



BANNED IN SPARTA

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for my families

December 2nd, 2022. I'd just finished writing my newest song, with Praxilla, she the Ancient Greek Lyric Poet who left this mortal coil around 2500 years ago, and who's immortalized mainly in ridicule by dint of the misjudgments of the handful of fragments and myth that are her remains, when I lit up a Marlboro (I know, I know) and sent a cloud over the wood stove in Foxhill, formerly the Wishing Well, the rustic inn in Shandaken, New York, near Woodstock in the Catskills, where Federico Garcia Lorca summered when he was living in the City almost 100 years ago. My glorious niece, Brooklyn artist Yolande Batteau, bought the place 3 years ago and is gradually fixing it up, since the spring in hand with her correspondingly glorious wife, Manhattan gallerist Katja Hirche. When I'm here, I sleep in Lorca's bedroom, welcoming dream tips from Lorca's ghost. A mama flying squirrel, nicknamed Federica, of course, regularly soars down to visit Katja from her enbabied nest in the rafters at night. My dreams are not so reliable.

After a half-century in various corners of the music world— classical, jazz, folk, blues, rock, with an old veteran's share of shared awards, like Grammy, Emmy, Gold Records, an Oscar nod— the Pandemic gave me (and the world) pause, and I got it into my head to return to Harvard to complete my final semester, having left to help my family out of trouble 50 years before. I knew I'd officially be "Last in His Class at Harvard," which made me laugh, so I bought the website. Having completed the requisites of my major ("Integrative Biology," whatever that is, no, the chairman of the department says he doesn't know, either) as a teen, I could take any courses I wanted, and my grade school fascination with Ancient Greece (I was Theseus for the 4th grade Olympics) turned my head to Introduction to the Ancient Greek World, at the Harvard summer school online (to get my feet wet) in 2021, taught by the wonderful Natasha Bershadsky. Here I stumbled upon Archilochus, the warrior/poet so irreverent he was "Banned in Sparta" (which sounded like a heck of an album title), who though as revered in his day (7th Century BCE) as he was irreverent, only left fragments of poetry and bits of myth behind. Like all the Ancient Greek Lyric Poets ("Lyric" because they played the lyre, guitar's noble predecessor), he was a singer-songwriter, the Bob Dylan of his day, so I moved to put together fragments into what felt (to me) like a song, like a whole, and from that mosaic emerged "Archilochus Re-Deemed."

So my enemy gets to wield my shining shield
I had to leave it in a wood¹
But I don't care, I saved myself
I'll get another just as good²
I don't like my army commander, up on his high horse
Trimming his beard in the mirror
Brushing his wavy hair, of course
Gimme a little guy with a lot of guts, who may not look so tough
He's the one I'm going with when the going gets rough

I am a servant of the Lord God of War³
I know what the line of shields and the spears are for⁴
And I thrill in the presence of the lovely muse
And I do not choose either or
For I am a servant of the Lord God of War

1 M.L. West, H.D.F. Kitto

2 M.L. West, H.D.F. Kitto

3 M.L. West, Gilbert Murray

4 Charles Burton Gulick

Balance the joy you take in luck⁵
With how much you're giving in to sorrow
Look past your hopes and fears
Count your blessings in the dance
That dazzles your days and your years
Now that Zeus makes night from noon
With the shield of the moon
Allay your beamlike spears⁶
Don't give up
Don't lie down in a bed of tears

I am a servant of the Lord God of War
I know what the line of shields and the spears are for
And I thrill in the presence of the lovely muse
And I do not choose either or
For I am a servant of the Lord God of War

Jealousy has no power over me
I do not burn to lead⁷
The fox knows many tricks, the hedgehog one⁸
Heart, my heart,⁹ it's for you I bleed

I am a servant of the Lord God of War
I know what the line of shields and the spears are for
And I thrill in the presence of the lovely muse
And I do not choose either or
For I am a servant of the Lord God of War

Beginning to learn Ancient Greek in my deeper dive into Ancient Greece in the fall semester, I translated some words and phrases, looked at past translations, and pieced the lyric together, picking up the guitar when the Muses moved me to see what music would fit and move the song to where it wanted to be. When I finished, I had tears in my eyes, my usual reaction when a song was doing what it was supposed to do, a sign that it might move others, a signal that it was on the right track. 2 weeks later Natasha's course happened on "The Encomium of Helen," Plato's Sophist friend Gorgias' defense of Helen of Troy's innocence in the tragedies of the Trojan War. Another song came to mind, guitar came to hand, and soon after, "Stolen in Love" was written, tears on cue.

