Gen Ed 1034 - Texts in Transition

Week 1 Readings

1. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 274e-277a. Trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 551-552.

SOCRATES: . . . Now the king of all Egypt at that time was Thamus,[1] who lived in the great city in the upper region that the Greeks call Egyptian Thebes; Thamus they call Ammon. Theuth came to exhibit his arts to him and urged him to disseminate them to all the Egyptians. Thamus asked him about the usefulness of each art, and while Theuth was explaining it, Thamus praised him for whatever he thought was right in his explanations and criticized him for whatever he thought was wrong.

The story goes that Thamus said much to Theuth, both for and against each art, which it would take too long to repeat. But when they came to writing, Theuth said: "O King, here is something that, once learned, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memory; I have discovered a potion for memory and for wisdom." Thamus, however, replied: "O most expert Theuth, one man can give birth to the elements of an art, but only another can judge how they can benefit or harm those who will use them. And now, since you are the father of writing, your affection for it has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality. Your invention will enable them to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing. And they will be difficult to get along with, since they will merely appear to be wise instead of really being so."

PHAEDRUS: Socrates, you're very good at making up stories from Egypt or wherever else you want!

SOCRATES: But, my friend, the priests of the temple of Zeus at Dodona say that the first prophecies were the words of an oak. Everyone who lived at that time, not being as wise as you young ones are today, found it rewarding enough in their simplicity to listen to an oak or even a stone, so long as it was telling the truth, while it seems to make a difference to you, Phaedrus, who is speaking and where he comes from. Why, though, don't you just consider whether what he says is right or wrong?

PHAEDRUS: I deserved that, Socrates. And I agree that the Theban king was correct about writing.

SOCRATES: Well, then, those who think they can leave written instructions for an art, as well as those who accept them, thinking that writing can yield results that are clear or certain, must be quite naive and truly ignorant of Ammon's prophetic judgment: otherwise,

---

[1] As king of the Egyptian gods, Ammon (Thamus) was identified by Egyptians with the sun god Ra and by the Greeks with Zeus.

how could they possibly think that words that have been written down can do more than remind those who already know what the writing is about?

Phaedrus: Quite right.

SOCRATES: You know, Phaedrus, writing shares a strange feature with painting. The offsprings of painting stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent. The same is true of written words. You'd think they were speaking as if they had some understanding, but if you question anything that has been said because you want to learn more, it continues to signify just that very same thing forever. When it has once been written down, every discourse roams about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not. And when it is faulted and attacked unfairly, it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself not come to its own support.

PHAEDRUS: You are absolutely right about that, too.

SOCRATES: Now tell me, can we discern another kind of discourse, a legitimate brother of this one? Can we say how it comes about, and how it is by nature better and more capable?

PHAEDRUS: Which one is that? How do you think it comes about?

SOCRATES: It is a discourse that is written down, with knowledge, in the soul of the listener; it can defend itself, and it knows for whom it should speak and for whom it should remain silent.

PHAEDRUS: You mean the living, breathing discourse of the man who knows, of which the written one can be fairly called an image.

SOCRATES: Absolutely right. And tell me this. Would a sensible farmer, who cared about his seeds and wanted them to yield fruit, plant them in all seriousness in the gardens of Adonis in the middle of the summer and enjoy watching them bear fruit within seven days?[2] Or would he do this as an amusement and in honor of the holiday, if he did it at all? Wouldn't he use his knowledge of farming to plant the seeds he cared for when it was appropriate and be content if they bore fruit seven months later?

PHAEDRUS: That's how he would handle those he was serious about, Socrates, quite differently from the others, as you say.

SOCRATES: Now what about the man who knows what is just, noble, and good? Shall we say that he is less sensible with his seeds than the farmer is with his?

PHAEDRUS: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: Therefore, he won't be serious about writing them in ink, sowing them, through a pen, with words that are as incapable of speaking in their own defense as they are of teaching the truth adequately.

PHAEDRUS: That wouldn't be likely.

SOCRATES: Certainly not. When he writes, it's likely he will sow gardens of letters for the sake of amusing himself, storing up reminders for himself "when he reaches forgetful old age" and for everyone who wants to follow in his footsteps, and will enjoy seeing them sweetly blooming. And when others turn to different amusements, watering

[2] Gardens of Adonis were pots or window boxes sown with lettuce and fennel used during the festival of Adonis; the phrase "Gardens of Adonis" was used proverbially to mean something "trivial or wasteful."

themselves with drinking parties and everything else that goes along with them, he will rather spend his time amusing himself with the things I have just described.

