

# The Writing Living in Papyrus and Wool

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**Philosophy**

So. “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.”

Ph. “You mean the living, breathing discourse of the man who knows, of which the written one can be fairly called an image.”<sup>1</sup>

Theuth: “I have discovered a potion [*pharmakon*] for memory [*mnemesis*] and for wisdom [*sophia*]...”

Thamus: “You have not discovered a potion [*pharmakon*] for remembering [*mnemesis*], but for reminding [*hypomnemesi*].”<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

When those living in cultures and times clothed in literacy write about Plato’s writings concerning writing, weaving and technology, they tend to forget or pass over the burden of considering the ancient’s lived, embodied experiences of *technai* and *logos*. This essay seeks to remedy such forgetting by attending to two interrelated questions. First, how might Plato himself have experienced writing (and reading)? To be certain, philosophers spend most of their time diagramming Plato’s arguments and debating his intentions—insofar as they can be inferred from and theorized through the literary, mythical and intellectual dimensions of text. These approaches, although important, tend to occlude the brute, material circumstances of ancient writing as well as Plato’s particular, lived experience of

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<sup>1</sup> *Phaedrus* 276A. (Plato. *Phaedrus*. trans. Nehamas and Woodruff. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995) All further citations from this document will be marked *Phaedrus*, followed by the line #.

<sup>2</sup> *Phaedrus* 275A. In this passage, *hypomnemesi* takes the genitive form— ὑπομνήσεως—literally, “from under memory.” Later on, the only other time the term *hypomnemesi* is used in the *Phaedrus* is in 278A, where the noun takes the dative form: “he believes that at their very best these can only serve as reminders [ὑπόμνησιν] to those who already know.” Here, this use of the dative shows the direction of either towards or under, i.e. “towards memory or under memory.” Many thanks to Morey Williams for helping me work out the Greek in this passage.

writing during the revolutionary times between orality and alphabetical literacy in Ancient Greece.<sup>3</sup> In order to take this dimension of ancient writing into account, I will call upon Papyrology, a combinatory field of archeology, paleography, epigraphy, linguistics, classical scholarship and philosophy, in order to, as the papyrologist claims, “make direct contact with the writers of 2000 years ago.”<sup>4</sup> My first task will be to describe the experience of writing and reading papyrus in Ancient Greece between the end of the Fifth Century B.C. and the middle-late Fourth Century B.C., the time during which Plato lived and wrote about writing. Then I will visit Plato’s *Phaedrus* and address what is written about writing, as it is the dialogue that makes attending to the question of good, bad, and artful speechwriting its task.

My second question concerns how Plato tailors his writing about *logos* with a metaphoric of weaving. How do living bodies, technological practice, and metaphor work and weave together in writing? Upon better understanding the textual practice of writing in Ancient Greece, I will approach what has been written about writing (text)—by Plato himself, as well as by scholars of Plato—with attention to weaving (textiles) as it is employed paradigmatically (statesmanship) and metaphorically (writing). In exploring the material practice of ancient weaving, I will turn to Plato’s *Statesman*, the Platonic dialogue which best exemplifies Plato’s living knowledge of weaving.

Through exploring ancient material praxes of writing and weaving as they were lived and experienced, I will arrive at phenomeno-pharmakological contact with Plato’s writing about writing—as well as his writing about weaving. Can we come into contact with the texture of Plato’s texts? Can the *pharmakon*, knotted into writing as ink scratches and bleeds into papyrus, be allowed to show itself in the bodily ways humans learn to know their technologies?

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<sup>3</sup> An *alphabetical script* can be understood as a unique type of writing technology that appears for the first time in Western history with the ancient Greeks. An alphabetical script transcribes non-alphabetical syllabary scripts into a script (system of letters, characters), which images or represents the range of vocal sounds made by oral, spoken language in a manageable and efficient way. This is revolutionary technology, for never before had humans made so efficient the technological practices of reading and writing; the efficiency of such technology allowed literacy to spread throughout the western world. See Havelock’s chapters, “The Greek Alphabet” and “The Alphabetization of Homer” in his *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences*.

<sup>4</sup> Turner, E. G. *Greek Papyri: An Introduction*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968. (v)

**Method: Phenomeno-pharmakology (*pharmakon*, *technē*, *physis*, *lived experience*)**

The enterprise of this essay is methodologically *phenomeno-pharmakological*, that is, it seeks to experience, understand, and describe weaving as it manifests or shows itself (*phenomena*) textually (*logos*) to describe writing, the *pharmakon*. It becomes pertinent, then, to gather conceptual guiding threads from Derrida, and Heidegger, and, to especially give attention to the lived-practical experience of ancient writing and weaving, found in Merleau-Ponty.

Derrida's text *Dissemination* focuses on the "textual, the textile, and the histological" graphic relations "between the living and the dead."<sup>5</sup> Provoked by the presence of Phaedrus himself holding a handwritten copy of Lysias' speech,<sup>6</sup> Derrida argues that the "central nervure" of *Phaedrus* concerns questioning the difference between writing dishonorably and beautifully. Within this question, Derrida discovers a litany of instances where *pharmakon* (polysemically the drug, the remedy, the recipe, the poison, the philter<sup>7</sup>), *pharmakeia* (Pharmacia the mythical persona, but also the noun signifying the administration of the *pharmakon*<sup>8</sup>), and *pharmakeus* (magician, sorcerer, the one who poisons<sup>9</sup>) appear ambiguously as well as ambivalently to describe the *technai* of writing and speech. Writing as *pharmakon* remains dangerous, oblique and ambivalent because writing blurs differences between life and death—the live, interrogative dialogue of speaking gets translated into monuments of dead inky words. Writing blurs the differences between inside and outside—written speech as discourse becomes errant, pouring or spilling out of the author over the papyrus: still the author's words, yet now vulnerable to haphazardous, convenient, or disingenuous misappropriations. The dangers of writing, as we know from Plato's play with Egyptian mythology<sup>10</sup> in the *Phaedrus*, is that words can too easily masquerade as tools for wisdom and memory without inciting true memory in the reader ("You have not discovered a potion [*pharmakon*] for remembering [*mnemesis*], but for

<sup>5</sup> Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. trans. Barbara Johnson. London: The Athlone Press, 1981): 65. Hereafter cited in the notes as *D*, followed by the page number.

<sup>6</sup> All Greek text was handwritten at this time. Punctuation, text character, grammar, and spelling were not yet standardized features of alphabetical literacy.

