

Translation 1: Oedipus the King, 1478-1515

May you be fortunate, and may a better god
Than mine guard you on this path.
Children, where are you? Come here, come
Here to my hands, your brother's hands
Which have made the eyes of your begetter see
As they do—eyes which, before, were bright;
And I, children, after neither seeing nor understanding,
Was revealed as your father, from where I myself was ploughed.
And I cry for you—though I am unable to see—
When I think of the rest of your bitter life,
And the way you must live among men.
For what sort of common gatherings will you attend,
And in what sort of festival—instead of
Coming home in tears—will you join?
And when you arrive at the point of marriage,
Who is the man that will risk, children,
Taking on this disgrace from me, which
Will be a bane both for the family and for yourself?
What of this evil is absent? Your father slayed his
Own father, and he ploughed from where he
Himself was sown, and equally,
He acquired you from where he himself was born.
You will be shamed: And then who will marry you?
No one will, children, but clearly
You will be ruined, barren and unwed.
Son of Menoeceus, since you alone are left
As father to these two girls (for indeed, we who were their parents,
We two are both destroyed) do not let them
Wander, husbandless beggars, since they are your family,
May they not be equals to my evils!
But pity them, seeing them so young,
Lonely of all things except your company.
Agree, nobleman, with a touch of your hand.
And to you, children, if you had any sense by now,
Then I would offer you much advice: but instead pray this for me,
That you will live where opportunity arises, and have a better
Life than that of your father, who sired you.

I knew that I wanted to translate this scene from Oedipus. I am always so intrigued by the silence of Antigone and Ismene, and the way Oedipus just talks at them, openly declaring himself their brother. To go about translating this scene, I used the Greek text, and looked at several other translations. I could not find a formal commentary (which is pretty necessary, since I've never read tragedy in Greek before), so I translated what I could, and used the professional translations to help me shape my phrases. The result was a bit clunky, and it sounded overly archaic and formal. I know the sense of the passage, and now I know the Greek as well. I was intrigued by the idea of "defacing" through translation, as it was called in the syllabus. So, to make my translation feel more alive, I distanced myself from both the Greek text and other translations. Instead of a very literal translation, I changed words to synonyms that I preferred, and changed around the order of words and lines in some places. It is a translation not because it is exactly true to the original text, but expresses my understanding of the scene, and allows the reader to have my interpretation of the scene "translated" for them.

I was also inspired by what Prof. Giammei said in class- that he was almost repulsed (I don't remember the exact phrase, but I think this was the sense!) reading tragedy in English. I decided to lean into that, because what I think is even more repulsive than reading a beautifully polished translation is reading one by a relative beginner who took her own liberties with the text. I enjoyed this exercise, because my other classes on translation have been about understanding the literal words and grammar of the text, but very little about how the words sound and feel, and what they mean. This translation would not be accepted in a language class, as it is not completely grammatically correct. I have even felt that I have no right to be reading or even attempting to translate such complex and beautiful texts as this- I had to convince myself that it was alright for me to take a stab at this translation. But since I am the one defacing this text, and turning it into my own, why not do what I want with it?







Translation 2: Oedipus Rex, Pasolini

This photo series is inspired by the sphinx riddle that plays such an important role in the film, the photo series by Ai Weiwei, and the Greek vase depicting Oedipus as a traveler with a walking stick. I started thinking about playing with chronology. Ai Weiwei's photo set gives three distinct moments in time in a single viewing moment, compressing the passage of time into a frozen frame. I viewed the set as a single image, in which the pot is simultaneously held, falling, and broken. I imagine my photo set being seen in the same way. Oedipus is simultaneously a relatively young man and depicted (according to the sphinx's riddle) as walking with three feet. He is a father and son simultaneously. His existence is a compression of chronology into a single man. I decided to take the sphinx's riddle very literally, and depict someone in each "stage" of life simultaneously, but not in a traditional way. In each pose, the body is manipulated into an uncomfortable and uncommon pose, which was my translation of the oddity and discomfort associated with Oedipus' chronological position. I also chose to start my series with a slightly blurry photo. The middle is not blurry, but it is not particularly sharp, and in the final photo, I pulled up the clarity in post-production. So even though this is a single viewing moment, I hoped to create a feeling of increasing clarity from the beginning to the end of the series. I consider this a translation because my goal was to capture not the words of the film or tragedy, but the emotions it creates. Watching the film, I was uncomfortable, and a little confused at times. Although the medium of photography is quite different, I hope that I've been able to translate an approximation of the reading and viewing experience of Oedipus Tyrannus.

