

Agamemnon

1.



Mixing bowl (calyx krater) showing the killing of Agamemnon, the Dokimasia Painter, c. 460 BCE.

2. Rage - Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles,
murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless losses,
hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls,
great fighters' souls, but made their bodies carrion,
feasts for the dogs and birds,
and the will of Zeus was moving towards its end.
Begin, Muse, when the two first broke and clashed,
Agamemnon lord of men and brilliant Achilles

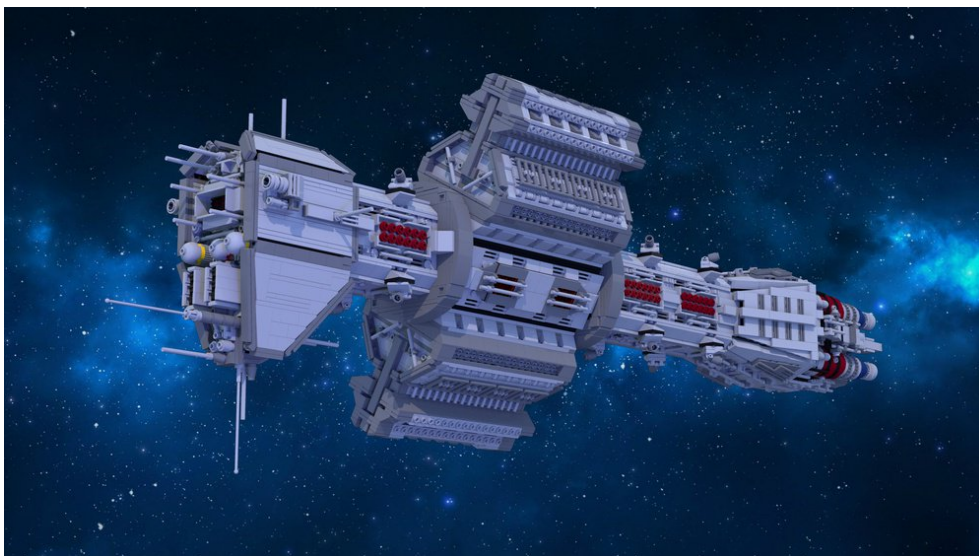
[*Iliad*, 1.1-8]

3. And all the ranks of Achaeans cried out their assent:
"Respect the priest, accept the shining ransom!"
But it brought no joy to the heart of Agamemnon.
The king dismissed the priest with a brutal order
ringing in his ears: "Never again, old man,
let me catch sight of you by the hollow ships!
Not loitering now, not slinking back tomorrow.
The staff and wreath of god will never save you then.
The girl - I won't give up the girl. Long before that,
old age will overtake her in my house, in Argos,
far from her fatherland, slaving back and forth
at the loom, forced to share my bed!
Now go,
don't tempt my wrath - and you may depart alive."

[*Iliad*, 1.25-37]

4. "But I, I will be there in person at your tents
to take Briseis in all her beauty, your own prize -
so you can learn just how much greater I am than you
and the next man up may shrink from matching words with me,
from hoping to rival Agamemnon strength for strength!"

[*Iliad*, 1.217-221]



Agamemnon, from *Babylon 5*

5. "there came Agamemnon, the son of Atreus,
grieving, and the souls of the other men who died with him
and met their doom in the house of Aigisthos, were gathered around him.
He knew me at once, when he drank the dark blood, and fell to
lamentation loud and shrill, and tears came springing,
and he threw himself into my arms, meaning so to embrace me,
but there was no force there any longer, nor any juice left
now in his flexible limbs, as there had been in time past.

I broke into tears at the sight of him and my heart pitied him,
and so I spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words:
"Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon,
what doom of death that lays men low has been your undoing?
Was it with the ships, and did Poseidon, rousing a stormblast
of battering winds that one would wish for, prove your undoing?
Or was it on dry land, did men embattled destroy you
as you tried to cut out cattle and fleecy sheep from their holdings,
or fighting against them for the sake of their city and women?"
So I spoke, and he in turn said to me in answer:
"Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,
not in the ships, nor did Poseidon, rousing a stormblast
of battering winds that none would wish for, prove my destruction,
nor on dry land did enemy men destroy me in battle;
Aigisthos, working out my death and destruction, invited
me into his house, and feasted me, and killed me there, with the help
of my sluttish wife, as one cuts down an ox at his manger.
So I died a most pitiful death, and my other companions
were killed around me without mercy, like pigs with shining
tusks, in the house of a man rich and very powerful,
for a wedding, or a festival, or a communal dinner.
You have been present in your time at the slaughter of many
men, killed singly, or in the strong encounters of battle;
but beyond all others you would have been sorry at heart
for this scene, how we lay sprawled by the mixing bowl and the loaded
tables, all over the palace, and the whole floor was steaming
with blood; and most pitiful was the voice I heard of Priam's
daughter Cassandra, killed by treacherous Klytaimnestra
over me, but I lifted my hands and with them beat on
the ground as I died upon the sword, but the sluttish woman
turned away from me and was so hard that her hands would not
press shut my eyes and mouth though I was going to Hades.
So there is nothing more deadly or vile than a woman
who stores her mind with acts that are of such sort, as this one
did when she thought of this act of dishonour, and plotted
the murder of her lawful husband. See, I had been thinking
that I would be welcome to my children and thralls of my household
when I came home, but she with thoughts surpassing grisly
splashed the shame on herself and the rest of her sex, on women
still to come, even on the ones whose acts are virtuous."

[*Odyssey*, 11.387-435]

Athenian red figure cup, Clytemnestra kills Cassandra
(c.430 BCE).

6.



7. Beneath this stone lies Aeschylus, son of Euphorion, the Athenian,
who perished in the wheat-bearing land of Gela;
of his noble prowess the grove of Marathon can speak,
and the long-haired Persian knows it well.

8. Zeus, who set mortals on the road
to understanding, who made
'learning by suffering' into an effective law...

[*Agamemnon*, 176-178]

9. ...how the two-throned rulers of the Achaeans, leading in concord the
youth of Greece
were sped with avenging spear and hand
to the Teucrian land...

[*Agamemnon* 109-111]

10. So the sons of Atreus were sent
against Alexander by the mightier power, Zeus
god of hospitality, who thus, for the sake of a woman of many men...

[*Agamemnon* 60-2]