<sup>7</sup> *D*, 71.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>9</sup> See Plato's use of *pharmakeus* in *Symposium* at 203D "... he [*pharmakeus*] is a schemer after the beautiful and the good; he is brave, impetuous, and intense, an awesome hunger, always weaving snares, resourceful in his pursuit of intelligence, a lover of wisdom through all his life, a genius with enchantments, potions, and clever pleadings."

<sup>10</sup> *Phaedrus*, 275A.

reminding [*hypomnemesi*]).<sup>11</sup> But how might we understand the *pharmakon*, this doubled-edged blade, writing technology, within the ancient Greek concept of *technē*?

Heidegger's account of *technē* (art, skill, craft) gives a broad, nuanced reading of the Greek concept. Rather than merely craft-making or artwork, rather than merely a "means to an end" and/or a "human activity" (i.e. mere manual labor),<sup>12</sup> Heidegger claims that "*technē* manifests a mode of knowing. To know means to have seen, in the widest sense of seeing, which means to apprehend what is present, as such."<sup>13</sup> I want to stress that, even for Heidegger, such seeing and knowing need not be exempt from the bodily, the nervous, the tactile, or the visceral. Within whatever words one can use to grasp and describe writing as such, there are sheaths of flexor tendons braiding the insides of each writer's fingers; one knows writing during the present of writing, through carrying the weight of the reed pen, through pinching the thickness of the papyrus scroll and stirring through the viscosity of molten ink. Such knowledge, for Plato and for Heidegger, always happens within and in relation to *physis*—the "arising of something out of itself,"<sup>14</sup> a bringing forth or giving birth which happens otherwise than our projects, a generativity which becomes regardless of us but moves and happens through us.

Socrates worries about the text's ability to arise out of and defend itself, to speak vitally on behalf of its author. He worries that the dead matter making up the words will fail to sound and grow with the living. But writing can rise from the dead through reading. The ways we know writing cannot be separated completely from the ways reading resurrects what is written. These are technological ways.<sup>15</sup> The question arises: how can the way Plato lived inform our understanding of

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<sup>11</sup> Phaedrus enters the dialogue holding Lysias' speech- a piece of writing which seems to know love, but which rather forgets the live-erotic dialogue which must come to risk and play in the lives of living people.

<sup>12</sup> Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology*. Translated by William Lovitt. New York: Harper & Row, 1977. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Writings*. Translated and edited by David Ferrell Krell. New York: Harper San Francisco, 1977 (Heidegger Selections 1927-1964):184.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Heidegger argues that the ways of modern technology threatens to monopolize and fix the manifold of potential ways of knowing into stasis. Modern technology—itsself the greatest monument of text ever constructed—has covered over (buried, entombed) original Greek knowing because its essence is "en-framing" [*Ge-stell*]: a way of technological revealing which only reveals what it has already grasped, gathered, assembled and ordered (what is written, permanently inked) in its reserves. Heidegger writes: "According to ordinary usage, the word *Gestell* [frame] means some kind of apparatus, e.g., a bookrack. *Gestell* is also the name for a skeleton" (*Question Concerning Technology*, 20-21).

what he wrote about writing and weaving? To be intertwined with Derrida and Heidegger are Merleau-Ponty's ways of reading and writing, his textual praxes, which return to the bodily dimensions of *lived experience*. The phenomeno-pharmakological method now makes contact with writing and weaving by attending, first, to the living, richly sensuous bodily dimensions of experience, rather than exclusively to those dimensions, which are reflective or strictly cognitive. Phenomeno-pharmakology concerns how living organs and senses work together through *technai* and *logos* to gather, together, store and exercise knowledge (*episteme*) of their own—a knowledge that ultimately weaves itself into reflection, cognition and analysis.

### **What is Inked in the Papyrus**

Classics scholars, epigraphists, and papyrologists place Greece's acquisition of its own, alphabetical written language somewhere between 850 and 700 B.C.<sup>16</sup> In the centuries that follow this monumental technological achievement, the exact circumstances of Greece becoming literate remain unknown. Controversially<sup>17</sup>, Eric Havelock argues that, in the time of Plato, Greek culture should be described in terms of craft-literacy and pre-literacy rather than in any sense of "literate" that the modern West understands.<sup>18</sup> Greece cannot be called "literate" if literacy is thought of as widespread, standardized reading and writing. When papyrologists and epigraphists look at the differences in textual practice between documentary scribes, commentators, stone masons, isolated authors, and bookhands,<sup>19</sup> they discover that Greek alphabetical literacy—both reading and writing—was utterly idiosyncratic to each writer, and therefore unpredictable from author to author.

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<sup>16</sup> The exact circumstances of debate over alphabet acquisition are worth noting, especially for their speculative character. It is known that the Greek alphabetical script is an adapted version of Phoenician script and that this technology was probably developed on the island of Cyprus for a century or more before it started to spread. The translation of oral language (phonetics) into written alphabetical text (standardized representations of phonetic sounds into a system of images) was probably pursued as a technology which would help preserve the memory of Greek culture.

<sup>17</sup> Havelock's theses are controversial in that they examine a slew of presuppositions that classical and philosophical scholars bring to their analyses of ancient texts. In summary, Havelock argues that the Greek literacy is incomplete as well as constantly in tension with oral culture during classical antiquity.

<sup>18</sup> Havelock, "Spoken Sound and Inscribed Sign" in *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences*, 59.

<sup>19</sup> Turner, E. *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971. 22-24

Punctuation had not been standardized (there are not yet question marks, apostrophes, commas, but only signs that demarcate changes in speakers); text was written without separating letters into words as a continuous, single sequence of script, a thread without case sensitivity, without standardized lettering or font.<sup>20</sup> Turner, a classical papyrologist, notes that in the idiosyncrasies of these earliest Greek papyri (late-middle fourth century B.C.) “...we can see the limitations imposed on the writer by the material and by format, on the reader by layout.”<sup>21</sup> Too, there are significant divergences between tutored and untutored handwriting.<sup>22</sup> Herein, we notice the Greeks struggling to achieve a new discipline of standardizing dexterity in their hands. The fact that writing on papyrus did not usually happen on tables but instead occurred while sitting on the ground and stretching one’s tunic over one’s knees as a makeshift desk<sup>23</sup> further emphasizes the difficulties such discipline faced. While balancing the papyrus, the writer would have to practice feeling for and applying his reed pen with the right, timely amount of pressure—enough force to make his mark without tearing through the sheet, the board, or his garment. I interpret such skill in terms of *kairological finesse*—the living body’s timing, grace and poise in working over the *physis* through *logos* and *technē*<sup>24</sup>. The way a tightrope walker withstands an unexpected breeze; the way an archer’s pupils dilate during the arrow’s narrow twilight release; the way an ancient writer learns to apply the right amount of pressure to the pumice as it grinds into the papyrus and erases the ink, learning to feel through the depths of friction without wounding the text; these moments are evidence of *kairological finesse*. A signature, the subtle impression of the art of one’s own touch, achieves itself in the nuances of carving and hollowing the tip of one’s hard reed pen; this tip became a vessel for the writer’s homemade ink, a potion of heated gum and lustrous carbon black ash (perhaps, ashes from burnt papyrus).