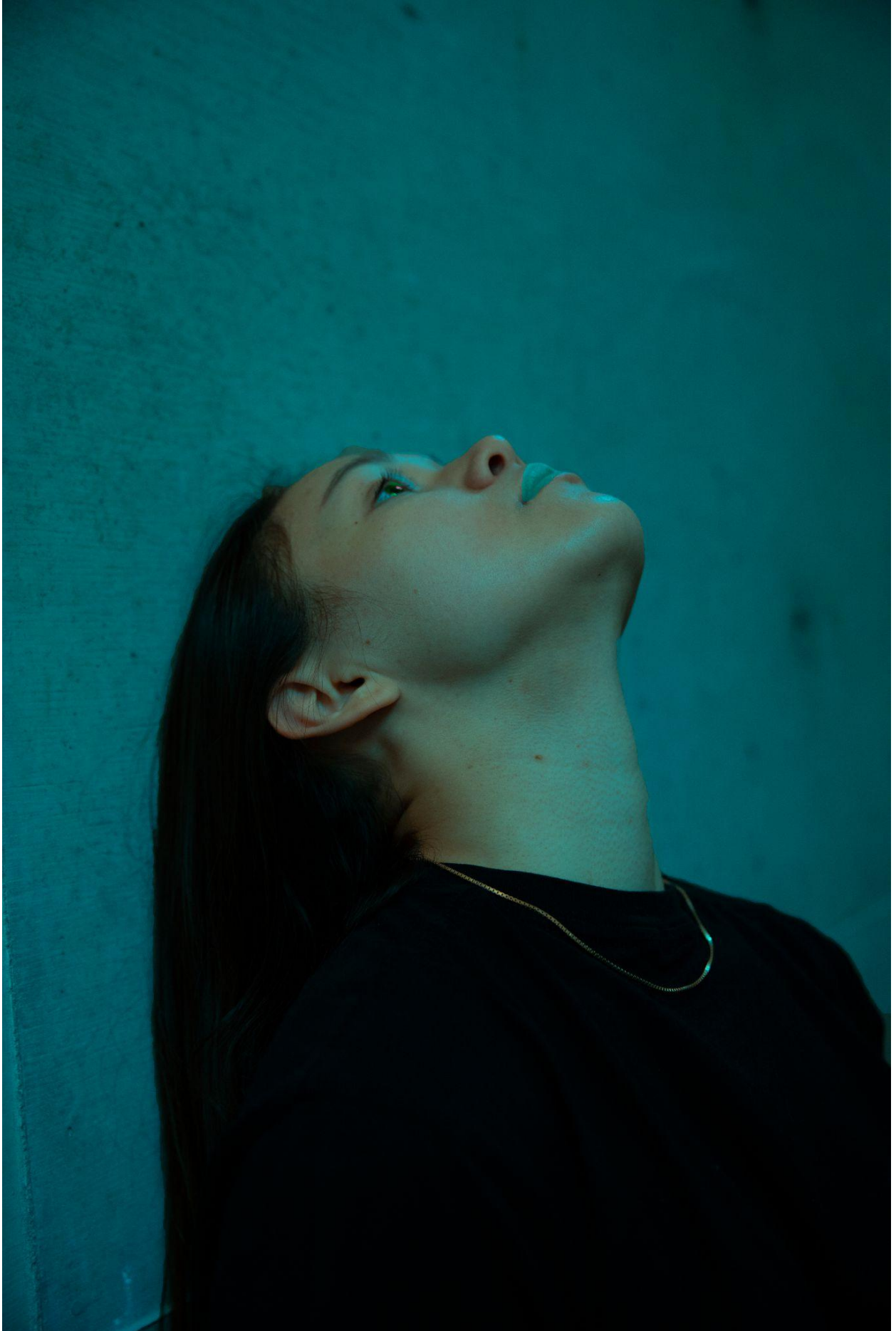
Translation 3: Medea 230-251

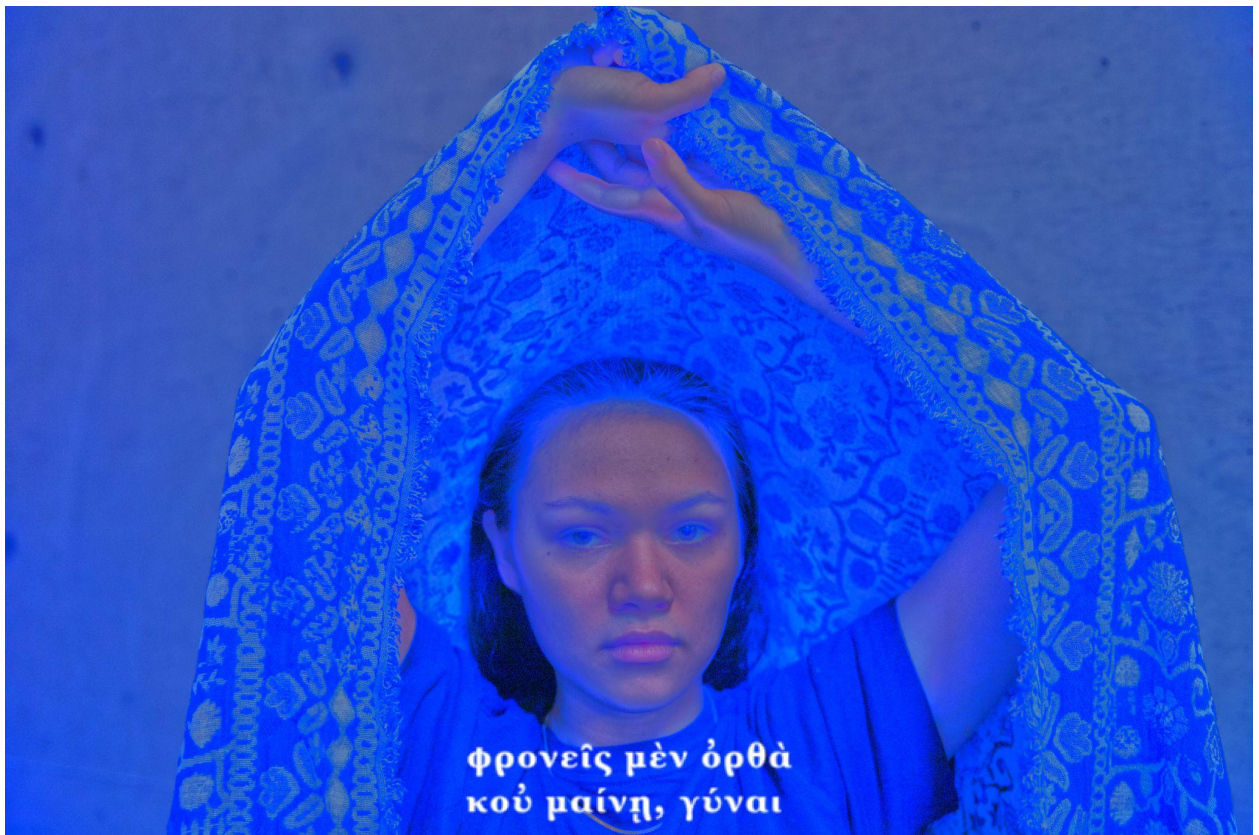
Among all things living and possessing a mind,
 We women are the most wretched creatures:
 For first it's necessary, for an extravagant price,
 To be purchased by a husband, who is the master of our body,
 [to receive: for yet worse than this is the terrible bodily pain.]
 And in this, the greatest question is: will we get an
 Evil or a worthy one? Since divorces are not in good form,
 It is not possible for a woman to refuse her husband.
 And arriving to this new place, under new rules,
 We must become prophetesses, for we didn't learn at home
 How best to please our bed-mates.
 And if we work this out well enough,
 Our spouse may live with us, not fighting to bear the yoke,
 And then things might seem enviable: but if not, we must die.
 But a man, whenever he's annoyed at those he lives with,
 Will go out, stopping the loathing in his heart,
 Turning either to a friend or someone his age:
 But in distress, we have only one soul to look upon.
 And they say that our lives are free from danger,
 Living at home! And meanwhile those men fight with spears.
 How they misunderstand: three times, indeed, I'd rather stand
 Beside my shield, truly, than give birth once.