Stolen in love, stolen in love
Is all she guilty of
Is getting stolen in love
Stolen in love, stolen in love
Is all she guilty of
Is getting stolen in love

5 Richmond Lattimore

6 Richmond Lattimore

7 Guy Davenport

8 Isaiah Berlin

9 Richmond Lattimore

So maybe she did what she did when she did it
It's anyone's guess if a crime's been committed
If the winds of fate or the Gods have decreed
Even swept away, she should pay
For the deed

Stolen in love, stolen in love
Is all she guilty of
Is getting stolen in love
Stolen in love, stolen in love
Is all she guilty of
Is getting stolen in love

Words can can bring you all the way down
Or bring you to life
Make you cry with laughter
Or cut like a knife
To the deepest part of the darkest heart
Make you feel joy and fear and pity and pain
Like the hardest of drugs, these are words' domain

And you know I know you know how
'Cause I've got you listening now

Stolen in love, stolen in love
Is all she guilty of
Is getting stolen in love
Stolen in love, stolen in love
Is all she guilty of
Is getting stolen in love

Returning to Cambridge as a college student at 73 years of age offered opportunities and challenges, not the least of which was where to live. Susie Rioff, a fan who'd become a friend, had recently bought the house next door to the one I grew up in, 45 Lexington Avenue between Brattle and Huron, and she kept the top floor as guest rooms for singers and musicians in their travels, especially for the Revels that light up Cambridge and more every ChristmaKwanzanukkahSolstewYear, and they weren't arriving till October, so she offered it to me for September, and my instruments and bags and me were soon nestled in a room directly across from my childhood bedroom. The surreality was not lost on me, I fully expected to wake up in the middle of the night, look outside, and see my 9-year-old self peering through the glass back at me. It happened in dreams only, I think.

Like most my age, I have health challenges, having taken two bullets for the team in 2016, a heart attack and a colon cancer that was only discovered as the result of the heart attack. Experiencing the usual symptoms, I hopped in the car and my wife Wendy whipped me to the hospital, where, looking for reasons I tested anemic, they discovered the Stage 3 tumor, and a few weeks later (giving the newly stented heart a chance to settle in), they took it out, just after Halloween. But for the heart attack, my symptomless tumor might easily have reached Stage 4 and killed me.

So when descending the stairs to breakfast with Susie I started feeling breathless and a few degrees West of normal, Susie whipped me to Mount Auburn Hospital, where I hung out for a couple hours till

the doctor told me I seemed fine. It's, again, surreal when doctors are half your age, but we routinely accept technical advice from people a tenth our age, so I trundled on to class.

About to start was my favorite, a seminar with a dozen students (how Olympic!), 2 teaching assistants, and our fearless leader, eminent Classicist Professor Gregory Nagy, who wanted us all to call him Greg, or Darth, for Darth Vader, as we all breathed and talked through our required Covid masks. He does a pretty good impression, and liked referring to me as Skywalker, continuing the Star Wars theme. Not just my favorite teacher, but the only one older than me. The class is called "Songmaking and the Idea of Lyric," apparently because the Gods knew I was coming back to school, and in it we reveled in Sappho, Puccini, and Taylor Swift's 10-minute "All Too Well" on Saturday Night Live, with commentary by Greg/Darth and a circle of incisive and insightful minds and hearts a quarter my age. Pretty damn cool.

Sappho's only got one or two complete poems extant, so I examined them and the other fragments, and wrote what it made me feel, as if I were inhabiting her spirit with lyre in hand and the island of Lesbos in the window, in a song I imagined she was writing for herself, from who she was and who she's become. Because a song is a song, I let it rhyme. As she graced more ancient urns than anyone but the gods, I call it "Terra Cotta Heart."

O Muse
I adore you
I implore you¹⁰
It's your Sappho
I am for you

Nothing have I ever sung or written
Mooning, falling, swooning, smitten
Without your divinity¹¹
Speak to me¹², speak through me

On beautiful swift sparrows
She's descending the sky
On terrible swift sparrows
Aphrodite, I
Take no joy in hurting
Aphrodite, why?

She tells me,
If she runs, it's just until
She turns and sees, almost against her will
Her heart's decided for her
The way that you adore her
Is how she must adore you to the end
Or till your terra cotta heart
Turns and breaks again

On beautiful swift sparrows

10 Gregory Nagy

11 Gregory Nagy

12 Gregory Nagy

You're descending the sky
On terrible swift sparrows
Aphrodite, I
Take no joy in hurting
Aphrodite, why?