<sup>20</sup> These observations are culled from E. Turner’s text *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World*. 1-22.

<sup>21</sup> Turner, E. *Greek Papyri: An Introduction*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968. 99.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 89. “Rough, untutored hands can be easily picked out...the same letter may be so clumsily made that it appears to have several distinct forms, yet by studying the direction of the individual strokes one observes that attempts to make it proceed in the same way. Usually there will be gross spelling errors also—letters and syllables are omitted, and so on...”

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3. This practice also came from ancient Egypt, as certain ancient Greek travelers have noted. Turner speculates that Greeks may have developed mats of some kind, which, placed underneath the papyrus, provided a harder surface which prevented punctures and tearing.

<sup>24</sup> Consider the Greek concept of *kairos* here, in the context of having the “right” and “timely” kind of physical strength, finesse, and dexterity to write complex systems of characters. The practice of writing with hard reed into papyrus differs starkly from ancient Egyptian methods, which used ink brushes to paint their hieroglyphics on the papyrus.

Add to such difficulties the fact that the ancient Greeks recite their literacy: reading and writing are simultaneously spoken out loud. In this way, their writing maintains archaic vestiges of orality: the living rhythms of speaking bodies make impressions into every character written and read. *Logos* resonates within the breath of lungs as well as the breadth, flexibility and durability of the lips and vocal chords; it makes its mark in the text, the voice's knowledge flowing through the fingertips staining their signatures. The momentum of the heart beats through speech, echoes through the speakers hands and fingers; together they clothe the papyrus in black, the color which Plato says contracts the visible.<sup>25</sup> What is inked in the papyrus is the living blood carried through contractions, through the reed's tip, to be born beyond them, the pulse blackening and hardening as it dries outside of the living body, dyeing.

The tension between orality and literacy, within which Plato wrote, was a tension between different ways living bodies learn to work over and through *logos*. Interpreting the circumstances of Plato's lived experience of ancient writing materials confirms this claim.<sup>26</sup> It is agreed upon by classical epigraphists and papyrologists that Plato's dialogues were written on papyrus (*Cyperus Papyrus*,)<sup>27</sup> a green, sedge-growing, starchy, fibrous plant which could not grow in the Aegean regions where Plato lived. In ancient Greek, the term for green, *chloros*, suggested moisture, fluidity, freshness and living.<sup>28</sup> Papyrus was imported from Egypt by Greece and was probably harvested from the banks of the Nile in the months after it would flood. The hot dry summers and cold wet winters of Greece did not allow the survival of any complete, original Platonic texts—they have been erased, just as that same tumultuous and fecund climate erased nearly all of the textiles made and worn by ancient Greeks.<sup>29</sup> The oldest literary Greek papyri are found south of

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<sup>25</sup> Plato. *Plato's Cosmology [Timaeus]*. trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957. (*Timaeus*, 67E)

<sup>26</sup> "Evidence for the date of the invention of the alphabet and its earliest use is supplied by epigraph. But material evidence for literacy is something else. Reading is a habit which does not leave its impress upon a material object. Nor can you build it up upon the basis of a fund of inscriptions. What is needed is a body of documentation in quantity available in private houses, easily transmissible between persons, fluently and easily written. In short, a ready supply of material surfaces receptive to ink and light in texture." Havelock, "The Pre-literacy of the Greeks" in *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences*, 190.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis, Naphtali. *Papyrus in Classical Antiquity*. Great Britain: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1974. 87

<sup>28</sup> Plato sees colors as "flames streaming off from bodies of every sort" because he understands the eyes to be organs that negotiate thermodynamic moisture. See *Timaeus*, 67C-68D.

<sup>29</sup> Plato's own handwriting, then, like his living voice, remains a mystery.

Greece, across the Mediterranean Sea, in Egypt<sup>30</sup>—Egypt’s deathly winds and sands best preserved what was already dead.<sup>31</sup>

Ancient books were not books as we understand them, but rather were rolls of papyrus.<sup>32</sup> The papyrus sheets themselves were, to some extent, woven out of crisscrossing horizontal and vertical layers of the plant.<sup>33</sup> Papyrus was not only used for writing: plaited baskets, tunic fasteners, ship’s cables and ropes, wicks for lamps and candles, sandals were made of papyrus. “They even make boats from [papyrus],” writes Theophrastus, “and from the fiber they weave sails.” Farmers and workers chewed the softer parts of the papyrus stalk for the taste of its refreshing, juicy pulp.<sup>34</sup> Papyrus plants’ feathery crowns were used for ceremonial decorum and interior design. When it was burned, papyrus ash was used for perfumes, incenses and aromatic powders. Papyrus also had medicinal functionality: “...it was used from very early times as an ingredient in a large variety of medicinal recipes; its residual ash when burnt (like all vegetable matter) has a mildly caustic and desiccatory property<sup>35</sup>... Alone or with other ingredients the ash went into potions and ointments prescribed for fistulas, tumors and a host of other ailments from alopecia to ulcers—even for insomnia (if taken in wine).”<sup>36</sup> Stripped from the stalk, dampened with oils and infused with powders, papyrus also covered wounds, bandaged human flesh.

In the themes just articulated, papyrus is used for clothing, travel, festival decoration, nourishment, writing, and medicine. Papyrus is used by Greece between home and the foreign, between life and death. It makes literal, as well as

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<sup>30</sup> The oldest fragments and commentaries date to the second half of the fourth century B.C., three hundred to four hundred years after the alphabetization of Greek had occurred but before literacy is standardized, let alone widespread. See Cavallo, Guglielmo. “Greek and Latin Writing In the Papyri” in Bagnall, Roger S. ed. *Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. (102)

<sup>31</sup> Many of the earliest papyri fragments of Platonic dialogues are found in the papyrus wrapping the limbs of Egyptian mummies—literally, for eternity, these dead bodies were to be clothed in copied texts of Plato. The difference between text, textiles and death becomes blurry here.

<sup>32</sup> Turner, E. G. *Greek Papyri: An Introduction*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968. (7). As opposed to the spine-bound papyrus codices of later antiquity which could sit and stand on a desk and remain open, needing only one hand to turn the pages, the papyrus scroll “was convenient, impermanent, and not very capacious...two hands were needed to hold it open...”