PHAEDRUS: Socrates, you are contrasting a vulgar amusement with the very noblest—with the amusement of a man who can while away his time telling stories of justice and the other matters you mentioned.

SOCRATES: That's just how it is, Phaedrus. But it is much nobler to be serious about these matters, and use the art of dialectic. The dialectician chooses a proper soul and plants and sows within it discourse accompanied by knowledge—discourse capable of helping itself as well as the man who planted it, which is not barren but produces a seed from which more discourse grows in the character of others. Such discourse makes the seed forever immortal and renders the man who has it as happy as any human being can be.

2. Sappho, Fragment 2, Fragment 16, Fragment 68. From *Sappho: A Garland*, trans. Jim Powell (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1995).

Fragment 2, preserved on a potsherd PSI XIII.1300 discovered in 1937 in Egypt:

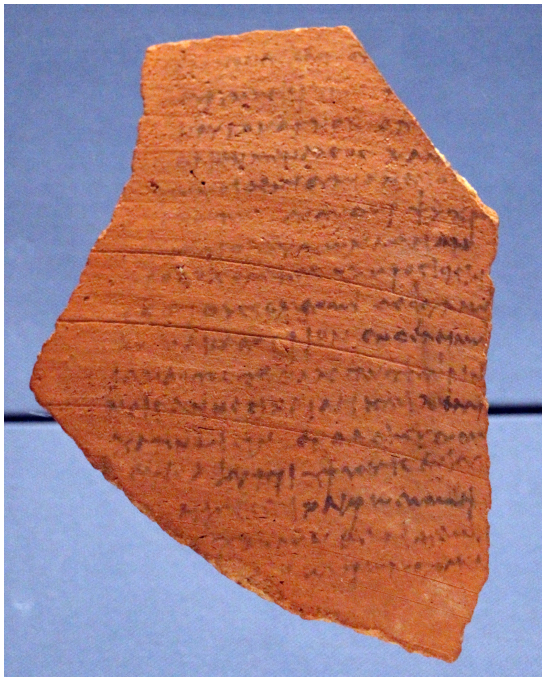
| summit of the
mountain descending,

come to me from Crete to the sacred recess
of this temple: here you will find a grove of
apple trees to charm you, and on the altars
frankincense fuming.

Here ice water babbles among the apple
branches and musk roses have overshadowed
all the ground; here down from the leaves' bright flickering
entrancement settles.

There are meadows, too, where the horses graze knee
deep in flowers, yes, and the breezes blow here
honey sweet and softer [
[ ]

Here now you, my goddess [ ] Cypris
in these golden wineglasses gracefully mix
nectar with the gladness of our festivities
and greet this libation.



Fragment 16, preserved on papyrus from a garbage dump at Oxyrynchus now at the Bodleian Library in Oxford:

Some say thronging cavalry, some say foot soldiers,
others call a fleet the most beautiful of
sights the dark earth offers, but I say it's what-
ever you love best.

And it's easy to make this understood by
everyone, for she who surpassed all human
kind in beauty, Helen, abandoning her
husband—that best of