She says,
Sappho, who's doing you wrong?¹³
The moon is down,¹⁴ the stars abound
The Pleiades emerging
Matrix of the virgin
You were before and you are again each time you call my name
I may turn you in the fire, but it's you that starts the flame

On beautiful swift sparrows
You're descending the sky
On terrible swift sparrows
Aphrodite, I
Take no joy in hurting
Aphrodite, why?

You burn me, Aphrodite
Turn me in the fire
Straddling the threshold
Between memory and desire

I could be dying
I could be dying
I could be dying
I could be dying



On beautiful swift sparrows
I'm descending the sky
On terrible swift sparrows
I'm descending the sky

Like English, Ancient Greek has words with more than one meaning, hence swift sparrows are alternately beautiful and terrible. And Sappho, like all Ancient Greek Lyric Poets, sees her work as the work of Muses she's channeling, with the faces changing in midstream. I'm no more smitten with her than is Alcaeus, her contemporary and competitive neighbor on Lesbos, so I (we) wrote this, "Sweetly Smiling."

How come it takes the purple harvest of the vine, bleeding in the press¹⁵

13 Gregory Nagy

14 Gregory Nagy

15 James S. Easby-Smith

For the wine to do the talking, every time, our secrets to confess¹⁶
How come it always seems to take a sea of trouble to see the light climb up the rigging to the sail
How come the only girl who gets me seeing double ties my tongue in knots
Why won't the wine prevail

But raise a song for her, O Muse, the violet-crowned maiden
And praise her soft throat's changing hues, her low voice laughter-laden
Sing yet again her thousand charms, her eyes' entrancing splendor
Her suntanned cheeks and supple arms, and bosom bold and tender
Yea, sing forever more of her, my mistress soft, beguiling
Fairest of all who are or were, my Sappho sweetly smiling¹⁷
My Sappho sweetly smiling, my Sappho sweetly smiling

I wish I could, I would, I should, with pleasures gone,¹⁸
Put away desire¹⁹
But nothing in this drunk or sober world can quench
The all-consuming fire

But raise a song for her, O Muse, the violet-crowned maiden
And praise her soft throat's changing hues, her low voice laughter-laden
Sing yet again her thousand charms, her eyes' entrancing splendor
Her suntanned cheeks and supple arms, and bosom bold and tender
Yea, sing forever more of her, my mistress soft, beguiling
Fairest of all who are or were, my Sappho sweetly smiling
My Sappho sweetly smiling, my Sappho sweetly smiling

And she says, If anything good, if anything fair
Is something you were trying to say,
Give your heart one inch of daylight²⁰
Don't hide your eyes
Don't turn away

But raise a song for Me, My Boy, Your violet-crowned maiden
And praise My soft throat's Hymns Of Joy, My low voice laughter-laden
Sing yet again My thousand charms, My eyes' entrancing splendor
My suntanned cheeks and supple arms, and bosom bold and tender
Yea, sing forever more of Me, Your mistress soft, beguiling
Fairest of all who 'Ere will be, Your Sappho sweetly smiling
Your Sappho sweetly smiling, Your Sappho sweetly smiling

My muted violin plays the part of the aulos, the oboe-like double-reed often seen in Sappho's hand; pan pipes typical of the Grecian isles provide a bed of air; dancers' finger cymbals chime the rhythm. Sappho danced and played as she sang, as illustrated on many an urn. The refrain is a gently edited

16 James S. Easby-Smith

17 James S. Easby-Smith

18 James S. Easby-Smith

19 James S. Easby-Smith

20 James S. Easby-Smith

1899 translation by James Stanislaus Easby-Smith, a Georgetown law professor, who clearly swooned as much as me and Alcaeus.

Corinna, 6th-5th Century BCE, was considered by many second only to Sappho, and though no complete poems are still with us, I've tried to mosaic a complex and complete feeling, hopefully transmitting some of the meaning and inspiration and emotion of her work. A central question Greg put to us in class was, "What is a lyric?," and a voice inside me said, "What rings inside." Rhyme helps things ring— I think we unconsciously take the synchronicity as a signal that it's meant to be. This is "In Her Loving Arms."