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>34</sup> This practice was more predominant in Egypt and, in fact, Greeks thought it to be a bit distasteful.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis, Naphtali. *Papyrus in Classical Antiquity*. Great Britain: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1974. (31)

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

literary sense that Plato would term papyrus writing and the papyrus rolled scrolls of his age as *pharmakon*.

Woven thick with bodily praxes of writing are the habits and customs surrounding the textual praxes of ancient academia. While this issue deserves more time than I can devote to it, one point must be made. The anxiety felt about writing was fueled by confusion regarding issues that today we relate to author intention and academic integrity. The majority of academic writing in Plato's time was conducted with "commentaries" (*hypomnemata*), handwritten copies of isolated passages which served the student during lectures. Turner describes these texts, *hypomnemata*, as pre-critical interpretative texts:

Literary and historical scholarship are impossible unless the reader respects the words of the author he is reading, and reproduces them with all the accuracy of which he is capable. This presupposition of scholarship we take for granted, but it was not part of the tradition of classical Greece. Used to the cut and thrust of oral dialectic, the Greeks tended to be careless of exact quotation or copying and of precise chronology, undisturbed by anachronisms. In a famous passage of the *Phaedrus* (274 F) Plato decries the use of books: they inhibit thought, they can't answer back, they merely provide *hypomnemata* or aids to memory. Plato's protest is not against exact thinking, it is not even against pedantry: it is against the tendency encouraged by books to depend on others and consequently to cease to think oneself, to close one's mind when the problem has been stated and given a solution.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to the idiosyncrasies of the written texts of that day, as well as their being prone to errors, the practices of copy-making and recitation in the ancient world ran the regular risk of distorting the author's original words, plagiarism, slander—especially in *hypomnemata*. Recalling the ambivalence of the *pharmakon*, perhaps describing Plato's reaction to writing simply as "protest" gets a bit more problematic. Plato is protesting the art of writing from within writing—this is a fact observed by anyone who has thought twice about *Phaedrus*.

### **Ancient Writing in *Phaedrus***

I am interpreting Plato's intentions in *Phaedrus* as grafting from, into and upon his lived experiences of writing—they live in the finessed carving and bleeding of

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

inked reed crisscrossing into and through the depths of crisscrossed papyrus. The duplicity of the potion, the *pharmakon*, writing, in the passages quoted at the beginning of this essay, is written as a difference between technology for *mnemesis* and *hypomnesis*, that is, the dangerous difference between a living-recollected memory and a dead, artificial memory. We feel anxiety surrounding this danger in the mythical words Plato has Socrates speak, and that Socrates says are spoken by Egyptian kings and gods:

...[writing] will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory [*mnemesis*] 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 [*mnemesis*], completely on their own. You have not discovered a potion for remembering [*mnemesis*] but for reminding [*hypomnesis*]....<sup>38</sup>

The carefully imaged tapestry this myth presents to the reader is already woven thick with the lived experience of writing in classical antiquity. The ways *mnemesis* differs from *hypomnesis* parallel the ways oral culture is in tension with literacy. Plato's writing inhabits this tension and his anxiety stems from those living, first encounters with writing as being essentially different from living speech: writing was still new technology, and the myth depicts it this way, bringing us into contact with the moment of writing's birth and the anxiety witnessed and felt therein.

Writing, for Plato, embodied an ambivalent relation between life and death, between home and what is foreign. The presence of the Egyptian speakers in Socrates' *mythos* concerning the invention of writing (Theuth and Thamus) does not seem so strange anymore—in fact, it makes perfect sense that the myth displaces itself even further outside of Athens (into Egypt), as Socrates himself already tells it standing outside of his city's limits. One clue is that the myth begins in Naucratis,<sup>39</sup> a Greek trading colony in Egypt. A conversation concerning writing carried Socrates outside of Athens because the material practice of writing already depended on sources beyond Greece. The presence of Egyptians in this myth, akin to the *pharmakon*, is ambivalent, duplicitous. On the one hand, "Egyptians were known in Greece for their ancient records and their efforts to retain the memory of the past."<sup>40</sup> This is clear, too, from the *Timaeus*' discussion of natural disasters

<sup>38</sup> *Phaedrus*, 274E-275A.

<sup>39</sup> *Phaedrus*, 274C.

<sup>40</sup> See Nehamas' and Woodruff's commentary to *Phaedrus* on relevance of Egyptian mythology (FN 177, Page 78).

related to water in relation to irrigation and record-keeping technology in Egypt.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, Egyptians were known for the malicious erasure of the texts of their predecessors: pharaohs deliberately erected monuments over those made by their predecessors, going so far as to erase their cartouches from the stone.<sup>42</sup> We cannot forget that writing is born of an Ancient Egyptian culture that was preoccupied with the task of monumentalizing death on a scale unsurpassed even by modern architectural technology. The pyramids, like many other colossal Egyptian temples (to name just two: Abu Simbel, a monument scratched into the face of mountain rock; Saqqara, Egypt's "city of the dead"), are first and foremost tombs<sup>43</sup>—perhaps Plato thought of such architecture when describing Lysias' speech as an epitaph or tomb inscription.<sup>44</sup>

Phaedrus, holding this tomb inscription, is the instance which charges readers of *Phaedrus* to explore the problem of deciding how writing can be good, bad...artful.<sup>45</sup> I have argued that knowing how to write involves how bodies live through and practice *technē* and *logos*. Recall the many moments in *Phaedrus* where Socrates stresses the importance of demonstrating a living knowledge (*mnemesis*)—living between *technē* and *physis*—in one's writing or

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<sup>41</sup> *Timaeus*, 22-23.

<sup>42</sup> The defacement and erasure of Egyptian monumental writing is common knowledge for Egyptologists and Egyptian epigraphists. The question to be asked is: to what extent was Plato, and for that matter were Greeks of his time, familiar with Egyptology? The use of Egyptian mythology in *Phaedrus* suggests evidence in the affirmative. Was Plato familiar with the battles between Egyptian pharaohs concerning eternity, monument and memory? Allow me one example: Thutmose III (1479-1425 B.C.), sometimes referred to as Thothmes after Thoth, the Egyptian god of knowledge and writing (Recall Theuth, in *Phaedrus*, can also be called Thoth) was thought to have purposefully destroyed the monuments of his predecessor, Hatshepsut. Epigraphists still debate the exact circumstances of this erasure, but its malice is not in the least uncommon to Egyptian pharonic history (See: Caminos, Ricardo. "The Recording of Inscriptions and Scenes in Tombs and Temples" in *Ancient Egyptian Epigraphy and Palaeography*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976.)