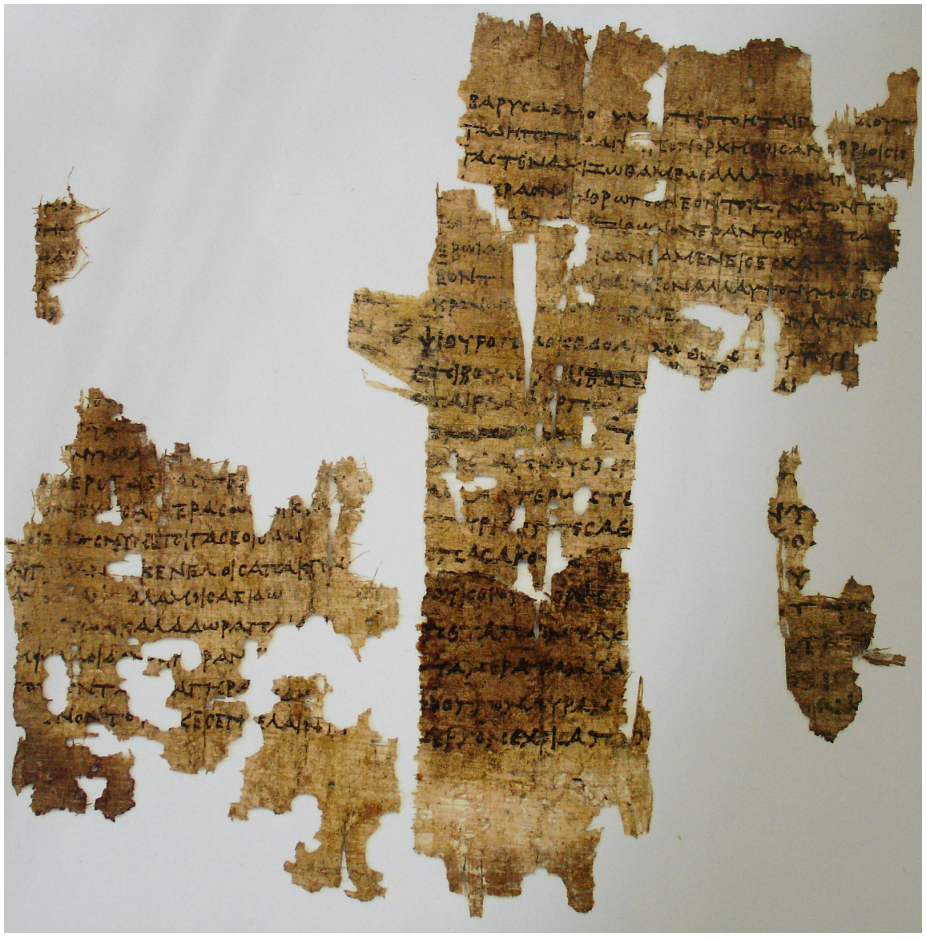
men—went sailing off to the shores of Troy and
never spent a thought on her child or loving
parents: when the goddess seduced her wits and
left her to wander,

she forgot them all, she could not remember
anything but longing, and lightly straying
aside, lost her way. But that reminds me
now: Anactória,

she's not here, and I'd rather see her lovely step,
her sparkling glance and her face than gaze on
all the troops in Lydia in their chariots and
glittering armor.

Fragment 58, preserved on mummy cartonnage now in Cologne

] places success on *your* lips,
my children, the fair gifts of the deep-robed Muses
] song-loving lyre, the clearvoiced
] but age wrinkles my skin already,
my hair has become whiter than it was black, once,
] my knees won't carry
] to dance like young fawns
] but what could I do?
] not possible to be ageless
] dawn goddess, rose-armed Eos
] ends of the earth she carried
Tithónos, her love. Nevertheless, it seized him
] wife, immortal
] considers
] might give me.
But delicacy, that's what I love, and this love
has made of the sun's brightness and beauty my fortune.



3. Catullus XCV. From Guy Lee, trans., *The Poems of Catullus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

XCV

Zmyrna, my Cinna's, brought forth at last, nine harvests
And nine winters after her inception!
Meanwhile Hortensius five hundred thousand in one
. . . . .

Zmyrna will travel far—to Satrachus' sunken waves;
Long will the white-haired centuries read *Zmyrna*.
Volusius' *Annals*, though, will die beside the Padua
And often make loose jackets for mackerel.
Dear to my heart is my comrade's small-scale monument;
The crowd can admire long-winded Antimachus.

Notes

In line 3 the name Hortensius may be corrupt; Catullus is his friend in LXV.

5–6 Probably quote from or allude to Cinna's own words. The Satrachus was a river in Cyprus where the story took place.

7 The Padua was a branch of the Po. For Volusius' *Annals* see XXXVI.

10 Antimachus of Colophon in Lydia was a fifth-century Greek poet admired by Plato but criticized by Callimachus who described his *Lyde* as 'fat writing and not lucid'.

4. Horace, Odes 3.30. From *The Complete Odes and Epodes*, trans. David West (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1997).

I have built a monument more lasting than bronze
and set higher than the pyramids of kings.
It cannot be destroyed by gnawing rain
or wild north wind, by the procession

of unnumbered years or by the flight of time.
I shall not wholly die. A greater part of me
will escape Libitina. My fame will grow,
ever renewed in time to come, as long as

the priest climbs the Capitol with the silent Virgin.
I shall be spoken of where fierce Aufidus thunders
and where Daunus, poor in water,
rules the country people. From humble beginnings

I was able to be the first to bring Aeolian song
to Italian measures. Take the proud honor
well-deserved, Melpomene, and be pleased
to circle my hair with the laurel of Delphi.