OH THIS ENVIOUS MAN, HE'S NOT HERE TO HARM YOU²¹
DROPPING HIS GUARD, JUST TO DISARM YOU
TO AT FIRST CONCEAL, AT LAST REVEAL EACH GIFT
HIS TRAVELING SHIP SO SWIFT
MOON'S HOLY LIGHT ALONE COULD GUIDE IT TO YOUR HARBOR
INSTEAD OF THE ROCKS
ALL MEN TO TURN TO DOGS WHEN SET
ON THE TEUMESSIAN FOX

IN HER LOVING ARMS
IN HER LOVING ARMS
IN HER LOVING ARMS, LOVE THE THUNDER AND DANGER
THUNDER AND DANGER
IN HER LOVING ARMS
ALL MEN COME TO LOVE
ALL MEN COME TO LOVE A LOVER OF STRANGERS
LOVER OF STRANGERS

RACING DOWN DOWN HELICON
ROARING DOWN HELICON
SOARING DOWN HELICON
I SHALL ADORN MYSELF IN SONG

IN HER LOVING ARMS
IN HER LOVING ARMS
IN HER LOVING ARMS, LOVE THE THUNDER AND DANGER
THUNDER AND DANGER
IN HER LOVING ARMS
ALL MEN COME TO LOVE
ALL MEN COME TO LOVE A LOVER OF STRANGERS
LOVER OF STRANGERS

HE WILL COME
SO LET HIM HEAR THIS FROM YOU
OF US
HIS HEART WILL IMPLORE HIM
WHEN THE LIGHT ACCOMPANIES THE VOICE, WILD AND URGENT
TILLER YOUR DREAMS IN THE STEPS OF THE VIRGIN

21 David A. Campbell

YOU WERE HERE BEFORE
ALL DREAMERS COME TO
LET HIM HEAR THIS FROM YOU
LET IM HEAR THIS FROM YOU

IN HER LOVING ARMS
IN HER LOVING ARMS
IN HER LOVING ARMS, LOVE THE THUNDER AND DANGER
THUNDER AND DANGER
IN HER LOVING ARMS
ALL MEN COME TO LOVE
ALL MEN COME TO LOVE A LOVER OF STRANGERS, LOVER OF STRANGERS

I think I wrote this out in all caps because I wrote it in a high key for me, better for a woman. When I began this project, I played a custom 8-string guitar with one string missing, to emulate the 7-string lyre favored by the Lyric Poets, and the second song, “Stolen in Love,” begins with a 9-voice falsetto choir, all me, 9 for the 9 Muses, emulating the Ancient Greek Choir. It was exhausting. Channeling is challenging. But I was in love, so pouring all I had into each musical mosaic seemed only right.

When the Duchess of Devonshire, like Princess Di a Spencer, came to a musical meeting of the gentlemen’s club “The Anacreontic Society” in London in 1792, it roiled so many members that they broke up the band. Shades of Yoko. But not before their theme song, “To Anacreon in Heaven,” had spread far and wide, including into the ears of Francis Scott Key, who hummed the tune to himself while writing the lyrics to “The Star-Spangled Banner” in the belly of a British warship in the War of 1812. The song was written by club member John Stafford Smith, and its target was the Ancient Greek Poet Anacreon, 6th Century BCE, of whose songbook we have mere fragments, but enough for an unofficial member of the Anacreontic Society like me to find inspiration to the point of exhilaration.

SHAKE YOUR, SHAKE YOUR HAIR
SHAKE YOUR YOUR HAIR, YOU THRACIAN FILLY
TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES AND LET ME SEE YOU DANCE YOUR STORY
SHAKE YOUR HAIR, SHAKE YOUR HAIR
SHAKE YOUR HAIR, YOU THRACIAN FILLY
DRAIN A CUP AND PLAY THE DORIAN TONIGHT
AND WE’LL DROP THE REINS FROM OUR HANDS
AND WE’LL FLY UP TO OLYMPUS
ON WINGS OF LIGHT

THRACIAN FILLY, DON’T YOU LOOK AT ME²²
FROM THE CORNER OF YOUR EYE AND FLEE²³
TWINING THIGHS AROUND THIGHS²⁴ IS
PAYING DUES TO DIONYSUS
LIKE A SONG OF HOW WE FELT IN LOVE
DRINKING LOVE, MELTING LOVE²⁵
TAKE ME THERE, COME SHAKE YOUR HAIR AT ME

22 David A. Campbell

23 David A. Campbell

24 David A. Campbell

25 Abraham Cowley (1656)

SHAKE YOUR, SHAKE YOUR HAIR
SHAKE YOUR YOUR HAIR, YOU THRACIAN FILLY
TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES AND LET ME SEE YOU DANCE YOUR STORY
SHAKE YOUR HAIR, SHAKE YOUR HAIR
SHAKE YOUR HAIR, YOU THRACIAN FILLY
DRAIN A CUP AND PLAY THE DORIAN TONIGHT
AND WE'LL DROP THE REINS FROM OUR HANDS
AND WE'LL FLY UP TO OLYMPUS
ON WINGS OF LIGHT