I decided to try another take at Greek to English translation for this week's project. I was happy with my last one, but I felt that I didn't give myself enough room to play and bend and break the words. So this time, I did a very rough translation from Greek, and stepped back to give myself more space to play with flow and lyricism and emotion. I decided to give myself an added layer of separation from the Greek. I did this translation during our third week of class, and I wrote it out on a sheet of paper. I did not look at the Greek text again until I transposed the written work to this document. As I was typing, I changed words and phrases to what I felt flowed better. As I was typing, I had no idea how much I had strayed from the Greek. I'm happy with this result.

This scene from the tragedy is one of the most poignant in my opinion, and is a true window into Medea's heartbreak. The play obviously was written by a man, and I have almost exclusively read translations of the Medea by men, which feels disingenuous to this scene. I wanted to translate this scene into one that feels more organically female, because it is a work of interpretation or translation of the original meaning by a woman. I do not claim to know or

understand Medea's position as an migrant woman, but I do think that re-imagining this scene or translating it to a more female reality was an exercise that I really wanted to do. In the end, because of the distance I gave myself, I came away with a translation that I feel captures not only the sense of the scene, but also what I as a reader and observer feel during this scene.







Translation 4: *Medea*, Pasolini

The idea of Otherness is deeply important to the construction of the Medea, and this is especially evident in Pasolini's version. Medea's character is visually defined by her costuming, which is elaborate, dark, and very different from the costume of the Corinthians. The important turning points of the film are marked by distinct costume changes. On a different note, I was also struck, watching the film, with the power of individual frames accompanied by subtitles. As someone who is interested and invested in photography, I thought of some of the more drawn out scenes of the Medea as a collection of frames accompanied by writing because, as an English speaker, I read the film instead of listening to it. I decided to translate my experience of watching the film into photography. I chose some of the most striking frames and shot images that expressed the same emotion as what I felt. I tried to create a feeling of separation or distance (I hesitate to use the term Otherness, because I do not want to recreate the racial Otherness that Pasolini and Euripides use to characterize Medea) by the use of jarring light and color. In one photo, I included a "subtitle," inverting the idea of subtitles lending clarity or giving translation, since most people don't read Ancient Greek.

The poses are simple but based on the film entirely. There are several scenes in which a profile of Medea's face is the focal point, telling us all we need to know. The angle of her face, what she is wearing, the light, and the color all tell the story, rather than actions. This film is

surprisingly stark in terms of character movement. We see lots of long, slow scenes, focused on the faces and bodies of the characters. These photos attempt to recreate that by setting a simple portrait into context through angle, light, color, and textile. I want the viewer to look at the photo and feel something, but I do not want it to be a comfortable or familiar feeling. I designed these images to have suggestive power, but to create a sense of surreal distance, which is how I felt watching Pasolini's *Medea*.

Translation 5: The Oresteia
Based on *Agamemnon* 220-257

My father, a set-faced, strong-jawed Atreidai,
 Anax and lover of gold and things that shine,
 Wearer of red robes and changer of coins,
 He who smelled of wealth and war,
 Brother and son and father and man,
 Was a self-selected killer.

I, promised to the Swift-footed,
 I, flowing-haired and cow-eyed,
 Learner at the loom and saffron shrouded,
 Veiled, private, prized,
 Was his daughter,
 Worth my weight - or more - in gold.

A woman, stolen away,
 Pulled the tapestry from beneath
 The stable strong Atreidai feet.
 War was the whisper on the tongues of men,
 Swift black ships and spears and shields,
 Spoils and kleros and fame.
 But behind netted veils and soft hands
 The women spoke of stale winds
 And burning pyres adorned with shrouds
 They would be called upon to weave.

I heard echoes of prophecy, indeed,
 All Argos seemed to know my fate
 Before me, pouring out one, two, three
 Cups of honeyed wine on their altars:
 Thank the goddess not our daughter,
 The prayer offered up.