---

7 *Libitina*: the Roman goddess of funerals.
9 *priest*: the *Pontifex Maximus* led solemn processions which included the Vestal Virgins up the Sacred Way to the Temple of Jupiter Best and Greatest on the Capitol. Horace underestimated.
11 *Daunus*: legendary founder king of Daunia, the ancient kingdom in which Venusia, Horace's birthplace, was situated. The River Aufidus flowed close to Venusia, in winter and spring a torrent, but not in summer.
13 *bring*: the Latin word *deduxisse* is used of establishing a colony; also of spinning wool. It is a standard claim of Hellenistic poets (and the Latin poets they inspired) that their verse is fine-spun.
13–14 *Aeolian . . . Italian*: Horace's proudest boast is that he has brought Greek lyric poetry to Rome
15 *well-deserved*: with characteristic evasiveness Horace leaves the reader to decide whether it is Melpomene who deserves the honour or Horace.
15–16 *Melpomene . . . Delphi*: invoked at the end of the first poem in the three books, and thanked at the end of the last as Horace claims the laurel crown of Apollo, god of poetry.

5. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.871-870, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (San Diego: Harcourt, 1993).

> And now my work is done: no wrath of Jove
> nor fire nor sword nor time, which would erode
> all things, has power to blot out this poem.
> Now, when it wills, the fatal day (which has
> only the body in its grasp) can end
> my years, however long or short their span.
> But, with the better part of me, I'll gain
> a place that's higher than the stars: my name,
> indelible, eternal, will remain.
> And everywhere that Roman power has sway,
> in all domains the Latins gain, my lines
> will be on people's lips; and through all time—
> if poets' prophecies are ever right—
> my name and fame are sure: I shall have life.

6. Martial, *Epigrams* 1.1, 1.2, 3.2, 4.72 trans. Gideon Nesbit (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2015); 6.61, 7.51 trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb Classical Library 95 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

1.1

> The man you read, the man you want—here he is: *Martial*, famous all round the world for his gossipy little books of epigrams. While he still lives and breathes, Avid Fan, you have conferred on him distinction such as few poets achieve when dead and gone.

1.2

> Want my little books with you all the time? Fancy them as travelling-companions on a long trip? Then purchase *these* ones: parchment binds them between narrow boards. Boxed sets are for the Greats; me, you can hold in one hand. But to be sure you know where I'm to be found for sale and don't wander lost all over the city, I'll steer you right: seek out Secundus, freedman of erudite Lucensis, past the threshold of Peace and the Forum of Pallas.

_____

parchment binds them between narrow boards: the special travel-sized copies described in the poem are parchment codices: they have spines, covers, and pages, like the books of today. Codices did not catch on as a mainstream way of publishing literature for centuries after Martial's time, so his typical ancient reader will have read this poem in a bookroll—a scroll made of papyrus.

the threshold of Peace and the Forum of Pallas: Vespasian's temple of AD 75 celebrated the end of the Jewish revolt and looked out over a colonnaded garden. The relatively narrow urban corridor between the Temple of Peace complex (sometimes called the 'Forum of Peace') and the Forum of Augustus was subsequently turned into the Forum of Nerva, which takes its name from Domitian's short-lived successor. However the project was begun under Domitian and included a temple of his favorite goddess, Minerva.

3.2

> Whose present, little book, do you wish to be? Sort yourself out with an owner quickly, or you might be snatched off to some soot-blackened kitchen, to clothe whitebait in your soggy papyrus or make a conical wrap for frankincense or pepper. Are you making a run for Faustinus' lap? Smart move. Now you'll be at liberty to stroll about, slicked back with cedar-oil; nicely turned out with borders prettified, you will exult in your painted finials; and voluptuous purple will clothe you, and your haughty title will blush with carmine. With him as your owner, you need not fear even Probus.

4.72

> You keep pestering me to give you my little books, Quintus. I don't have them, but Tryphon the bookseller has them in stock. 'You expect me to *pay* for that trash? To

buy your poetry, and me in my right mind? I'm not doing something so stupid', you say. Me neither.

6.61

Pompullus has it made, Faustinus. He will be read and scatter his name all over the world. "So may the faithless race of the yellow-haired Usipi prosper, and whosoever loves not Ausonia's empire!" And yet Pompullus' work is said to have talent. "But believe me, that is not enough to make him famous. How many good poets are food for moths and bookworms, and only cooks buy their accomplished verses! There is something more that gives centuries to paper. A book that is to live must have a Genius."