<sup>43</sup> One of the first, principle books of Egyptology, a hodge-podge collection of the earliest Egyptian mythological fragments, is known as the "Book of the Dead"—precisely for the reason that it is almost entirely preoccupied with ritualizing and monumentalizing death (albeit, for purposes as of rebirth, as the first translators of hieroglyphics found). Interestingly, Derrida was quite preoccupied with this text as well as Egyptology.

<sup>44</sup> Writing, specifically Lysias' speech, is described by analogy to epitaph, an epigram inscribed on the tomb of Midas (264C).

<sup>45</sup> *Phaedrus*, 276B: "The issue which brought us to this point in the first place: We wanted to examine the attack made on Lysias on account of his writing speeches, and to ask which speeches are written artfully and which not."

speechmaking.<sup>46</sup> Along these threads, remember Socrates speaking for “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.”<sup>47</sup> Recall also Socrates’ argument that good speech must be put together like a “living creature, with a body of its own.”<sup>48</sup> Our focus on ancient fingers gripping the reed dipped in ink, this reed’s carving valleys in the papyrus and filling them with lustrous black carbon, has been in aid of attending to such living, experiential knowledge: the kairological finesse of the writer.

The knowledge in kairological finesse is a living knowledge of the difference between writing and speechmaking: a knowledge which in turn questions the differences between the material practices of writing and speechmaking, the differences between voice and ink, larynx throat and reed, living body and dead papyrus. Socrates concludes the dialogue by composing for Phaedrus an image of the man who knows these differences:

He believes that at their very best [written discourses] can only serve as reminders [*hypomnēsis*] to those who already know. And he also thinks that only what is said for the sake of understanding and learning, what is truly written in the soul concerning what is just, noble, and good, can be clear, perfect, and worth serious attention: Such discourses should be called his own legitimate children, first the discourse he may have discovered already within himself and then its sons and brothers who may have grown naturally in other souls insofar as these are worthy; to the rest, he turns his back. Such a man, Phaedrus, would be just what you and I both would pray to become.<sup>49</sup>

Socrates prays to become the man who knows how to write and speak the difference between *mnēsis* and *hypomnēsis*—the difference between living memory and those dead monuments to memory that remain, which are reminders— insofar as writing, reading and speaking are possible. But Socrates, it

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<sup>46</sup> *Phaedrus*, 277B. “First, you must know the truth concerning everything you are speaking or writing about; you must learn how to define each thing in itself; and, having defined it, you must know how to divide it into kinds until you reach something indivisible. Second, you must understand the nature [*physis*] of the soul, along the same lines... Then, and only then, will you be able to use speech artfully [*technē*], to the extent that its nature [*physis*] allows it to be used that way...”

<sup>47</sup> *Phaedrus*, 276A.

<sup>48</sup> *Phaedrus*, 264C.

<sup>49</sup> *Phaedrus*, 278A.

has been speculated, never, himself, wrote. Does Plato's portrayal of this great philosopher now appear a bit hypocritical, if not facetious? In writing, the man who never writes challenges his interlocutor, a reader and writer, concerning his lack of living, self-knowledge regarding these technological praxes. Here, Socrates' knowledge of how these *technai* are woven and inked into the papyrus with *logoi*, between body, soul and *physis*, begins to wither and fray.

### What is Dyed in the Wool

"Held closer to the light" for a moment in the *Phaedrus*, what Socrates and Phaedrus have been weaving with *logos* shows itself akin to "threadbare fabric,"<sup>50</sup> as if poorly crafted speech or dialogue can reveal, as well as the nudity of a body, the fragility and vulnerability of human discourse. Plato seems anxious about the facts of this material: discourse can be stripped, torn to tatters, opened to suffering—perhaps even wounded. Yet earlier in the dialogue, before giving his first speech, Socrates stands under the high-noon sun, inundated by the cicadas' screaming. He appears to be overheating—from the weather as well as from his proximity to Phaedrus. To prevent himself from 'losing the thread of his argument,' Socrates covers his head and face with a cloth.<sup>51</sup> This cloth seems to be thicker than the discourse: among other things, it lends Socrates the shade necessary to continue weaving with *logos*. Does the thicker cloth reveal less than one that is threadbare? Is one more vital than the other?

While these cloths are equal in ink and papyrus, what can be gathered from Plato's use of threadbare fabric as a metaphor for written discourse remains unclear. His choice of such metaphors, when we look at their history in discourse, seems less a choice and more the participation in a custom—Plato is, by far, not the first to employ a metaphoric of textiles and weaving for describing various threads of *logos*.<sup>52</sup> In fact, the cultural work performed now, and in Plato's time, by texts was for much of western history achieved in textiles. As Kathryn Kruger notes, "The connection between weaving (textiles) and language (texts) [and *technē*] becomes so entangled as to be almost impossible to separate."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Phaedrus*, 268A.

<sup>51</sup> *Phaedrus*, 237A.

<sup>52</sup> See: Kruger, Kathryn. *Weaving the Word: The Metaphorics of Weaving and Female Textual Production*. New Jersey: Rosemont Publishing, 2001. (cited hereafter as *Weaving the Word*)

<sup>53</sup> *Weaving the Word*, 29. Continued: "In many languages including English, the verb *to weave* defines not just the making of textiles, but any creative act. Likewise, the noun *text* comes from the Latin verb *texere*, also meaning 'to construct or to weave.' In Greek this verb, [*technē*], refers to art, craft and skill."

Archeologists and historians understand the practice of weaving to be the major technological predecessor to writing: *writing is born of and through weaving*, and in prehistoric cultures, myths and stories are woven by communities of female authorship.<sup>54</sup> The technological weaving vocabulary that Plato employs, much akin to the ritual practice of praise given to Athena, Athens' patron goddess of weaving (and, as *Athene Parthenos*, patron of the literary arts<sup>55</sup>), originates millennia prior to Greece's fitful transitions to literate culture.<sup>56</sup> It appears less confounding, then, that Plato continues the custom of using metaphors of weaving to address the complex activities and movements that carry the generative potential of *logos*. But in a literal sense, writing *clothes logos* with *technē* designed to withstand natural disaster and preserve the records of a culture for eternity. Weaving as a metaphor for writing works to articulate the ways *logos* goes into labor for generation and preservation. Thus weaving, as it shows itself as a metaphor for writing in writing, tends to appear when Plato tries to articulate gestation, growth, and endurance. Gestation: the weaving carries and harbors *logos* against *physis* and destruction, before writing is read or spoken. Growth: Socrates, the speaking midwife, delivers increasing intimacy between the living bonds of *technē*, *physis*, philosophy and statesmanship—all while being able to keep them distinct.<sup>57</sup> Endurance: weaving produces technology for the long haul—it is literal

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13. The scope of this paper cannot adequately address the dimensions of gender and work at stake in these historical facts which archeologists and historians are only recently beginning to piece together. From my research I can gather that women played a much greater role in culture prior to literacy, in addition to roles concerning textile manufacture, medicine and education. E.J.W. Barber's research on women's work in textiles is of landmark importance to approaching questions concerning gender, history and labor. See: *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years - Women, Cloth, and Society in Early Times*; see also: *Prehistoric Textiles: The Development of Cloth in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages with Special Reference to the Aegean*.

