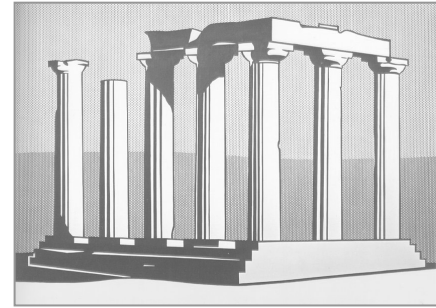


# CREATING CLASSICS

A Visual Workshop on Pasolini & Greek Drama



CSTS H222B · Haverford's Dept. of Classics & Bryn Mawr's Dept. of Italian and Italian Studies  
· Tuesdays from 7:10 pm to 10:00 pm on zoom ·

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Office hours:  
to be scheduled on the *Calendly* app on Moodle

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to be scheduled on the *Calendly* app on Moodle

**Description:** Is the reception of what we call “Classical Antiquity” a passive exercise of memory, inheritance, and recurrence? Or can it be a truly creative action, a kind of reclaiming, even a subversion of inherently exclusionary ideas and media? And what happens when we try to actively take part in this dialogue with a past that was transmitted to us as important, foundational, original, and authoritative? Rooted in the perspectives of trans-codification, trans-historical tradition, and cultural trans-lation, this course attempts to address such questions both in theory and practice. It starts with a seminar, devoted to the analysis and discussion of primary sources from the ancient Mediterranean and their afterlives in modern media. It then turns into a workshop that is both scholarly and creative.

This year, the topic of our seminar will be Pier Paolo Pasolini's cinematic re-writing of Greek tragedies: *Medea*, *Oedipus Rex*, and *Oresteia*, shot in Morocco, Turkey, Italy, Uganda, Tanzania, and Syria. Pasolini was a queer (but Catholic), communist (but conservative), poet (but mostly famous for his films) who scandalized bourgeois audiences in Postwar Europe. Trained as a philologist, art historian, and linguist, he looked at Greek literature from a (post)colonial, Marxist point of view, and played with its different traditions. We will read (and, in part, translate) the texts that he read, we will watch his films, and we will discuss them as if they were creative essays by an unruly classicist. Then, we will collaborate to make our own visual experiments based on the tragedies and on Pasolini's cinematic and poetic techniques.

### Assessment Components:

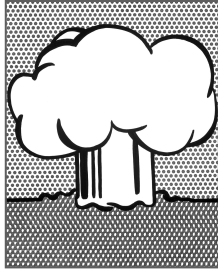
Contribution	· 25%
L Words presentations	· 15%
Translation Portfolio (midterm)	· 25%
Final Workshop & Artifact	· 35%

**Weekly workload:** One tragedy or one film per week, with a selection of orienting tools (essays, images, videos, literature). Out of class, from week 2 to week 8, you will conduct a guided and personalized exercise of translation—described, along with all the other assessment components, further along in this syllabus.

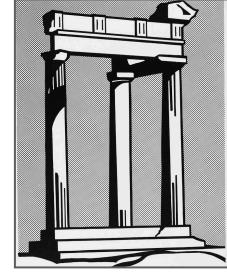
**Resources:** All required readings and films, as well as further readings and other useful sources, are available on our Moodle page. Additional material can be obtained from the library in various ways (pick up in person, online databases, and scan service).

Cross-Listed: Classics (HC) · Italian and Italian Studies (BMC) · Comparative Literature · Visual Studies · Film Studies · Africana Studies · Gender and Sexuality Studies · Theatre





This class has no prerequisite. It is designed to introduce students to Greek tragedies and their context, media theory and its creative applications, and Pasolini's work in Postwar Italy. The comparative and collaborative nature of the course accommodates students with no background in Classics, Italian, or Film, as well as majors in these fields. Tailored activities related to translation will fulfill dept. requirements.