YOU KNOW, IN THESE DAYS PERSUASION DOESN'T SHINE ALL SILVER²⁶
IT'S ALL BABBLE LIKE THE BUBBLES IN THE SEA
BUT DON'T GO DOWN TO ESCAPE LOVE, THERE'S NO WAY TO SHAKE LOVE
PUT SOME FLOWERS IN YOUR HAIR AND LOOK AT ME
LOVE'S A CUP OF EQUAL SHARES
TAKE A SIP AND SET YOUR THRACIAN TRESSES FREE

SHAKE YOUR, SHAKE YOUR HAIR
SHAKE YOUR YOUR HAIR, YOU THRACIAN FILLY
TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES AND LET ME SEE YOU DANCE YOUR STORY
SHAKE YOUR HAIR, SHAKE YOUR HAIR
SHAKE YOUR HAIR, YOU THRACIAN FILLY
DRAIN A CUP AND PLAY THE DORIAN TONIGHT
AND WE'LL DROP THE REINS FROM OUR HANDS
AND WE'LL FLY UP TO OLYMPUS
ON WINGS OF LIGHT

'CAUSE WHEN YOU SHAKE YOUR THRACIAN LOCKS
I'D PUT ON GLOVES AND BOX
WITH LOVE AND ALL HIS ARROWS
LIKE A SPEAR FULL OF TEARS

SHAKE YOUR, SHAKE YOUR HAIR
SHAKE YOUR YOUR HAIR, YOU THRACIAN FILLY
TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES AND LET ME SEE YOU DANCE YOUR STORY
SHAKE YOUR HAIR, SHAKE YOUR HAIR
SHAKE YOUR HAIR, YOU THRACIAN FILLY
DRAIN A CUP AND PLAY THE DORIAN TONIGHT
AND WE'LL DROP THE REINS FROM OUR HANDS
AND WE'LL FLY UP TO OLYMPUS
ON WINGS OF LIGHT

Simonides of Ceos, 6th-5th century BCE, with his nephew Bacchylides the heroes of Mary Renault's "The Praise Singer," is better known for his legends than his prize-winning songs. "Theater of Memory (Man of Gold)" came out like a eulogy, fitting for a rich, vain patron like Scopas, who, as legend has it, perished when he scolded Simonides for his commissioned ode's failure to say enough about him, and too much about godlings Castor and Pollux, and when Simonides was called away from

the banquet table to meet two strangers outside, the building collapsed and killed Scopas and all his guests but Simonides, whose ability to picture in his mind where everyone was sitting allowed the authorities to identify the dead. Thus was born the Art of Memory, the Theater of Memory, the Method of Loci, the trick magicians use to recall all the names in an audience today, and more. The strangers had vanished by the time Simonides stepped outside. Legend has it they were Castor and Pollux.

In my Theater of Memory
You're still there
Echoing like a melody
In the air

As long as waters flow, tall trees grow²⁷
The sun can shine and the moon glow
I will tell every tomorrow
That a man of gold is buried here

A man of gold is buried here

The Method of Loci
Is a trick of the light
To make you remember even against your will
In harrowing hindsight
That a man of gold is buried here

A man of gold is buried here

Oh, to be young and invincible
With my friends again
Just like music and wine
We share origin
Just as poetry is painting that speaks

And that painting is silent poetry
I will let this painting speak for me
That a man of gold is buried here

A man of gold is buried here

Greed or lust or blind ambition
All easily misunderstood
Taken for guidance of the Gods
God, it's not easy being good
But a man of gold is buried here

A man of gold is buried here

I cheered when I hit on Telesilla, 6th-5th Century BCE— what a practically prehistoric post-post-modern heroine! She rallied the women of Argos when their men had fallen to the supposedly invincible Spartan army, and she won. Oh so little of her writing persists. But enough to build a dream on— or a song. She was, and is, legendary. Soon to be a Marvel Superhero movie. No, not really.