<sup>55</sup> *Weaving the Word*, 24.

<sup>56</sup> See Barber's *Women's Work*, 243: "Good evidence exists that the basis of Athena's mythology lies far back in Aegean prehistory, long before the Greeks themselves arrived. The names of Athena and Athens are not Greek or Indo-European names but come from an earlier linguistic layer. Furthermore, the Greek weaving vocabulary is not Indo-European. The proto-Indo Europeans seem to have had scant knowledge of weaving, their women knowing only how to weave narrow belts and bands... The people who taught the Greeks this technology, vocabulary, and associated mythical lore must have been the 'indigenous' inhabitants of the Balkans (skilled in weaving since the middle of the Neolithic, perhaps even 5000 B.C.). The Athenians referred to these natives as 'autochthonous'—born of the land itself—and Athena must belong originally to them."

<sup>57</sup> See *Sophist* at 259E: "...speech has arisen [read: *physis*, generation] for us through the interweaving of the forms." At 262D-E, in a conversation concerning how one learns the art of speaking: "...we say that [the learner] speaks and does not merely name; what's more, we utter

and cultural technology, which provides comfort as well as survival from disaster and annihilation. Thus, Plato's graphic depictions of real weavers, their materials, and the complicated techniques of their craft continue and follow along these threads.<sup>58</sup>

In the *Statesman*, Plato leaves the reader with a "wool cloak," a "bond" of interrelating statecraft and citizenry, which weaves and holds together, in the end, as a "drug [*pharmakon*] provided by art."<sup>59</sup> The *pharmakon* returns to *logos*, and this time it is weaving in writing. Before approaching the nature of metaphor—the carrying and bearing beyond—in more bodily ways, two questions arise for orientation. First, how does the wool cloak communicate the bonds that statesmen weave? Second, how and why did Greeks wear wool? These questions will weave together as they approach the context within which Plato writes about weaving in the *Statesman*.

### **Ancient Weavers in the *Statesman***

Plato's Eleatic Stranger employs a paradigm to aid practicing giving a verbal account (communicate) of the art of statesmanship. A *paradigm* is metaphorical technology that shows the art of statesmanship alongside the art of weaving wool<sup>60</sup> in order to bring forth or reveal something not yet recognized about both.<sup>61</sup> Although the Stranger is certain that "no one in his right mind would be willing to hunt down the account of weaving for the sake of weaving itself,"<sup>62</sup> I am not convinced that the domain of the body and its lived experiences weaving wool should (or can) be omitted from the intelligibility of Plato's metaphor. Rather, the

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the name 'speech' for this weaving..." Recall Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium* at 191A-D. After describing the primordial wound Zeus lacerates into humankind, we are told of the ways humans "throw their arms around each other, weaving themselves together, wanting to grow together... Whenever one of the halves died and one was left, the other that was left still sought another and wove itself together with that." Herein we glimpse weaving as the metaphorical technology, which can work between life (generation, movement) and death (destruction, stasis).

<sup>58</sup> See *Republic* at 369D-370E, for an instance of weaving being associated with woman's work.

<sup>59</sup> *Statesman*, 310A.

<sup>60</sup> *Statesman*, 277D.

<sup>61</sup> The paradigm reveals similarities of nature between whatever it intertwines; it also preserves what is other as other, what is same as same; it addresses sameness and otherness together, intertwining them. "Through comparison," says the Stranger, the generation of the paradigm "brings to completion one true opinion about [statesmanship and weaving wool] as about both together" (278C).

<sup>62</sup> *Statesman*, 285D.

living body's kinaesthetic finesse in weaving and wearing wool provides the very first frameworks for their intelligibility; these are the reservoirs rich with bodily knowledge and material, the reserves which condition the possibility of carrying and bearing resources beyond embodiment. To be sure, the Stranger's playful warnings against pursuing an account of weaving for "weaving itself" is followed by claims that degrade the bodily dimensions of the *technē* as those which are easiest to make plain, those which are lesser. The greater and more honorable account concerns bodiless things. The philosopher Stanley Rosen seems to agree with this when he describes the Stranger's specificity regarding the nuances of weaving as a material practice, not ironically, as "too much material."<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, Rosen argues that the Stranger's

...theory is tangled together with practice...[The] more separate from practice, the farther we are removed from human existence, the less accurately we understand it as it is actually lived. The perspective of the mathematician or the astronomer is not suited to the study of politics. And there is a deeper or more theoretical inference to be drawn. We cannot finally separate theory from practice because theory is itself in part practice. The pure viewing of Platonic forms is impossible for an incarnated soul, which must "recollect" these forms or view them in images, which are artifacts of the cognitive and perceptual process.<sup>64</sup>

If theory *tangles* with practice, and if the practice of recollection is necessarily incarnated, this means living, bodily experiences necessarily graft themselves into cognition and perception. Their threads and sutures cannot be entirely severed, for the arts of weaving and writing, after all, "tend to produce artifacts by the hand."<sup>65</sup> Hence the need to interpret the massive amount of "material" concerning weaving in the paradigm's graphic account of wool cloaks.<sup>66</sup> This material is vital to how the reader and interlocutors, through a series of distinctions, reach the production of wool cloaks: from defenses against suffering (*paschein*: suffering, the opposite of self-power, agency, movement and cause) come barriers, screens; there are screens which wrap around to protect, screens which are made, without stitches, from hair; such protectors (*alekseteria*: remedy or medicine, as distinct from *pharmakon*) bind together; "To these very defenses and coverings, worked by

<sup>63</sup> Rosen, Stanley. *Plato's Statesman: The Web of Politics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995 (104).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>66</sup> *Statesman*, 279C-280A.

fastening them together with themselves,” says the Stranger, “we give the name ‘cloaks.’” This *technē* which forges cover from *physis* “defends from winter storms, fashions barriers of wool, and is called by the name of the weaving art.”<sup>67</sup>

Plato’s choice of the garment’s material as wool is significant. Wool<sup>68</sup> was, in fact, the most available source of fabric in the ancient world, especially in Greece. It was available because practices of selective breeding sheep and goats already stretched far back into the cultures of pre-historic, oral epochs. Not only did most families in Greece rear, tend to, and cultivate their own sheep; Greek women (wives, daughters and slaves) routinely sheered wool in their homes, washed and beat it, spun and even dyed it.