On that day when rowing benches were
 Perched with youths, the hulls filled
 With glistening chariots and jars of sweet wine,
 My lord father looked past the land,
 Eddies and tides of the black sea

And the well-walled city beyond
In his eyes and on his mind.

And he began to offer sacrifice,
Say the customary things,
And slashing the nape of a new-born lamb,
Steam rising, his boots soaked deep brown,
A sweet and earthy stench rising to meet him.
The old men, venerable, pious,
Separated the shining fat from the soft meat
And youthful bones, set them alight on
A triumphant blaze.

I give of my own blood, my
Kingly father continued, and let
These swift ships find safe passage,
The unruly winds may you bind,
Let not one of our number meet a watery grave
And wander the shores of Hades,
Awaiting their pyre.
Let us come upon Priam's shores,
And let us leave with pockets of gold
And the hollow ships with well-belted women
Who will fill the seats of men fallen to the cause.

Hands, now, with rough nails that tore,
Circled my pale arms. That wild wind
Blew billowing my saffron vestment,
As I was hurled high, axis shifted.
I saw only the strong jaw of the lord,
My creator. My own jaw, by the same
Ragged hand - so foreign from the
Fine fingers of the royal women
Who sit spinning in their quarters -
Inspected my teeth like a stallion at auction,
And I choked and pulled for air and let
My neck fall. The new-born lamb was
Burning on my peripheral horizon.
The elders - whom so often as I pranced
The halls as a young girl, still with the

Soft round face of an infant, I would pass,
 And who, already with white hair and long beards,
 Would think of their girls, married off and
 Far away, but who drew a suitable price -
 Too, were in my sight, and I fixed
 My view on them, their stony face betraying nothing.
 On display, they watched, appraising me
 Like a fine marble woman, newly imported.
 I thought of the lamb as my blood was poured.

Each time I read the Agamemnon, I linger over the chorus' description of the sacrifice of Iphigenia. The images of her fixed stare, her saffron robes billowing, and the chorus who cannot look away but also cannot describe the moment itself have always stayed with me. Instead of doing a translation from Greek to English, I decided to write my own version of the scene. There is not really an equivalent to this scene in the tragedy itself, aside from the description of the moment by the chorus, and illusions to Iphigenia's death by other characters. That gave me the freedom to imagine this scene as I wanted. I set it in a world that is clearly Homeric, but I did not feel a particular need to make it precisely historical accurate. I instead wanted to capture the betrayal and hatred encompassed by this scene. I wanted to explore the sadness and the pain of the loss that makes Clytemnestra do what she does. In free verse and plain speech, this scene is translated into a more modern context, while remaining rooted in the original story. Despite using some modern phrases and colloquialisms, I tried to incorporate Homeric literary tropes, such as epithets for characters, and the importance of the *geras* and wealth. Iphigenia is central to both this scene and the entire trilogy, yet it begins after her death, which prevents us from seeing her as an active character. My translation of this scene makes her an active and vocal character. I hope that it also brings a more intense dislike for Agamemnon to this scene. To me, translation is a very intimate and interior process. I personally have a deep and burning dislike for Agamemnon, so I hope that this poem is not only a translation of the source material, but a translation of my interiority while reading the trilogy.