TELESILLA'S ON THE WALL
SHE'S PAINTED IN STONE
A POETRY MOSAIC
IN TILE AND BONE

TELESILLA'S ON THE WALL

SHE SINGS,
WOMEN, RAISE YOUR BOW AND DRAW YOUR STRING
SO THE LEADER LEADS NOTHING BUT GHOSTS AFTER THIS
POINT YOUR ARROW AT THE KING
TONIGHT WE ARE ALL ARTEMIS

TELESILLA'S ON THE WALL

SHE SINGS,
THEY THINK THEY WILL WIN
BECAUSE THEY'RE THE BETTER MEN
BUT IF WE WEAR THEIR ARMOR, AND THEY BEAR OUR LINEN
THEY WOULD SEE WE WILL BE THE BETTER WOMEN

TELESILLA'S ON THE WALL

SHE SINGS,
IN THE WORDS OF THE ORACLE'S SECOND SIGHT
WHEN THE MALE BY THE FEMALE'S PUT TO FLIGHT
SHE MUST BE THE SERVANT OF THE MUSES
AND THE MUSES SAY FIGHT

TELESILLA'S ON THE WALL

SHE SINGS,
BUT WOMEN, WE'RE NOT RUNNING FROM ALPHEUS
NO, WE'RE NOT STANDING DOWN
COME RAISE YOUR VOICES IN THE CRY OF BATTLE
CARVE YOUR NAME ON THE BATTLEGROUND

TELESILLA'S ON THE WALL

TELESILLA'S ON THE WALL, SHE WILL NOT THROW HER CHILDREN DOWN
ONTO THE SPEARS OF ACHILLES' LINE, THIS IS NOT THE TROJAN TIME
BEARING SPEAR, BRANDISHING SHIELD,
HER HUSBAND'S BLOODY HELMET AT HER FEET

THE SPARTANS KILLED HIM, BUT THEY WON'T TAKE HER HERE
SHE WILL HARVEST THEIR HEARTS LIKE WHEAT

TELESILLA'S ON THE WALL

WE SERVE THE MUSES, AND THE MUSES SAY FIGHT
AND THEY SAY IT IN TONES THAT WILL SING THROUGH THE NIGHT
AND RING WITH THE SUN-LOVING SONG²⁸ OF THE MORNING
BUT THERE IS NO MORNING TONIGHT— THE MUSES SAY FIGHT

TELESILLA'S ON THE WALL

Helen of Troy, in contrast, was portrayed by most poets as of bad character, bearing responsibility for the tragedies of the Trojan War, and Stesichorus, 7th-6th Century BCE, was no exception. But after one particularly mean-spirited ode, he woke up blind. Soon after, Helen visited him in a dream, and he wrote The Palinode, absolving her of guilt. He woke up the next day with his sight back, and his insight restored. He, too, left us only fragments, but sometimes that's enough.

Wreath of violets and rows of wild narcissus
Dolphin on the shield of Odysseus
A night with five watches
One too many notches on the belt of Aphrodite
That Helen wore tonight

Just a phantom of a ghost of a dream
She is there, she is here, and in between
The moment men see your face, frozen like kings in place
Their stones hit the ground, shattering

And I hear,
How can you love me, how can you love me
How can you love me, sings the Akestelian bird
How can you love me, how can you love me
After all you've heard

I knew you by the curl of your hair
Your evanescence hanging in the air
My punishment was meant to be
I was blind, but now I see
Your apparition followed me
Like a shadow dancer

In a world rich with legend and rumor
Would that we had seen it sooner
This Palinode will start to tell
How myth is like a wishing well
With a mirror in each hand

And you say,
How can you love me, how can you love me
How can you love me, sings the Akestelian bird
How can you love me, how can you love me
After all you've heard

As long as there's a long-winged hawk
Riding an invisible wind
I will be remembering

When you said,
How can you love me, how can you love me
How can you love me, sings the Akestelian bird
How can you love me, how can you love me
After all you've heard

Well, I say
How can you love me, how can you love me
How can you love me, sings this Nightingale
How can you love me, how can you love me
After echoing your former tale

And you say,
How can you love me, how can you love me
How can you love me, let me count the ways
How can you love me, how can you love me
In your Works and Days
Letting your emotions blaze
Or in
Just a word or phrase

'Works and Days' is reference to the rumor that Stesichorus was descended from Hesiod, author of that formative work. Fashioning bones like a paleontologist to complete a partial skeleton sometimes entails accepting bits of knowledge that orbit the song. I'm grateful for whatever Muses are here from one day to another. Songs just occur to you, when it's right.

Catullus is not an Ancient Greek Lyric Poet, but a Roman playwright et al living in the 1st century BCE, as taken with Sappho as me, in a long, tempestuous relationship with his aptly named girlfriend Lesbia, inspired to write "Odi et Amo" (hate and love) when he woke up to the idea of their essential intersection at the crossroads of the heart. A million fanciful translations and expansions have been made, mine, "Cross," no less. Guitar for lyre, muted violin for aulos, it is its own species. Catullus' Sappho infatuation places it firmly in this basket.