7.51

If it irks you to buy my trifles, Urbicus, and nonetheless you have a fancy to know my wanton verses, you will seek out (and perhaps you know him) Pompeius Auctus. He sits at the entrance of Mars the Avenger's temple. Steeped in law and practiced in the various employments of the gown, he is not my reader, Urbicus, he is my book. He remembers and recites my little books in their absence so that not a letter is lost to my pages. In fine, he could pass for their author if he wished, but he prefers to favor my fame. You may solicit him from the tenth hour onward (before that he will be too busy); a small dinner will accommodate the two of you. He will read, you drink. Though you wish he wouldn't, on he will boom. And when you say "That's enough," on he will read.

7. From the *Life of Adam and Eve* (3rd to 5th century CE), translated in H.F.D. Sparks, *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, pp. 160-161.

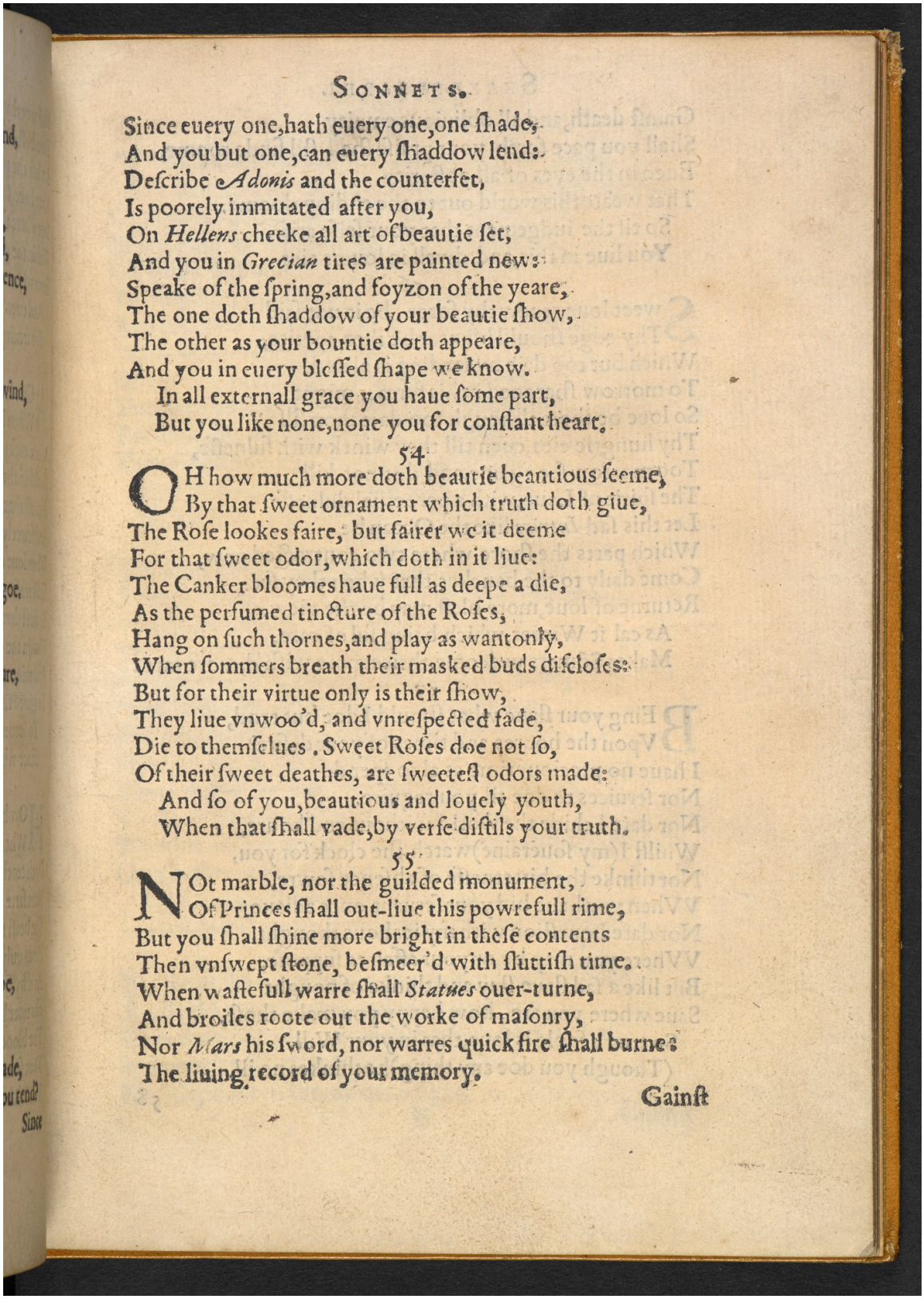
XLIX. Six days after Adam died, Eve, realizing that her own death was near, called all her sons and daughters together—that is, Seth with his thirty brothers and thirty sisters. And Eve said to all of them, "Listen to me, my children, and I will tell you what the archangel Michael said to us when your father and I transgressed the command of God. "Because of your transgression," he said, "our Lord will bring on your race the anger of his judgment, first by water, the second time by fire: by these two things will the Lord judge the whole human race."