Translation 6: Notes Towards an African Orestes, Pasolini

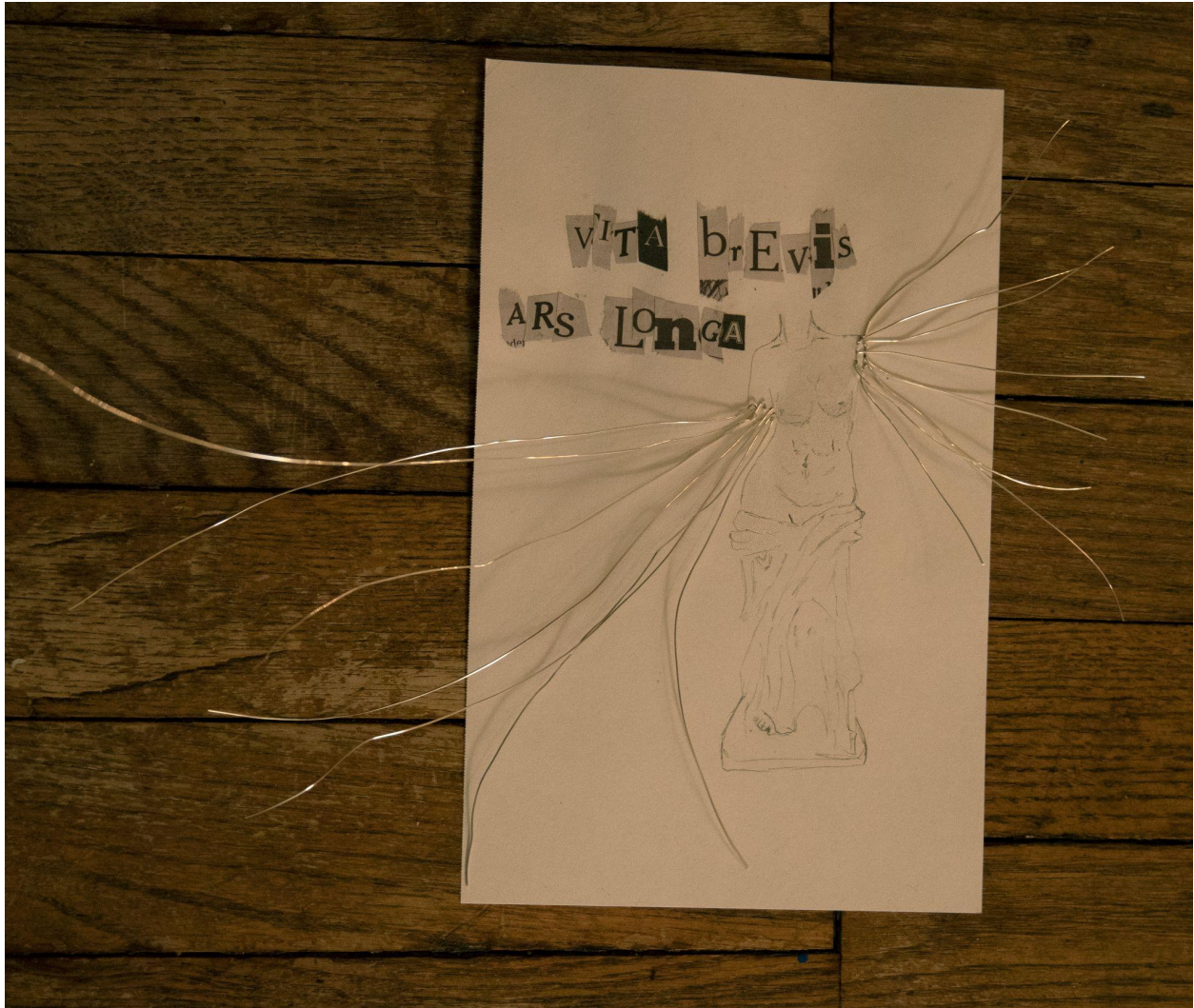
“Prima di tutto vorrei dirvi perché ho deciso di fare l’Orestide di Eschilo nell’Africa di oggi. La ragione essenziale, profonda, è questa: che mi sembra di riconoscere delle analogie fra la situazione dell’Orestide e quella dell’Africa di oggi, soprattutto dal punto di vista della trasformazione delle Erinni in Eumenidi. Cioè, mi sembra che la civiltà tribal africana assomigli alla civiltà arcaica greca. E la scoperta che fa Oreste della democrazia, portandola poi nel suo paese, che sarebbe Argo nella tragedia e l’Africa nel mio film, è, in un certo senso—diciamo così—, la scoperta della democrazia che ha fatto l’Africa in questi ultimi anni.”

First today of all things, truly, I am poised to direct you to my decision to make Aeschylus’ Oresteia in Africa today, of course. The essential reason, profoundly, is the question: what seems to be the most resonant today? To me, there is an analogy between the situation of the Oresteia and that of Africa today, of course, most of all the bridge formed by the transformation from the Erinyes to the Eumenides. See, it seems to me that here, the populace of tribal Africa assumes a similar shape to the populace of archaic Greece. The similarity of this rests in Orestes and democracy: bringing it with him so that he would not be left in the past, like the homeland of Argos, which is not a tragedy in Africa, in my version of the film. Instead, in a certain sense- and what I might say is the cause- is the scope of democracy as it is made in Africa, as this is ultimately in question this year.