**This is not a normal semester** and we should not pretend otherwise. We will do our best to be flexible and accommodate the needs generated by the ongoing covid emergency. However, we are not able to anticipate all the problems specific to each participant's situation. If our expectations or the resources that we provide are not compatible with what you are going through, please let us know.

### LEARNING GOALS

1. Through literary analysis and a collective discussion of relevant scholarship and contextual information, students will acquire the power to interpret foundational texts of western literature. At the same time, through the formal and sociological analysis of films and trans-historical routes of transmission, they will learn to question the reason why such texts are considered foundational, and to de-center them in a post-colonial perspective.
2. The alternation of seminar and workshop instruction will turn the students into a collaborative learning community. The goal is to contaminate backgrounds and aspirations in the macro-fields of classical and modern, textual and visual cultures. At the end of the semester, all participants will be able to cross disciplinary boundaries in order to make sense of humanistic questions that transcend traditional approaches.
3. Students will not only acquire foundational skills in the interpretation of Classical texts and European films, visual art and recent scholarship. They will also, and foremost, learn how to mix and intersect those skills, and they will be empowered to use them to produce creative artifacts rooted in academic thought.
4. By the end of the semester, students will have acquired individual experience in the practice of translation. This guided experience will extend to inter-media acts of trans-codification, which will be not only explored as objects of study but also directly attempted in a workshop setting. By blending theoretical approaches with practical ones across disciplines, students will acquire multi-literacy skills that can be spent in the pursuit of different majors in the Humanities and Arts.
5. Students will be empowered to approach ancient and modern classics ("a classic is a work which has never exhausted all it has to say" Italo Calvino) not as unquestionable authorities but as malleable sources of inspiration that directly invite them to action as readers, translators, and creators of content. Such action might be curatorial or satirical, philological or vandalistic, based on memory or disruption. It may also hybridize these approaches.

### ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS

#### 1. Contribution (an often misunderstood component)

**Synchronous attendance** is important for the success of this class. If you absolutely cannot attend a class meeting, please inform us in advance and let's figure out together how to make up for the missed class. Since this is a once-a-week, 3 hours seminar+workshop, it is absolutely crucial to **come to class prepared, and ready to contribute**. If serious reasons prevent you from completing the readings or watching the film for a class, please be present anyway and inform us about such reasons. Not all readings and films require the same level of attention and investment, but you are expected to come to class with impressions, notes, and, ideally, questions about each of them.

Actively participating in discussions and activities during class time is the most obvious way to show your contribution. You are always encouraged to be vocal (or textual, on chat and during in-class text-based activities), and to let us know how to make it easier for you to speak and interact in class. However, there are **many other ways** to show that you are participating. You can, for instance, take good notes (which may include drawings, stills from slides and videos, photos of marginalia on your copy of the readings, quotes from class discussion) in class and submit them, as a separate document, with your translation portfolio or final project (see below). You can also schedule an office hours appointment just to have a conversation, one on one, about what we discussed in class, and show us that you were present and actively learning. Or you can prepare for class collaborative with a classmate, and ask them to report some of your ideas and questions when we meet for the seminar. In sum, we expect you to find your own way to make your contribution visible, and we are always available to give you feedback and suggestions on this part of the assessment.

## 2. L Words presentations (**NOT** your usual presentations)

Most of our classes, in the seminar portion of the course, will include this oral exercise, which is entirely led by students. **At the beginning, in the middle, and at the end** of our weekly discussion, one or more students will have the task to choose one word to fuel, re-direct, and project our work forward. They will explain why they chose that word, and lead our collective effort to receive our material in a specific direction. All three these “solos” are not going to be informational presentations, sequences of prepared slides, or summaries, but an informal moment of reflection aloud.