I love to hate to love you
I'm on the torture wheel
I hate to love to hate you
It's just the way I feel
And I know it's just too true not to be real

I hate you love you hate you
My heart keeps asking why
I love you hate you love you
And so help me God, I'm crucified anew
I know it's too real not to be true

Is love best when it's the worst
Is every blessing cursed
It hurts it hurts it hurts it hurts

I know it hurts, that's how I know it's real
I love how I hate how I love how
It's really how I feel

Why do I ache as I adore her
Is love just a form of torture
I feel there's nothing after or before her
To behold
Is every crucifixion on a cross of gold

The Golden Age of Ancient Greek Lyric Poetry (Singer-Songwriting) comes down to us in fragments like a rain of volcano ash in search of a jigsaw table. It's as if our own Golden Age of Singer-Songwriting, the 1960's, were preserved only as broken LP's and shreds of reviews. The parallel's acute to me, growing up and starting out in the 1960's, and there is a sound to the time like no other. Scientists at least once tried to listen to the sound of Classical Athens by running a stylus, a record needle, along the grooves of ancient terra cotta urns created spinning on a potter's wheel. God, I wish it had worked. But the sound of '60's singer-songwriters is still here to behold and be heard. Because this project is personal, I play favorites, and asked friends, iconic voices of the age, like Tom Rush, Tom Paxton, Carolyn Hester, Eric Andersen, Livingston Taylor, Kate Taylor, and Robin Lane, all of whom I first thrilled to hear in the '60's, to voice thoughts and feelings of the Lyric Poets. As good as Taylor Swift and Ed Sheeran are at their craft, and they are very good, the work of Joni Mitchell and Bob Dylan and the host of extraordinary craftsmen and women of the '60's created a matrix that rings through our culture like a carillon.

Because the Lyric Poets set the stage for Greek Theater, it seemed right to make this the beginning of a stage review that recapitulates the evolution of Western Theater itself, from Greek Chorus to Greek Chorus plus one step-out actor (Thespis, from whom we get "Thespian") to Greek Chorus plus two step-outs (Aeschylus' innovation) to Chorus plus three (Sophocles) and on to Rome to commedia dell'arte to Shakespeare to Moliere to Berlin to Broadway, so I've enlisted the voices of 2-time Tony Best Actor James Naughton (whose wonderful baritone I also first heard in the '60's), his singer/actor son Greg Naughton— yes, there are family connections here, as in theater, as in song, this is family. I once wrote a duet for Marc Cohn and Gwyneth Paltrow called "Sailing Avon," spun from Shakespeare, for a fundraiser for Greg's Blue Light Theater company, which could fit right in. There's more to write, of course, thank you, Muses.

And here it starts. My final piece for this initial set, written with the aforementioned Praxilla, from fragments and stories, myths, about her. Perhaps this will help set the record straight, pun intended.

Is the most beautiful thing in the world
Is the most beautiful thing in the world

Only the thing you leave behind

Did I really know you
Only when I lost you
Only to hold you
In my mind
Who's the dream face watching from the window blind
Sparkling like the sun
Shining like the stars
Glowing like the moon
At harvest time
I was your harvest
You were mine

Is the most beautiful thing in the world
Is the most beautiful thing in the world
Only the thing you leave behind

Was I your Hetaira, was I your Geisha, your Muse
You were my Adonis
You astonish
Me
Mine's the face of a maiden
The body of a mistress
In the conspiracy of kisses
I know secrets
But I'll never know enough to keep you from your fate
To hold you in place
This is our fall from grace
Never forget this kiss
Never forget this face

Is the most beautiful thing in the world
Is the most beautiful thing in the world
Only the thing you leave behind



Navigating the labyrinth of Harvard, I was aided by students a quarter my age. My favorite was a woman of 17 named Ariana from my Ancient Greek language class. She'd come to Wednesday morning class in a neon green or orange wig, signifying Wild Wednesday, which absolutely no one copied, but she persisted, laughing and undeterred. I once ran into her on Huron Ave, near where I was staying on Lexington Ave, guiding a group of Harvard tourists through the labyrinth streets of Cambridge. As I walked with them, I told Ariana that her name was derived from Ariadne, who saved Theseus from the labyrinth and her brother the Minotaur by sneaking him a sword and a ball of yarn, to find his way back out. It was news to her, and welcome, smiling. I lent her my Greek-and-English Bible sent from my religious brother Kim, former head of the Dutch Reform Church in the Hague. She once gave me a couple of donuts from the Harvard Bible group table near Sanders Theater. If I have a religion, it's myth and art and song and love. And maybe baseball. Ya gotta believe.

