*And I wonder : What would life be without you?
Can one imagine day without the sun?
Thus, with both joy and sorrow combined,
Eternal lover of Beauty I am!*

MEMORIES OF CYPRUS

(Excerpt)

p. 172

*I look upon this worthy sample of the Gothic style,
The grandeur of St Nicholas' Church,
Mighty edifice of age-old wisdom,
Immortal monument to the Lusignan House.*

*Like a revelation it beckons from a magic rock,
Echoing the Symphony of the Past,
Like the voice of forefathers of old,
Recalling all living things to their sure fate.*

*Like a precious treasure of our soul,
Rays of divinity from ancient times,
Like a hymn to the mind and to the soul,
It reaches out o'er the span of time.*

*With searching eye, I trace the remnants
Of Venetian walls, in ages past,
My thoughts sink deep into the scars
Of bitter years gone by and lost.*

In memory of my son, Vladimir, never forgotten

p. 174

*Your soul sheds over us
Its sapphire light,
Far in the Galaxy
With myriad stars.*

*A question hangs in the Heavens above,
Silently uttered by your heart:
How can you drive these innocents so callously
Into the arms of oblivion
You, who as friends used to drink with me?*

*I am a pilgrim of the forest,
I look with awe on the autumnal spell,
There in the liturgy of silence,
Where the wild elms trembling stand,
And departing flocks of cranes
Cry out their sad farewell.
The parting words have sounded,
I look back o'er the years we shared.
How sad to think the thread of life,
Once a proud part of nature's realm,
Counts for so little on the scales of time.*

To my beloved Greek wife Ekaterina

pp.186-88

*I follow the scudding clouds
Reflected on the lake's still water
And, like enchanting Russian nature,
Bewitching in serenity and pride,
They too dance on the heavenly floor
Like ships fighting sleep,
Sailing proudly to unknown ports.
The joy of nature is the more enjoyed
By travellers who have suffered ordeals,
And as the captive who dreams of home
Feels nostalgia bitter-sweet:
To Her he will some day return,
Who once he to the altar led.
Where all remains in perfect harmony
And the children anxiously await.
How joyful is he in nature's midst
As if sorrow never was his friend.
Serenity heals him like a balm
No better place has he on earth
Than the sweet marriage nest and She,
Who draws him close from far away.
(Who has not felt this from the distant past?)
And longing has such beauty!*

*I dedicated my life to Art, as was my wish,
And deprived you of most of life's joys
My angel, my ethereal love!
You touched my soul's most sacred chords!*

*Oh, my sweet Homeland, I loved you so,
As good children love their mother.
I never faltered, I gave myself in war.
Might you have loved your son a little more?*

*Give me dandelions, daisies, flowers of the fields,
To decipher the secrets of nature.
Since my youth I saw and revealed
The mysterious world's transformations.*

*From forests and fields I have drawn
The endless enchantment of sound.
As the soul's sacred Muse sings her song
Weaving words in melodious rhyme...*

(6)

*Rosy mystery of the Dawn,
The sun's fiery disc will soon arise.
Already the fishermen's swift craft
On peaceful waters glide.*

*Travelling far with their sails and their nets,
Chasing fortune while waters are high.
O, what wonderful nights of romance,
When in your true love's arms you lie!*

*And the joy is greater and more complete,
When in the silence of the night,
A kiss from the adored woman,
Turns all your pain to delight.*

*Whosoever sanctifies what he loves
Has my word that he will lead a happy life.*

OLIVES

p. 292

*Olives, olives, incomparable olives,
As far as the eye can see,
But what I seek are Russian willows
Weeping, perhaps for me.*

*I seek the house with roof of straw,
Rooted in earth and low.
From whence I followed a murky path
To an unknown fate of woe.*

*In hunting sweet visions of glory,
With all the strength of the young,
In bitter, intoxicating poison
I destroyed my youth, like a drunk.*

*Thus you wasted the best years of your life,
Scion of a devastated generation!
Tell me which god you worshipped,
When you squandered your youth in oblivion?*

BALLAD
(Excerpt)

*The dawn breaks rosy, and throughout the woods
Echoes the birds' discordant choir.
The road nearby awakes and howls
Like a demon screaming, panting nigh.*

*And sees up high the faded tracks
Left by the flocks of iron birds,
And senses now that evil is close
And no salvation will be there.*

*With full attention in both eyes and ears
Sighing under the cross's weight
The hapless traveller sets down his soul
Before the imagined Heaven's gate.*

*Frenzied era of machine assaults!
In this unbearable cloud of smoke
And of metal screeching loud,
All he desired was a little fresh air.*

INCORPOREAL AND ETERNAL BEAUTY

Beauty will save the world

Fyodor Dostoevsky

If gods are immortal and in the likeness of men,

Could men be mortal gods,*

as they have an immortal soul?

Lara Bargilly

O, deluded men of this planet Earth

Invoking Eternity in youth,

Then death and attrition, as age beckons, at dusk!

The beauty of matter is a captive to time.

But incorporeal Beauty is eternal,

Its boundless crystalline spring carved out

By those mortal gods who worshipped the Muse,

And spread love to their neighbors diffuse.

*«Beauty will save the world»,
Fyodor Dostoevsky*

THE MYSTERY OF LOVE

*Life is no man's creation,
It has always existed and exists eternally.
Life cares nothing for beginning or end,
It has always existed and will exist perpetually.
And if our Mother Earth, the sinful,
Is just a planet in the universe,
Can my wish make a difference?
What then am I compared to this?
Am I nothing but an atom, oh so slight?*

*But no, I am the lava from a comet's fiery core,
A unique, original fount of light,
Preserved within the very nucleus of my soul.
I do not believe that existence ends miserably,
But what - I wonder - is life's deeper sense?
This question, like a sharpened sword
Wounds all whose conscience is intense.
The meaning of life - eternal Beauty,
Is found in every work of fair intent,
Also in Love, but not the love of self;
Love for our neighbours, and our fellow men.*

1980

*translated from the Greek by
Rhea Frangofinou
and Susan Papas*