



★ **Clytemnestra**

Costanza Casati

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Violence, passion, and murder abound in Constanza Casati's stunning historical novel *Clytemnestra*.

The daughter of King Tyndareus and Queen Leda of Sparta, headstrong, intelligent Clytemnestra lives a charmed life as a princess. Surrounded by siblings, cousins, courtiers, and slaves, she lives for the hunt and shares all her secrets with her sister and confidant, Helen. Then Clytemnestra falls in love with, and marries, King Tantalus of Maeonia. She could not be happier.

Clytemnestra's idyll is shattered when two brothers, Agamemnon and Menelaus, arrive in Sparta. Having been cast out of their kingdom, Mycenae, they seek Tyndareus's support in plotting their revenge and return to power. Unable to intervene, Clytemnestra watches as Helen falls under Menelaus's spell, while Agamemnon sets his sights on separating Clytemnestra from Tantalus.

Tyndareus and Agamemnon scheme to decide on Clytemnestra's fate. After her child is born, Agamemnon slays Clytemnestra's husband and son before her eyes. She's forced by her father to accept Agamemnon as her new husband. After a violent wedding night, she is taken to Mycenae to start her new life as a queen. Devastated by loss and driven by hatred, Clytemnestra swears vengeance against those who have wronged her.

Clytemnestra is a great literary achievement that gives voice to characters who, due to their genders, have been vilified and silenced throughout the millennia. They include Helen of Troy, who made the world go to war to force her husband's respect; Leda, who carries the mark of shame after Zeus had his way with her; and Penelope, who outwits the greatest trickster of them all. Most formidable among these women is Clytemnestra, the hunter who plots her revenge and waits for the right moment to arrive.

Clytemnestra is a literary tour de force—a novel of passion and vengeance set in Ancient Greece.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (January / February 2023)

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