I have a million people to thank— just think, there were only 50 million people, less than New York and California together, on planet earth when Classical Athens lit the flame of Western civilization— so let's start: Classicists Greg "Darth" Nagy, Natasha Bershadsky, and Davide Napoli, engineers Mark Dann, Neale Eckstein, Mikal Leroy, Phil DaRosa, Brook Batteau, Jon Russell, and Cathy Fink, musicians Abby Newton (cello), Jerry Marotta (drums), Mark (bass, drums, electric guitars, synths), Neale (bass, drums, guitars), Eric Schwartz (keyboards), Matt Nakoa (drums, bass, guitars, keyboards), singers Tom Rush, Carolyn Hester, her daughters Karla and Amy Blume, siblings Kate and Livingston Taylor, Tom Paxton, Eric Andersen, Robin Lane, Matt Nakoa (who snuck into the studio and recorded "Theater of Memory" all by himself when the rest of the house was still sleeping) and sister Yani Batteau; my gracious hosts and hostesses on my peregrinations, my personal Odyssey, the past year: Katja Hirche and Yolande, Yani, Brook, Katie, and Alouette Batteau, Neale Eckstein and Laurie Laba, Spencer and Joy and Hannah and Emily Cowan, Annie Wenz and Larry French and Nikko Maldonado, Rod and Nicole and Elliot and Alena MacDonald, Chris Fincham, Ed Koh, Joey Levine, Amy Blake and Brian Wolfsohn, Dave Feder, Susie Rioff, Blue Magruder and John Hurwitch, Diane van de Mark, Abby, Robin, and the army of translators of Ancient Greek and Latin on whose shoulders I stand and strum: Gregory Nagy, David A. Campbell, Gilbert Murray, M.L. West, Charles Burton Gulick, H.D.F. Kitto, Guy Davenport, Isaiah Berlin, Richmond Lattimore, T.F. Higham, A.O. Prickard, J.M. Edmunds, Abraham Cowley, and James S. Easby-Smith, all of whose language inspired me so much the echoes are footnoted.

Graduated this spring, walked with the class, beamed as Jacinda Ardern delivered the Commencement Address. And got back to work on this labor of love.

Archilochus Re-Deemed (I Am a Servant of the Lord God of War), from Archilochus,
sung by James Naughton

Stolen in Love, from Gorgias, sung by Robin Batteau

Terra Cotta Heart, from Sappho, sung by Robin Lane

My Sappho, Sweetly Smiling, from Alcaeus, sung by Robin Batteau

In Her Loving Arms, from Corinna, sung by Carolyn Hester

Shake Your Hair (You Thracian Filly), from Anacreon, sung by Tom Paxton

Man of Gold (Theater of Memory), from Simonides, sung by Matt Nakoa

Telesilla's on the Wall, from Telesilla, sung by Kate Taylor

How Can You Love Me, from Stesichorus, sung by Robin Batteau

Cross, from Catullus, sung by Eric Andersen

The Most Beautiful Thing in the World, from Praxilla, sung by Robin Batteau

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The singers, beside me, recorded at their personal choice of studio and engineer, Phil DaRosa for Kate Taylor, Cathy Fink for Tom Paxton, Brook Batteau for Robin Lane, Mikel Leroy for Eric Andersen, Karla and Amy Blume for Carolyn Hester, Jon Russell for James Naughton. My work, on violin, guitars, percussion, keyboards, and vocals was done at Neale Eckstein's Fox Run Studio in Sudbury, Massachusetts, and Mark Dann Recording in Woodstock, New York.

Eric Andersen personalized the lyric to "Cross," from Mikel Leroy's studio in Amsterdam. Every singer, like every songwriter, like every Lyric Poet, has license, has responsibility, to make a song their own, or why sing it? He calls it "Cross of Gold."

I love-to hate-to love you
I'm on this torture wheel
I hate-to love-to hate you
It's always how I feel
And I know— it's just too true— not to be real

I hate you-love you-hate you
My heart keeps asking why
I love you-hate you-love you
On this cross I'm crucified
I know—i t's too real— not to be true

Is love best when love's the worst
Is every blessing cursed
It hurts— it hurts— it hurts— it hurts

I know it hurts— that's how I know it's real
I love how—I hate how—I love how—
It's really how I feel

Why do I ache I still adore her
Is love like this a form of torture
After her— what's to behold... or left to hold

Why is this crucifixion on a cross of gold



