

Patroclus, when a thick mist has fallen on the field, his prayer for light breathes reverent submission to the will of Zeus¹.

Such is the Ajax of the *Iliad*; a mighty champion of the Greeks in their sorest need; a man of good sense and good feeling, sparing of words, but able to speak wisely in season; loyal to his friends; straightforward and unselfish; frankly conscious of his strength, but placing his reliance on the help of the gods, and yielding, even in the fiercest struggle, to revelations of their mind.

A contest between Ajax and Odysseus for the arms of Achilles, resulting in the defeat and suicide of Ajax, is first mentioned in the *Odyssey*², where the sullen shade of the injured hero refuses to hold converse with the victor. It was the goddess Thetis who set her son's arms for a prize; 'the judges were the children of the Trojans and Pallas Athena.'

Cyclic
epics. The
Aethiopsis.

§ 2. The whole passage evidently presupposes some well-known work or works in which the contest for the arms had been related more at length. The scholiast says that 'the story comes from the Cyclic poets³.' There are two poems, and two only, which are known to have contained that story. One is the

¹ *Il.* 17. 645 ff.

² *Od.* 11. 543—547:

οἴη δ' Αἰαντος ψυχὴ Τελαμωνιάδαο
νόσφιν ἀφεστήκει, κεχολωμένη εἵνεκα νίκης
τὴν μιν ἐγὼ νίκησα δικάζομενος παρὰ νηυσὶ
τεύχεσιν ἀμφ' Ἀχιλῆος· ἔθηκε δὲ πότνια μήτηρ,
παῖδες δὲ Τρώων δίκασαν καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη.

On the last verse (547) the schol. (H) says, ἀθετεῖ Ἀρίσταρχος. It is not known on what grounds he rejected it; whether because the verse was absent from some copies; or because it conflicted with some other version of the matter which he regarded as having better authority; or for both reasons. The context itself affords no reason for suspecting this particular verse; on the contrary, the mention of the person who *proposed* the prize (ἔθηκε) is most naturally followed by a mention of the persons who made the award; and the passage would be maimed by the omission. W. Christ holds that Aristarchus was mistaken in condemning verse 547, and that it represents an early version of the story, probably that given by Arctinus in the *Aethiopsis* (*Jahr. f. Philol.* 1881 p. 444): see also Kirchhoff (*Hom. Odys.* p. 231); and K. F. Ameis *ad loc.* The whole passage relating to the contest of the arms may, no doubt, be later than other parts of the *Nékuia*.

³ Schol. H on *Od.* 11. 547 ἡ δὲ ἱστορία ἐκ τῶν κυκλικῶν.