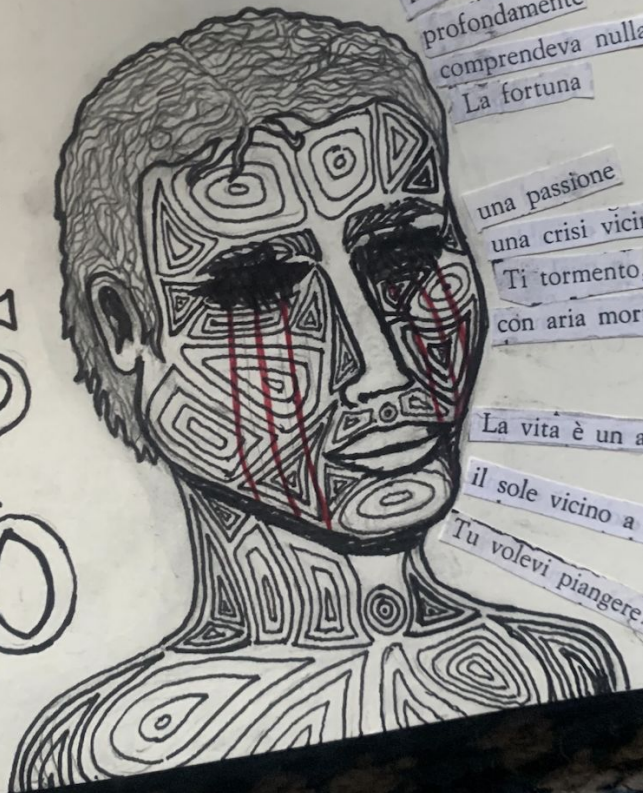


Translation Portfolio

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CSTS H222 - Creating Classics
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OEDIPUS

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il capo
profondamente
comprendeva nulla,
La fortuna

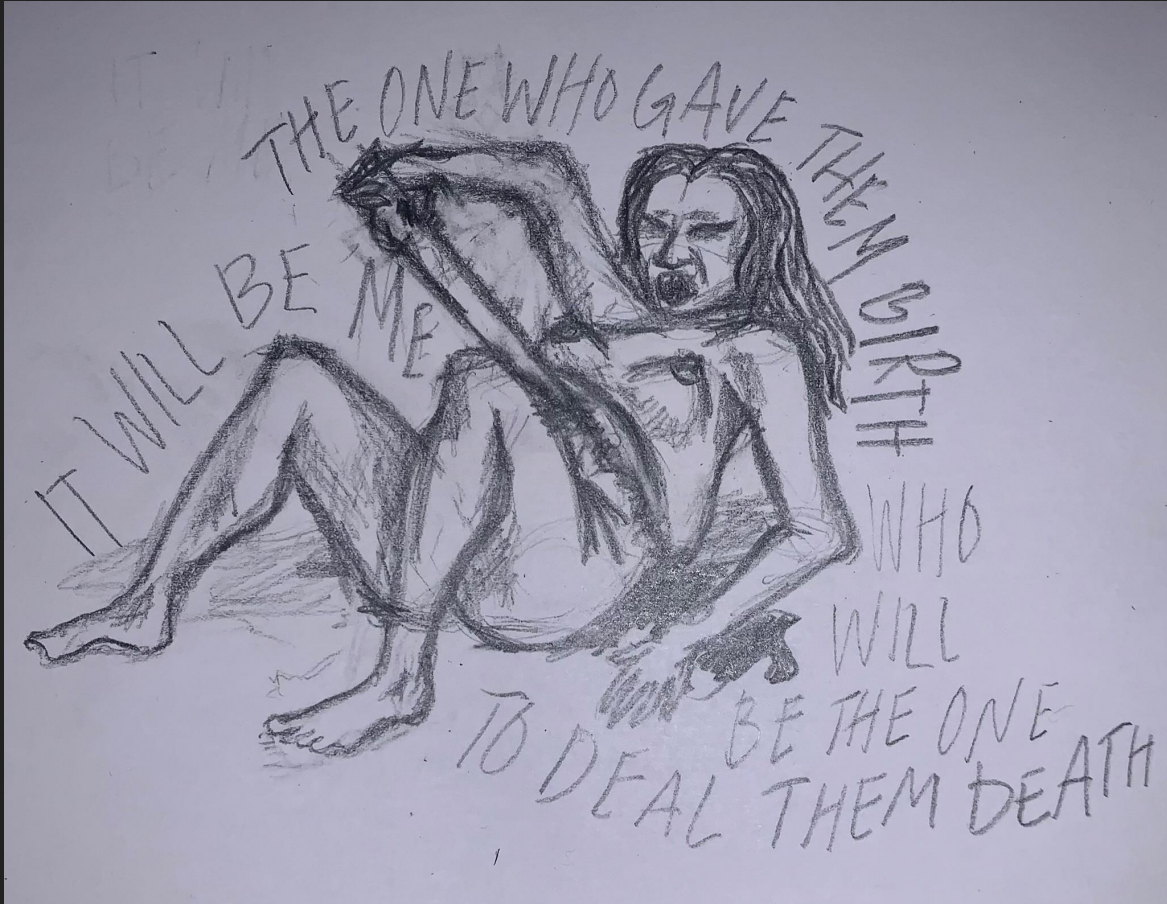
una passione
una crisi vicina,
Ti tormento,
con aria mortificata

