Agamemnon Review Essay, Research Paper

The play Agamemnon, a Greek playwright written by Aeschylus, starts out after the fall of Troy at the palace of King Agamemnon. A watchman watching for a flare in the distance spots a light in the distance, signaling that the end of the war has finally come after many years. After the King comes home, the “chorus” (high authorities I think?) talks about the war and about the fact that it was fought over a woman. Around this time, the chorus is doubting whether or not the signal flare was true or not, but soon a messenger comes along and confirms the word. This is when Agamemnon comes back to his palace on a chariotand his wife, Clytaemestra, comes out to greet him and pledge her love to him after supposedly missing him for so long. In fact, she’s so glad to see him that she rolls out a carpet in front of their home as if to treat him like a god. He refuses, stating that he’s only a man, not a god. After begging him repeatedly, he follows her into their home where she kills him along with the Trojan princess Cassandra that he brought back with him. She shows no sign of remorse and the chorus is appalled by her degree of brutality.

It is evident now that Clytaemestra had been hiding her anger towards Agamemnon for sacrificing their daughter years before at the start of the war as a sacrifice to the gods. Clytaemestra tries to justify her action as righteous and ok by the gods. The chorus refuses to hear any of it and they wonder how to mourn their dead king. At this point, she declares that the death of Agamemnon shall not be mourned at all. The chorus now wonders if Cytaemestra’s actions indeed were justified, or what she did was motivated by a human desire for revenge. In the end and having no other choice, the chorus agrees with Clyaemestra.

Soon Aegisthus, Clyaemestra’s secret lover, bursts onto the scene admitting that he had devised the plot to murder Agamemnon in revenge for his father. He also admits at this point to sleeping with Clyaemestra while Agamemnon was away at the war of Troy. Nonetheless, he’s happy to see the body of Agamemnon and explains that it was justice for what Atreus (Agamemnon’s father) had done to his father (Thyestes). Thyestes had been banished from the city by Atreus, only to be invited back and fed a feast of his own children (Aegisthus’ brothers).

After hearing his story, the chorus accuses Aegisthus of being a coward for not killing Agamemnon himself. This enrages Aegisthus. He starts threatening the chorus and the state with torture and bondage and says that he plans to become king by using Agamemnon’s money to control the citizens. Aegisthus expects them to be scared and intimidated, but that wasn’t the case. They grow insolent to his boasting and rise up against him.

Clytaemestra begs and pleads with Aegisthus to not shed any more blood. The chorus, still very upset with him, tells him that he will be very sorry when Agamemnon’s son Orestes returns. In return, Aegisthus tells the chorus that they will be sorry for their insolence. Clyaemestra and Aegisthus leave together.

I had a lot of trouble understanding the real point or moral behind the story. Was there a point or moral? It seemed to me that Agamemnon should be the “good guy” but he isn’t because he sacrificed one of his daughters before going to war – yet he wins the war and comes home only to be murdered by his adulterous wife as revenge for the intentional death of their daughter.

Another thing I didn’t understand too well was the “chorus.” I believe that the chorus was a group of people, similar to a city board committee or something like that. The story never really says this clearly. It was fairly difficult reading the play and trying to understand the “wording” and how everything fit together. To sum it up, I didn’t really like the play at all that much. Why? The whole story of adultery and war doesn’t really do the trick for me and it was hard understanding the dialogue as well.