Wool-working unites Greece in sharing the domestic practice of weaving as technical expertise. While wool-working was a family practice close to home, Ancient Greece’s major export markets were, in fact, driven by demands for wool textiles. Wool wove together what was home and what was foreign, and Greeks found pride and meaning in their mutual prosperity. Weaving succeeded partly because Greek experts worked at all levels of weaving processes—efficient technical praxes of teamwork and specialization were already well developed and underway. The reader cannot forget that effectuating the efficiency of any economy depends upon the efficacy of communication and education.

Within the success that the Greek’s kairological finesse for weaving provided there is a material dimension which concerns the unique virtues of wool itself. First, the kairological finesse which weaving demands of the weaver shows itself in the shuttle’s movement back and forth, a motion which accords with the ways bodies live and work, the ways they walk together in and out of *harmony*.<sup>69</sup> The weaver aims at meticulousness, accuracy and speed in production—efficient due measure, *kairos*. The finesse required here, akin to writing, concerns the heart as well as the subtlety of touch; finesse is learned in and through the pulsating nerves, the veins and skin.

In the *Timaeus*, skin is born and gestates according to moisture<sup>70</sup> in the brain; it grows by stretching into “long threads” that wind into “knots clothing the

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<sup>67</sup> *Statesman*, 280E.

<sup>68</sup> The remarks I am about to make concerning wool can be confirmed by variety of different sources. See below in my “Selected Bibliography” the texts by Barber, Becker, Blümner, Krueger, as well as the section “Greece” in *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles*.

<sup>69</sup> “*Harmonia*, close fitting, can be a feature of the tightly woven text only: a textile with a loose weave is not, so to speak, ‘harmonious.’” See McEwen, Indra Kagis. *Socrates’ Ancestor: An Essay on Architectural Beginnings*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993. (83)

<sup>70</sup> Recall the green of papyrus, its living freshness and association with the sensation of moisture.

body all around.”<sup>71</sup> “Further, where the fabric of the sinew, skin, and bone is finished off in the fingers and toes, a compound of the three, when it is dried off, forms a single hard skin containing them all.”<sup>72</sup> The rhythm of weavers’ hearts—their “knot of veins and fountain of blood which moves impetuously round throughout all [their] members”<sup>73</sup>—involves the timing of their steps to their breathing. Lungs, for Plato, provide relief for the throbbing and swelling heart.<sup>74</sup> The kairological finesse with which weavers wield the power of their fingers together impresses traces of their experience into the fabric wrought. Perhaps, like mystic weavers of the Middle Ages, Ancient Greek weavers sang or hummed as they wove, their voices and limbs working together to become communities of living metronome.<sup>75</sup>

Kairological finesse, the living body’s proper timing and poise, requires timely material. There are materials which, in the moment, best clothe the bodies and texts of incarnated spirits. The metaphor that is timely gathers these materials into *logos* and carries them beyond their brute materiality. Necessarily, this movement “beyond” is a movement that retains the living body’s knowledge. The subtle longevity of the ink soaking into the papyrus, the *wool* enduring winter storms and summer-sun, these are *kairological materials*.

The unique virtues of woolen materials show themselves when compared to the fragility of finer linens such as cotton, flax, or silk. This is clear from *Statesman*’s paradigm dividing plant fibers from hair and then choosing the latter. Wool provided the ancient world with a plentiful source of flexible, durable material for textile manufacturing. Choosing wool as the material of the paradigm follows from and anticipates ways of living that clothe themselves in the virtues of wool: wool is both flexible and durable. Due to the complexity of its fiber structure, wool resists soiling and permeation; it is flame retardant and retains its shape in movement under duress. Remember natural disasters, fires, torrential downpours and the longevity of papyrus and ink, and then remember how clothing can save the living or allow them to perish. Wool works to protect whoever wears

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<sup>71</sup> *Timaeus*, 76A.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 76D.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 70B.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> See Michelet’s *The People* (trans. John P. McKay) 46-47: “The mystic weavers of the Middle Ages were famous under the name of Lollards because while they worked they actually lulled, that is, sang and hummed in low tones some nursery rhyme. The rhythm of the shuttle, pushed forth and pulled back at equal intervals, patterned itself to the rhythm of the heart, and by evening it often happened that in addition to the cloth, a hymn or a ballad had been woven.”

it during the extremities of *physis*—it is timely during turbulence and calm. The ancients knew the virtues of wool because they knew *kairos*—materially and in finesse.

During all Greek seasons, wool was worn by many.<sup>76</sup> In all seasons means in all weather—even the most comfortable days. Wool can be exceptionally comfortable. Clothing is, after all, technology that can become more useful as it frees its wearers more and more from their subtle pains and discomforts. It is in this sense that wool, like papyrus, offers to life a dependable, portable locality—an artifice that lasts through time and disaster, the right place and the right time for *logos* to engage with statesmanship and discourse philosophically.<sup>77</sup> The dynamic strife and intimacy between storm and calm, comfort and excruciation, horror and eroticism is clothed in wool. Choosing wool for the paradigm taps into shared human experiences of clothing ourselves and being clothed—the living experience of technology.

The wool cloak becomes more than wool in Plato's *logos*. Carried beyond the paradigm, the Statesman's woven wool cloak becomes a *bond*<sup>78</sup> that must care for everyone and everything living and dead, manmade and natural, divine and human in the city, weaving them together. The statesman must determine how best to divide and intertwine everyone and everything—most notably, the statesman must mix those naturally defined by virtues of courage or moderation in order to best advance the good in the city, depending upon the educators who cultivate the right beliefs about the good, justice, and the beautiful.

Recall that the divisions and intertwinings of different hairs of woolen cloaks were said to be “bound together with themselves.”<sup>79</sup> Recall also the role

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<sup>76</sup> By many, I mean men of all socio-political classes (even slaves). Women tended to wear other materials and thinner fabrics in summer.

<sup>77</sup> It is easiest to forget the body en route to philosophizing bodiless things when advances in clothing and other technologies makes it possible to live in states of uninterrupted comfort, or, at the very least, provide living with stable equilibriums of sensation, perception and experience. Think of the air-conditioning, the cushioned chairs, and the large, flat tables under 24-hour fluorescent lighting that populate nearly all university libraries. The environments in which philosophy (and the sciences) can pursue disembodied knowledge are environments that are conducive to forgetting about how our bodies feel, but does this mean that we can forget feeling absolutely? I understood such environments as incubators for those armchair theoreticians whose sedentary living tends toward controlling climate and silencing the noise of discomfort. Note: Socrates and Phaedrus stand amidst the cicadas' screaming under the high-noon sun.