### 1. Lecture (circa 10 minutes, at the beginning of class discussion)

The task is to think of one word (accompanied, if you want, by one image) that has the potential of connecting the week’s readings/film and defining the main topic(s) of the class. In 10 minutes or so (no more than 15), the speaker will explain why they chose that specific word and/or image, and will open a general discussion on the readings and themes of the week by asking no more than three questions to the entire class. We will include a slide with the word and/or the image in the course’s powerpoint, so please send it to Alessandro (along with the questions) in advance — no later than 1pm on the day you are speaking, please! When more than one student is speaking on the same day, they are encouraged to share their experience and collaborate but they are not expected to choose the same word.

### 2. (Re)Launch (circa 5 minutes, right after break)

The task is to pay extra-attention to class discussion and, during the break, to think of a second keyword to re-launch the discussion. Then, in circa 5 minutes, to explain why you chose this word, based on what you heard in class so far and on where you believe the class should move. The main goal of this task is to highlight the most interesting outcomes of our ongoing discussion and to steer the conversation towards topics, problems, and ideas that did not emerge yet. This exercise can dramatically alter the course of a conversation.

### 2. Landing (circa 3 minutes, at the end of class )

The task is to wrap up class with a third keyword that encompasses what you think the class accomplished and what you see on the horizon going forward. You will briefly explain why you chose this word (circa 3 minutes, no more than 5) and use it to orient everyone towards the following week. In part, this exercise is a form of divination: the word that you choose for the landing should make everyone more aware of the direction that the course is taking, and prepare us for the future.

This portion of the grade is **not determined by your performance**, but by the generativeness of the word (and, if you choose to use one in your Lecture, the image) that you chose and the way you offer it to the rest of the class. **If you are uncomfortable speaking in public**, you can provide us or a classmate that you trust with a written version of your Lecture/(Re)Launch/Landing—before class for the first, during the breaks for the other two. The designated speaker, on behalf of the presenter, will read the text or report to the rest of the class about the conversation they had with them about the word they chose. The questions attached to your Lecture should be clear, succinct, and, ideally, they should be ‘real questions’ (i.e. questions to which you don’t have an answer yet). Time limits should be respected in order to leave room for discussion. You are welcome to share your Lecture’s word/image in advance with us to get some guidance or feedback.

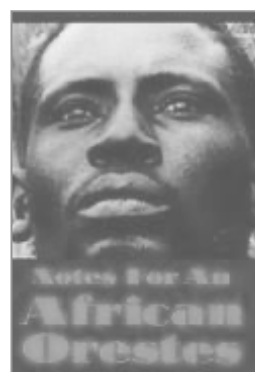
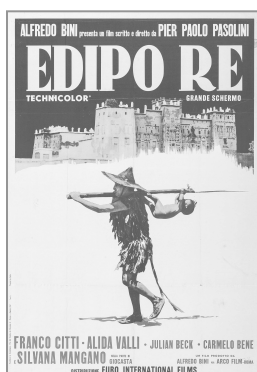
Each student will freely choose their favorite week to give the Lecture. (Re)Launches and Landings will be assigned randomly. A complete calendar will be on Moodle by Week 3. On Week 2, we will model the three exercises for you ourselves, so you can have a tangible example of the kind of informal and non-performative talk that we have in mind.

### 3. Translation Portfolio (a peculiar midterm)

Each week, from week 2 to week 8, you will work on a written and/or visual exercise of translation related to the week’s readings. This task should take **2 hours** of intense work per week outside of class. You can choose to translate **from a language to another** (the original Greek to English for instance, when we are reading a tragedy, or Italian to English when we are watching one of Pasolini’s films). You can also choose to translate **from a medium to another**, turning and excerpt from Euripides’ text into a photographic project, or making a film out of one of Pasolini’s poems. Experimental and out of the box ideas on what constitutes an act of translation are absolutely welcome. However it is your job to **explain** (in a brief paragraph, an audio-message, a presentation attached to your artifact, etc.) how what you did is indeed a translation. These translation works will be rooted in the texts and films assigned for the class and showcase not only your engagement with them, but also your ability to re-use, transform, or even deface them in an aware and philological way.