La vita è un arco,
il sole vicino a declinare
Tu volevi piangere?

I employed a few different modes of translation in this project. First, the more general translation of Oedipus to another form of media - a drawing. I wanted to capture the ubiquity of Oedipus's tragedy as well as the figure Oedipus as it is elevated in western culture. I imagine fate, godliness, and all of man and time coursing through his veins, even though he himself is not favorable to any of these things in the play. Second, the poem is comprised of words and phrases from an Italian book. In this poem, there exists both the act of translation from a text to my poem (in terms of lifting specific lines that stood out and repurposing them) and also literal translation from the Italian text to English when I was trying to decipher the meaning of the words I was using, as I do not really speak Italian other than at a very very beginner level. I think the thing that struck me/stayed with me most from working on this was when I was flipping through the book to find words to lift, I came across the phrase tu volevi piangere which I was pretty sure meant something about wanting to cry, although I was not sure. And that really stuck with me because in that moment I realized that Oedipus, after the greatest tragedies go down in his life, he can't even cry. In this act of stabbing his own eyes out, he becomes deprived of one of the most natural human instincts, that is to cry and grieve and show the kind of gut wrenching emotion that comes when life and fate and time and God have just chewed you up and spit you out, and you're left with nothing at all.

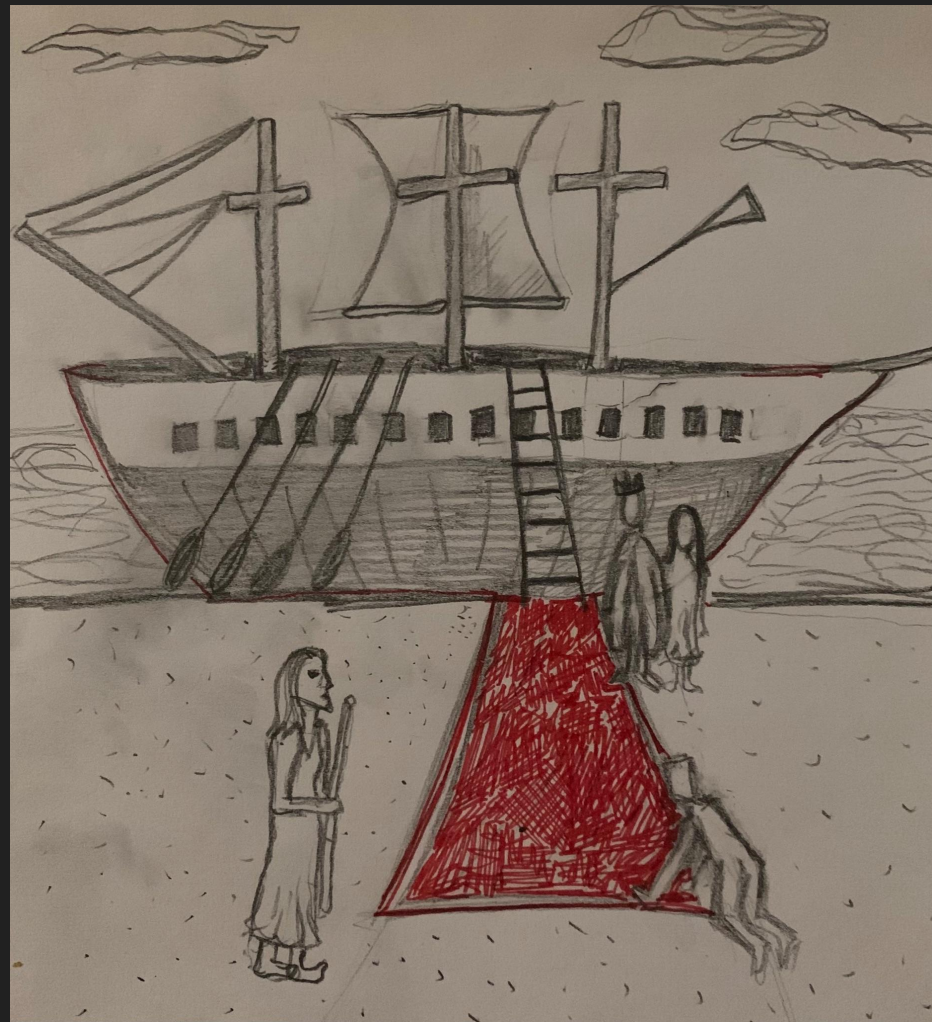
MEDEA