<sup>78</sup> The vocabulary of bodily weaving is employed to describe the bond: “...kingship attempts to bind together and *interweave* those natures ... we should claim that this bond is *implanted* through the laws for those alone who are both well-born from the beginning and nourished by customs that are according to nature, and that for just these men it is the drug provided by art...” (*Statesman*, 310A). (My emphasis)

<sup>79</sup> *Statesman*, 279E.

that education must play for the state, for community and for communication. Recall finally that Greek education prioritizes athleticism, harmony, risk, play, and trust. The Stranger claims that the art of statesmanship must direct and facilitate the education of citizens by mixing them together. The bond entangles and bears the traces of living bodies interweaving art and speech, *technaī*, *logos*, *episteme*, and *kairos*. The Greek word *sun-teinou* is translated here as ‘bond.’ *Sun* means “together”; *teinou* means to stretch, to draw tight, to brace up—to strain to the uttermost, to exert. *Sunteinou*, the bond, can be understood as a straining and stretching together, an artifact made to contain yet allow living tension and motile contact under duress. The flexible durability of this bond shows itself living through, along and inside the wool cloak, because the wealth of knowledge gathered through lived experiences of weaving and wearing wool shares itself even in being carried beyond into and beyond the text.

### **The Bond Between Writing and Weaving Living in Papyrus and Wool**

*Technē* and *logos* weave together to bond bodies of written text. While metaphors of weaving in writing do go beyond the brute experiences of living bodies, they do not completely escape these experiences. Theory, inextricably, remains tangled with practice. Odysseys of thought and journeys to the Forms in writing, as they are born of weaving through writing, gather, stretch and tighten their harmonies with dexterity, finesse, and materials that are timely.

If writing is born of weaving and weaving weaves a bond, to what or who does writing give birth? The answer, at least in part, concerns how we understand the bond. For Plato, the bond *bonds* as weavers weave wool into cloak. The bond lives as our living bodies work raw materials into technologies. The efficacy of technology subsists and improves with the lived experiences of practicing technology. It is this aspect of the problem that prompts the question: how is the bond lived, the garment worn?

The virtue of weaving and the flexibility and durability of wool shows themselves in the experience of siege and storm. Plato and his readers knew this, viscerally. Akin to doctors and writers, the statesman-weaver’s art (a *technē* that is *pharmakon*) can become remedy or poison. Deciding the art forever one way or the other begins tyranny and bondage: the bond cannot be finished, let alone perfected; it must avoid the death of stasis (*stasis*: suffering the standstill of internal opposition). The fetters and chains imposed by tyrants, the technology designed to immobilize and immure living citizens by deadening their livelihood (much akin to *hypomnemata*, the copies which deaden living speech by writing for readers only

reminders, *logos* entombed)—such carceral technology is not the bond of the proper statesman.

Incompleteness, vicissitude, and *aporia* must remain dyed in the wool.<sup>80</sup> The statesman must learn, from moving and living, how to keep movement alive. Educated in music and rhythm, the bonds woven become bands. Their self-originating movements play in harmonies, become elastic, tolerate, coordinate, collaborate, improvise. These bonds take risks; they test and are tested, endure trials and tribulations. Such flexible durability can tolerate the vicissitudes of play. Leaping and bounding in games of education and gymnasia, the bonds allow for the manners in which moderation and courage, family, state and the foreign, can divide and interweave, binding together. In play, risks are taken, tremendous energy is exerted—the joy of play leaves us bursting at the seams. There can be something excessive and perhaps dangerous about the risks taken in play: the bond must be flexible and durable enough to withstand unpredictable expenditures of energy and resource, the storms of laughter and throes of sorrow, the feasts of Dionysian frenzy.<sup>81</sup>

Once we start thinking of the way bonds can clothe, explore and negotiate the dangers of living— at the right time helping but sometimes harming according to the remedy or poison administered—we realize that these bonds might also protect, replenish and repair. These bonds not only move harmonically as bands but protect and heal as bandages. Administering the bond as band and bandage means that the experts of weaving, writing, medicine and statecraft are, in fact, experts of kairological material and finesse. I have shown that these experts know these bonds in and according to lived, bodily experience. The possibility of carrying this knowledge beyond bodies—the efficacy and potential of metaphor—generates from living, bodily experiences of memory and speech. The knowledge in the hands of the weaver impresses itself into wool that is woven and worn by the writer. When the writer writes about writing in terms of weaving, the writer carries

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<sup>80</sup> There is an uncanny proximity, a Janus-faciality between the Greek words for completing or “making perfect” [*teletē*] and death [*teleute*]. Dyeing incompleteness into the wool, inking it into the papyrus, is technology which activates and supports humankind’s living struggles against stasis, immobility, perfection, death. In this struggle, the wearers of wool and the readers of papyrus know the virtue of papyrus and wool because they feel it.

<sup>81</sup> Recall the ways children destroy their clothing as they learn to play—the ways their garments fray and tear in the course of making violent, first contacts, the ways that grass, mud, rust, and blood stain their garments. Think of the ways clothes learn to fit each body according uniquely to its movements—recall the strange experience of wearing someone else’s clothing, the experience of stepping into another’s shoes. I think of how new clothing has yet to be broken in, how old, well-worn clothing becomes frail, falls apart—the way the cadaver’s clothing reeks of decay, the way prison uniforms smell of concrete, steel and barbed wire.

these impressions into the text itself; the ways the writer impresses the papyrus with inked words for weaving are ways of clothing the text. These interwoven impressions are traces of the reservoirs of living, bodily knowledge. Metaphor taps into the wealth of these reservoirs in order to carry and bear such knowledge beyond bodies and text.

I must stress, one final time: going beyond the texts and textiles of living bodies does not completely leave them behind—there can be no absolute separation, no completion, no perfection in *logos*. To claim that metaphorical *logos* can completely sever itself from lived experience is to claim that metaphors practice the death of *logos* rather vivify it.

In absolute silence we can still feel and hear our hearts and lungs beating and breathing. Always there lurks the threat of losing one's threads. What the mind and hands can grasp and carry innervates with what is incarnate and mortal. Pausing to feel through and reflect on the text's craftsmanship, I stretch over my eyes and hold up to the sun what I have wrought here and see that it now appears threadbare, but nevertheless thicker than before. I savor this fabric's texture while beholding the light that slips through its crevices. I know that the freshness of this feeling is already fading, the ink drying, the skin wrinkling, the living dying.

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