While you will work on these translations **weekly**, after the first experiment on week 2 you can decide to work on bi-weekly projects (encompassing, for instance, Euripides’ Medea with Pasolini’s Medea). Therefore, your final portfolio will include from 4 to 7 pieces of translation.

You will submit the first weekly translation at the end of week 2 (no later than Monday, March 1, by noon), for initial, ungraded feedback from us. Then, you will submit a comprehensive portfolio of translations, including the first one and the following 6, by the end of week 8 (no later than Monday, April 5 by noon). The resulting document will count as your Midterm.



#### 4. Final Workshop & Artifact

The final four weeks of the course will be devoted to a creative workshop. The outcome will be an artifact of your creation that will count as your final project for the class. This artifact can take any form you'd like (e.g. an original adaptation of a Greek drama; short film; photographic series; podcast; short poems). Part of the grade will be based on your contribution to the final group workshop and, if possible, the organization of a class exhibit. Each final creative project will require an accompanying short reflection piece on your experience with and thinking behind the piece.

You will begin acquiring the conceptual and practical skills necessary to complete the final creative project from week 1. Our screenings of Pasolini's films and readings of Greek drama will be accompanied by scholarly bibliography on visual form, stagecraft, adaptation, and media theory, all of which will expose you to both the theoretical and technical elements of "creation". The syllabus also includes examples of creative projects in cultural translation that will serve as models for the final project, alongside Pasolini's films and other examples of artistic translation from within antiquity. We will take advantage of resources on campus (in particular VCAM and Special Collections) to get trained in particular aspects of media production based on your preliminary ideas for the projects. Furthermore, the weekly "translation" assignments are meant to provide you with a regular and low stakes space to experiment with creative adaptations before the workshop. Pasolini was a declared "amateur" filmmaker, who adopted visual solutions by experience as is clearly evident in his films. Thus, he will serve as a perfect model for us.

Following the guidelines of the Artistic Craft and Vision rubric from the College's General Education Rubrics, our assessment of the final projects will focus primarily on:

1. The project's engagement with and awareness of models which inform its stylistic and structural integrity and as well as its innovation
2. The project's grasp of its own historical and cultural situatedness, which can be demonstrated implicitly in the work itself or more explicitly in the accompanying reflection piece to be submitted alongside the work
3. The process of preliminary versions, drafts, models, appropriate to the medium and their presentation in Weeks 10-13 during the Creative Workshop
4. The student's engagement with and consideration of the critique and recommendations received during the Creative Workshop
5. The assessment of the technical elements of the work will focus primarily on the project's attempt to transcend simplistic ideas of adaptation and the ways in which it engages with questions of form and production so as to reimagine a "classic". In other words, students will not be assessed on mastery over a particular medium (e.g. their expertise in cinematography), though the development of technical skills will be encouraged based on the individual's existing knowledge and experience.



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## CLASS COVENANT

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This Covenant was brainstormed on our first class meeting and elaborated and approved the following week.

- We will interact freely, jumping in and responding to what is being said, building a conversation. This means that we will make an effort to listen actively and to speak clearly: to be generous interlocutors. When it feels more natural or easier, we will raise our hands to signal that we want to speak. The instructors will keep track of who wants to speak. When one has a follow-up (i.e. something brief to say about what has just been said by someone else) one can jump the queue by raising a pen or another object.
- If the surroundings permit it, we will tend to keep our microphones unmuted.
- To express one's enthusiasm/agreement in a non-verbal form, one can, for instance, snap, knock on the table, nod vigorously, or type XXXXX in the chat.
- The instructors will make an effort to make class material available in advance by building most of the moodle in the first two weeks of the semester. Nothing is set in stone, but the core primary readings (all the tragedies and films) will be accessible from the beginning.
- Snacks and drinks are okay during class time (but we eat with muted microphones).
- Silence is fine. Silence is not empty; it can be filled with reflection and speculation. There is no need to break silence to dispel its supposed 'awkwardness'. At the same time, informality and zest are also fine, because intellectual work does not need to be solemn and performative.
- Instructors will strive to keep expectations reasonable, and students will help them understand how to adjust workload and assessment paradigms when needed.