When reading the Medea, the most gut-wrenching moment for me was when she kills her own children. Especially in the description she gives in the play, you can feel her forcing her own hand, and hear her pain as she talks herself through this unspeakable act. This imagery coupled with the quote I chose “It will be me, the one who gave them birth, who will be the one to deal them death” is what I wanted to focus on in this translation. I wanted to capture Medea’s intense emotionality of the moment she kills her children, as well as capture this image of the mother as not one who only gives birth, but also deals death, making the mother a God-like controller of life at both its ends. I drew Medea as if she is about to give birth, but stabs her own pregnant belly instead, leaving but a pool of blood where her newborn should be taking their first breath. I attempt to show how the unspeakability of Medea’s act conjoins with her power as a mother: as Medea sees it, a mediator of both life and death. In this drawing, the moment she creates life, she also brings death.



AGAMEMNON

For this translation, I depicted the scene of Agamemnon arriving back at Argos with Cassandra, while Clytemnestra waits for him. I specifically wanted to focus on the moment that he refuses to walk along the crimson carpet laid out for him. As king, such a gesture could be considered honorable, but Agamemnon is quick to note that walking on the garment would equate him to the Gods (and as we know in Greek tragedy, bad things happen when mortals start acting like Gods..). This is very interesting because it's a big window into how Agamemnon sees himself - as a kind of benevolent overlord (which of course he is not -- he just sacrificed his own daughter on behalf of the wishes of the Gods), but again maintaining the distinction that the will of the Gods is to always be obeyed, never questioned or thwarted. However, even though Agamemnon always differentiates himself as one step lower than the Gods, he still dies a tragic death because of the curse on his family -- again a reminder that the Gods have ultimate power over everyone, even the king of the land.