L. "But listen to me, my children. Make two kinds of tablets, some of stone and others of clay, and record on them everything that has happened in my life and your father's, what you have heard from us and what you have seen yourselves. If the Lord judges our race by water, the clay tablets will become mud, but the stone ones will be preserved; but if he judges our race by fire, then the stone tablets will be shattered, but the clay ones baked hard." When Eve had said this to her children, she spread out her hands to heaven in prayer, and bent her knees to the earth; and while she was worshipping the Lord and giving him thanks she breathed her last. And afterwards all her children buried her with loud lamentation.

8. Shakespeare, Sonnet 55

Not marble nor the gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So, till the Judgement that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

Sonnet 55 in the 1609 Quarto:



Since euery one,hath euery one,one ſhade,
And you but one,can euery ſhaddow lend:
Deſcribe *Adonis* and the counterfet,
Is poorely immitated after you,
On *Hellens* cheeke all art of beautie ſet,
And you in *Grecian* tires are painted new:
Speake of the ſpring,and foyzon of the yeare,
The one doth ſhaddow of your beautie ſhow,
The other as your bountie doth appeare,
And you in euery bleſſed ſhape we know.
In all externall grace you haue ſome part,
But you like none,none you for conſtant heart.

54

O How much more doth beautie beautious ſeeme,
By that ſweet ornament which truth doth giue,
The Roſe lookes faire, but fairer we it deeme
For that ſweet odor,which doth in it liue:
The Canker bloomes haue full as deepe a die,
As the perfumed tincture of the Roſes,
Hang on ſuch thornes,and play as wantonly,
When ſommers breath their masked buds diſcloſes:
But for their virtue only is their ſhow,
They liue vnwoo'd, and vnreſpected fade,
Die to themſelues. Sweet Roſes doe not ſo,
Of their ſweet deathes, are ſweeteſt odors made:
And ſo of you,beautious and louely youth,
When that ſhall vade,by verſe diſtils your truth.

55

NOt marble, nor the guilded monument,
Of Princes ſhall out-liue this powrefull rime,
But you ſhall ſhine more bright in theſe contents
Then vnſwept ſtone, beſmeer'd with ſluttiſh time.
When waſtefull warre ſhall *Statues* ouer-turne,
And broiles roote out the worke of maſonry,
Nor *Mars* his ſword, nor warres quick fire ſhall burne:
The liuing record of your memory.

Gainſt

Gainſt death,and all obliuious emnity
Shall you pace forth, your praiſe ſhall ſtil finde roome,
Euen in the eyes of all poſterity
That weare this world out to the ending doome.
So til the iudgement that your ſelfe ariſe,
You liue in this,and dwell in louers eies.

56

Sweet loue renew thy force, be it not ſaid
Thy edge ſhould blunter be then apetite,
Which,but too daie by feeding is alaied,
To morrow ſharpned in his former might.
So loue be thou,although too daie thou fill
Thy hungrie eies,euen till they winck with fulneſſe,
Too morrow ſee againe,and doe not kill
The ſpirit of Loue,with a perpetual dulneſſe:
Let this ſad *Intrim* like the Ocean be
Which parts the ſhore,where two contracted new,
Come daily to the banckes,that when they ſee:
Returne of loue,more bleſt may be the view.
As cal it Winter,which being ful of care,
Makes Sõmers welcome,thrice more wiſh'd,more rare:

57

BEing your ſlaue what ſhould I doe but tend,
Vpon the houres,and times of your deſire?
I haue no precious time at al to ſpend;
Nor ſeruices to doe til you require.
Nor dare I chide the world without end houre,
Whilſt I(my ſoueraine)watch the clock for you,
Nor thinke the bitterneſſe of abſence ſowre,
VVhen you haue bid your ſeruant once adieue.
Nor dare I queſtion with my iealious thought,
VVhere you may be,or your affaires ſuppoſe,
But like a ſad ſlaue ſtay and thinke of nought
Saue where you are, how happy you make thoſe.
So true a foole is loue,that in your Will,
(Though you doe any thing)he thinkes no ill.

58