- We value comfort: everyone should organize their physical learning environment and their bodies so that they can comfortably participate in the course. It is important that positions and visual context do not become distracting for others.
- We bring lived experience in the classroom, connecting our lives and background with the content that we discuss and explore. Discussions are not about gathering facts, but rather a tool to refine our creative understanding of texts, images, and films.
- We come from different backgrounds, so we do not assume specific kinds of knowledge when we interact. When we bring in the discussion something from another class, a different reading, a personal experience, or an independent research, we make an effort to make it clear and usable.
- Some time will be reserved, towards the end of class (or portions of class) to invite people who haven't spoken to intervene—if they wish to.
- We observe two 10 minute breaks during our class meetings.
- The chat is always open to contributions.
- We value a non-performative, non-normative kind of rigor in this seminar. We make an effort to come to class prepared, having thought about the content and having journaled about our reading experience. We are generous readers: the point is not to understand everything or to accumulate more "facts" but to spend time in the company of texts, films, and works of art.

## EMAILS, OFFICE HOURS, ACCESSIBILITY, AND HONOR CODE

### on e-mails and office hours

Take advantage of our office hours. If you absolutely can't connect on zoom during our office hour slots, we can schedule a different appointment. It is always okay to ask about your performance in class and to give suggestions about how to make class better (more clear, more comfortable and inclusive, more focused, more effective). We will gladly give you in-advance feedback on portions translation portfolio, and we can discuss it during office hours. Office hours should also be a safe space to admit that you are lost and go over material that you did not understand. Come to office hours with a specific goal in mind and please, help us understand how we can help you with it.

We will do my best to respond to emails in a timely fashion. However, we receive an average of seventy-five messages a day, and on most days we only read emails once or twice a day between 9am and 5pm. Please be patient if I we are not able to respond on the same day.

### on access

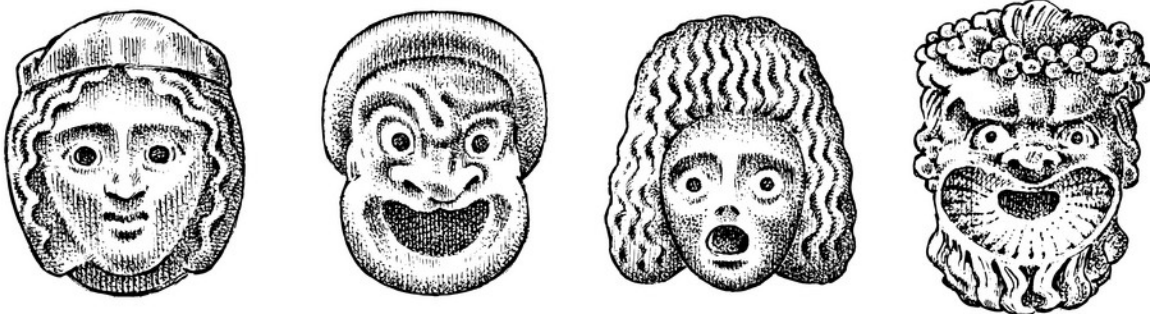
Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Access Services. Students can call 610-526-7516 to make an appointment with the Access Services Director, Deb Alder, or email her at [dalder@brynmawr.edu](mailto:dalder@brynmawr.edu) to begin this confidential process. Once registered, students should schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible to share the verification form and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website. (<http://www.brynmawr.edu/access-services/>). Any student who has a disability-related need to tape record this class first must speak with the Access Services Director and to me. Class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded.

[Haverford language?]

### on the honor code

In completing all your assignments for this course, you are expected to abide by the Bryn Mawr College Honor Code. See [sga.blogs.brynmawr.edu/honor-board/honor-code/](http://sga.blogs.brynmawr.edu/honor-board/honor-code/) for more information. Note in particular that using someone else's ideas or words without quotation marks and/or bibliographic references is not acceptable in writing texts for Humanities classes. Use of google translator and similar automatic translators is also not acceptable for Italian concentrators. When in doubt about what to do with a source (and within reason), ask us.