LIBATION BEARERS

“You see my actual self and are slow to learn. And yet you saw this strand of hair I cut in sign of grief and shuddered with excitement, for you thought you saw me, and again when you were measuring my tracks. Now lay the severed strand against where it was cut and see how well your brother’s hair matches my head. Look at this piece of weaving, the work of your hand with its blade strokes and figured design of beasts. No, no, control yourself, and do not lose your head for joy. I know those nearest to us hate us bitterly”
(225-234)

“Tu vedi la mia persona vera e sei lento all'apprendimento. Ma, quando tu hai visto questa ciocca di capelli che ho tagliato con dolore, tu hai rabbrivito con eccitazione, perché tu hai pensato che mi hai visto, e ancora quando misuravi le mie orme. Adesso, metti la ciocca tagliata contro dove è tagliato e guarda che i capelli del tuo fratello sono identici ai miei. Guarda questo pezzo di tessitura, il lavoro delle tue mani con la sua carezza da lama e la sua ideazione delle bestie come i umani. No, no, controllati, e non perdere la tua testa per la gioia. Io so che i persone più vicini ci detestano violentemente”

In this last component, I wanted to step out of my comfort zone and try to tackle a literal translation from the English translation of Libation Bearers into Italian. I chose this passage because I think Electra piecing together the clues that the stranger in front of her is Orestes can be likened to an act of translation itself. This project was quite difficult considering I don't know that much Italian, but I really appreciated getting a feel for the process of literal translation. I used mostly an Italian dictionary (for vocab) and the textbook on VHL (for grammar). The strategy I found most helpful was breaking down each sentence, and translating it piece by piece, so I was never trying to translate two clauses at once, which made things a lot simpler. It helped to identify the subject, verb, direct/indirect objects, adjectives, and transitional phrases in the English text first, and then piece it back together in the right order once I looked up the words in Italian. In cases where I really couldn't figure out how to say a certain thing, I would try and re-word the sentence in a more direct fashion, so I could work within the grammatical frameworks I know. This translation is obviously an approximation of the actual text, but I found the act of translating and picking each sentence apart word by word really let me get to know the text in a more intimate way, and has made the meaning in English even clearer.

You see my actual self] and ^(you) are slow to learn]. And yet
 you saw this strand of hair] I cut in sign of grief,
 and ^(you) shuddered with excitement], for you thought you saw
 me]; And again [when you were measuring my tracks,
 Now lay the severed strand] against [where it was cut]
 and see how well your brother's hair matches my head]
 Look at this piece of weaving, the work of your hand
 with its blade strokes and figured design of beasts. No, no,
 control yourself] and do not lose your head for joy
 I know] [those nearest to us hate us bitterly]

You see my actual self → Tu vedi: la mia persona vera
 and (you) are slow to learn (slow learning) → e sei lento al apprendimento
 you saw this strand of hair → Ma, Tu hai visto questa ciocca di capelli
 I cut in sign of grief (with grief) → Ho tagliato con dolore
 and (you) shuddered with excitement → e rabbrivisti con eccitazione
 for you thought → perché Tu hai pensato
 (that) you saw me → Che Mi Hai visto
 An I again Now you were measuring my tracks → E Ancora, Quando Misuravi le mie orme
 (you) lay the severed strand → Adesso, tu metti la ciocca tagliata
 against it was cut (command) → contro dolore, è tagliato
 you see (watch) how well your brother's hair matches my head → guardo, guarda
 (you) look at this piece of weaving → guarda questo pezzo
 the work of your hand → il lavoro dei tuoi; mani;
 its blade strokes (personified) → con la sua carezza da lama
 and (its) figured design of beasts → e la sua idiosincrasia dei bestie come i umani
 No, No (you) control yourself → Non, Non, controllati la tua testa
 (you) do not lose your head for joy → Non perdi la tua testa per la gioia
 I know (mind?) → lo so più
 (that) those nearest to us (they) hate us bitterly → che i persone vicini ci detestano violentemente

Notes/thought process/method for translation exercise