From the first day of class, when we talked about this kind of translation- one from a language that one does not know- I knew that I had to try my hand at it. I have always thought of literary translation as a precise, studied art. I’ve begun to chip away at that idea throughout this class, but to me, the ultimate defamation of translation is not even knowing the language of the original. This passage is deceptively short, but I poured a significant amount of time into trying to create an organic translation of this scene from *Notes Towards an African Orestes*. As one of my classmates noted earlier this semester (I think it was Sindi), this kind of uninformed translation is much harder than it seems! Trying to read meaning into a collection of letters that means nothing to me was nearly impossible for some words. I came into this translation with the benefit of having seen this film before, so I had read the subtitles at some point. I was, however, very careful not to let myself look at the subtitles again while working on the translation. I know French, Ancient Greek, and Latin in addition to my first language of English, which all informed my translation of Italian. I know and love that the final product is not accurate to the Italian. Reading the English that I have produced, there is a feeling that something is missing- some central concept that I haven’t quite grasped. It is not complete, precise, or studied. It is instead a sort of amalgamation of words that reminded me of words in the languages that I do know. After a while of working with this text, I found myself looking at this passage (for which I found the Italian transcript in the Arion article) not as Italian but truly as a combination between French, Greek, Latin, and English, accompanied by some words that I could not place at all. I did a sort

of quasi-translation of the text before turning it into English. I was subconsciously looking for a frame of reference for this piece based on what I already knew. This translation forced me to reconsider how I actually approach literary translations of ancient languages. I've realized that I come to these texts looking for meaning that fits with what I already know. For this translation, part of the reason why it is not accurate at all to the Italian is that I do not have an Italian perspective on what to look for in reading; I have a subconsciously English perspective. In translating ancient texts, then, I also bring an English language, American perspective not only to the content but to the physical words that I see on the page. Part of why learning ancient languages is so hard- and why translation of the same words produces such different results for different translators- is the language and literary eye that they bring to the text itself.

Translation 7: La Rabbia



NB: In an ideal world, I would be able to show this as a physical translation, instead of a photograph. I just wanted it to be clear that the artifact is the collage itself, not the photograph of it (although, I suppose the photograph is the translation of this piece into a medium viable for the pandemic world!).

La Rabbia was confusing and uncomfortable for me to watch. Given the vast expanse of space and time covered in the film, I wasn't sure how I could translate the same feeling of the film into another medium. I decided on collage because I think it is the still-equivalent of montage filmmaking. It allowed me to combine many different materials into one piece. The line that stuck out to me the most from the film, which is repeated several times, is the Latin phrase *vita brevis, ars longa*. Life is short, but art is long. When watching this film, about a time and place completely different from where I am right now, this line was particularly true. This art has lasted and will continue to last longer than any of the lives shown in the film itself. It was a sad

phrase to be reminded of while watching, and seeing scenes of devastating pain. Although the world I live in is nothing like what I witnessed on screen, I tried to translate that sense through my use of newspaper clippings. I've been saving newspapers since the beginning of the election season, in order to freeze in time a little bit of what it was like to experience this political era. I've tried to work this time and the people living through it into art, which will live longer than I will. That felt resonant with the montage of historical moments, and I decided to use the newspaper as the building blocks for the Latin saying. The fundamental tension of the film seemed to be between the fading and violent past, and what the filmmakers see as the future. They're quite different, but there's overlap. I felt a sense of needing to build and create from what is left over from the past, to "create a new pre-history," another interesting line from the film. I wanted to root this idea in classics, and classical reception. Everyone knows the Venus De Milo, and it's been an object of fascination as well as a symbol of the archaic, and of beauty. So I drew her in simple pencil on sketch paper, without her head. There is such an emphasis in the middle part of this film on the view of the female body which I found to be a problematic but central part of the film. I used steel wires to represent the creation of modernity, while using the sculpture as a foundation. The figure has no head and no arms in this rendition, but the wires use those holes, and the pieces lost - the arms lost to time, the head lost to my imagination - to create a new piece altogether. But I also envisioned them as chains, translating the sense of an over-reliance and over-revering of classical antiquity as the basis of modernity.