[Haverford language?]



## CALENDAR

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Week 1 *Covenant* · Weeks 2 - 8 *Seminar* · Weeks 9 - 12 *Workshop*

- Important dates:
- First translation due on Monday, March 1, by noon
  - Translation portfolio due on Monday, April 12, by noon
  - Exhibit of Artifacts TBD (likely in early May)



February 16

Week 1

### Covenant

This week we will establish our covenant and get to know each other. We will start familiarizing with the core concepts of our seminar: reception, translation, trans-codification, and trans-historical perspectives. We will start talking about tragedy and the shape it can take in time-based media.

#### Starting points

- Introduction to and Selections from *Liquid Antiquity*
- Excerpt from Episode 13 of Season 3 of Monty Python's *The Flying Circus* (1971)



**Oedipus Rex 428 BC**

Possibly the most influential and proverbial of all Greek tragedies, the Theban tragedy of Oedipus inspired painting, psychoanalysis, a whole lot of narrative, and music. We'll read Sophocles' text in translation and use it as a frame to understand the genre in its social and performative dimension.

**Required Readings**

- Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, trans. David Grene [Tragedy 70 pp.]

**Further Readings**

ON MOODLE

- Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* [excerpt from theoretical essay]

IN THE LIBRARY

- Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* [psychoanalysis, any edition—also available online]

**\* FIRST TRANSLATION DUE ON MONDAY, MARCH 1, BY NOON**

**Oedipus Rex 1967 AD**

Pasolini's autobiographical *Oedipus* was his first adaptation of an existing play, after 3 original screenplays and 2 films based on the Gospels. Mainly shot in Morocco, influenced by coeval anthropological and ethnomusicological studies, it scandalized classicists but was a commercial success.

**Required Readings**

- Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Edipo Re*, 1967 [Film]
- Audrène Eloit, *Oedipus Rex by PPP The Palimpsest: Rewriting and the Creation of Pasolini's Cinematic Language* [Essay 11 pp.]

**Further Readings**

ON MOODLE

- Martin Winkler, *Oedipus in Cinema* [essay]
- Nikola Petkovic, *Re-Writing the Myth, Rereading the Life: The Universalizing Game in Pier Paolo Pasolini's Edipo Re* [essay]

IN THE LIBRARY

- Francesco Citti, *Edipo classico e contemporaneo* [bilingual collection of studies, available at BMC]

**\* TALK "THE GOODS" BY ARTISTS MAEVE BRENNAN ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3RD, AT 4:30 PM EST (REGISTRATION REQUIRED)**  
<https://exhibits.haverford.edu/notesfortomorrow/programs/>

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**Medea 431 BC**

Re-written countless times, in the past century Euripides' *Medea* became one of the most staged classical plays in the world. Its formal and structural simplicity supports an inextricable knot of themes and perspectives on femininity, family, stranger-ness, and racial and national identity.

**Required Readings**

- Euripides, *Medea*, trans. Oliver Taplin [Tragedy 65 pp.]
- Maeve Brennan, *The Goods* [Talk at Haverford on March 3rd]

**Further Readings**

- ON MOODLE
- Froma Zeitlin, *Playing the Other* [excerpts from scholarly book]
- .....
- IN THE LIBRARY
- Apollonius, *Argonautica* [epic, any edition, also available online]

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**Medea 1969 AD**

Casting Maria Callas, a global icon of Opera, as Medea, Pasolini re-imagined the tragedy as a luxuriously stylish and disquieting nightmare. The film was shot in liminal places: Turkey, Syria, and Pasolini's home region Friuli. The screenplay smashes the perceived linearity of the original.

