Week 1 Readings


   **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,

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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 nor 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? 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

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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.

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.
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 whatever 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.

**XCV**

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

5  *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;

10  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'.

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.

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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.

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,
delible, 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.
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.
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 every one, hath every one, one shade,
And you but one, can every shadow lend;
Describe Adonis and the counterfeit,
Is poorly imitated after you,
On Helens checke 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 every blessed shape we know.

In all externall grace you have some part,
But you like none, none you for constant heart;

Oh how much more doth beautie beantious seeme
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give,
The Rosie lookes fairest, but fairest we it deeeme
For that sweet odor, which doth in it liue:
The Canker blooms have 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 discloseth;
But for their virtue only is their show,
They liue vnwoood, and vnrespected fade,
Die to themselves, Sweet Roses doe not so,
Of their sweet deaths, are sweeter odors made;
And so of you, beautious and lonely youth,
When that shall fade, by verse diftilts your truth.

Not marble, nor the guided monument,
Of Princes shall out-luye this powrful ryme,
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Then vnswep't stone, besmeir'd with mottish time,
When wastefull warre shall Statues ouer-turne,
And broiles route out the worke of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword, nor warres quick fire shall burnes
The liuing, record of your memory.
Gainst death, and all oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth, your praise shall fill
Euen in the eyes of all posterity
That weare this world out to the ending doome,
So til the judgement that your selfe arise,
You live in this, and dwell in louers eies.

Sweet love renew thy force, be it not said
Thy edge should blunter be than apetite,
Which but too dace by feeding is alated,
To morrow sharpened in his former might.
So love be thou, although too daie thou fill
Thy hungrie eies, even till they winck with fulnesse,
Too morrow fee 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 love, more blest may be the view.
As cal it Winter, which being full of care,
Makes Sombres welcome, thrice more wish'd, more rare:

Being your slave, what should I doe but tend,
Upon the houres, and times of your desire,
I have no precious time at all to spend;
Nor servuces to doe til you require,
Nor dare I chide the world without end houre,
Wilt thou (my soueraigne) watch the clock for you,
Nor thinke the bitternesse of absence soure,
When you haue bid your servant once adieu,
Nor dare I question with my icalous thought,
Where you may be, or your affaires suppose,
But like a sad slaye stay and thinke of nought.
Sawe where you are, how happy you make those.
So true a foole is love, that in your Will,
(Though you doe any thing) he thinke's no ill.