**Required Readings**

- Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Medea*, 1969 [Film]
- Saviour Catania, *Cinematizing the Euripidean and Sophoclean Spatial Dialectics: On the 'Skene-Self' in Pasolini's *Medea* and *Edipo Re** [Essay 9 pp.]

**Further Readings**

- ON MOODLE
- Colleen Marie Ryan, *Salvaging the Sacred: Female Subjectivity in Pasolini's *Medea** [essay]
- .....
- IN THE LIBRARY
- Gian Maria Annovi, *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Performing Authorship* [book on Pasolini, authorship, and stardom, with important passages on Callas]





March 23

Week 6

### Oresteia 458 BC

The *Oresteia* is a saga, composed of a trilogy of tragedies. It is rooted in a curse, centered on murders and trials, and features divine and fantastic creatures as prominent characters. Aeschylus dealt deeply with the question of justice in politics, law, and morality. We'll read the 3 texts experimentally.

#### Required Readings

- Aeschylus, *Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, The Eumenides*, trans. Richard Lattimore [Tragedies 60, 45, and 40 pp.] \*you'll be divided into three reading groups, each with an assigned tragedy

#### Further Readings

- ON MOODLE
- Oliver Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* [excerpts from essay]
- .....
- IN THE LIBRARY
- Simon Goldhill, *Language, Sexuality, Narrative: The Oresteia* [scholarly book, available online through Hathi Trust]

\* NO CLASS ON MARCH 30 (SPRING PAUSE)

April 6

Week 7

### Notes Towards an African Oresteia 1970 AD

This is not a film, nor is it a direct adaptation of the *Oresteia* set in Africa. It is a collection of visual notes on the failure of such a project. Shot in Uganda and Tanzania, it represents Pasolini himself as an ultimately colonialist intellectual, incapable of reconciling his classicism with the reality of Africa's postwar decolonization. The core of the film is montage, self-analysis and self-disgust, the white gaze, and a conversation with Black students at the university of Rome.

#### Required Readings

- Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Appunti per un'Orestide africana*, 1970 [Film]
- M.D. Usher, *An African Oresteia: Field Notes on Pasolini's Appunti per un'Orestide Africana* [Essay 35 pp.]

#### Further Readings

- ON MOODLE
- Ara Merjian, *Pasolini's African America: Race, Class, and the Limits of Analogical Imagination* [essay]
- .....
- IN THE LIBRARY
- Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Per il cinema* [complete collection of Pasolini's writings on cinema in the original Italian, also available online]

\* TRANSLATION PORTFOLIO DUE ON MONDAY, APRIL 12, BY NOON

**La Rabbia**

We conclude our seminar on one of the most experimental films by Pasolini. Entirely made out of leftover news reels, montaged over a long poem read by a novelist and a painter, *La Rabbia* uses structures of tragic theatre to advocate for a return to classicism while smashing any form of visual and textual tradition. It offers a glimpse on postwar history, decolonization, global stardom, and art.

**Required Readings**

- Pier Paolo Pasolini, *La Rabbia*, 1963 [Film]
- One of your classmates' "notes towards a final project"

**Further Readings**

- ON MOODLE
- Carla Benedetti, *La rabbia di Pasolini: come da un film sperimentale di montaggio può rinascere l'antica forma tragica* [essay]
- Andrew Korn, *Subjectivity and Politics in Pasolini's Bourgeois Tragic Theatre* [essay]
- .....
- IN THE LIBRARY
- Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Selected Poetry* [translated poems]

April 20

Week 9

April 27

Week 10

May 4

Week 11

May 11

Week 12

**Creative Workshop**

**Orienting Readings (will be posted on Moodle)**

- Aristotle *Poetics*
- Agamben, G "Poetics and Poiesis" in *Man Without Content*
- Mcluhan, M "The Medium is the Message"
- Holmes, B and Marta, K "Liquid Antiquity"
- Mulvey, L "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"
- Hartman, S "So many dungeons" in *Lose your mother*
- Zielinski, S *Deep time of the media*, chs. 1-3

