

TELAMONIAN AJAX

A STUDY OF HIS RECEPTION IN ARCHAIC AND
CLASSICAL GREECE



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Michaelmas Term 2015

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a systematic study of the representations of Telamonian Ajax in archaic and classical Greece. Its aim is to trace, examine, and understand how and why the constitutive elements of his myth evolved in the way they did in the long chain of its receptions. Particular attention is paid to the historical, socio-cultural and performative contexts of the literary works and visual representations I analyse as well as to the audience for which these were produced. The study is divided into three parts, each of which reflects a different reality in which Ajax has been received (different with respect to time, place, or literary genre). Artistic representations of the hero, as well as his religious dimension and political valence, are consistently taken into account throughout the thesis.

The first part – Ajax from Salamis – focuses on epic poetry, and thus investigates the Panhellenic significance of the hero (rather than his reception in a particular place). It treats the entire corpus of early Greek hexameter poetry that has come down to us in written form as the reception of a common oral tradition which each poem has adapted for its own purpose. I establish that in the larger tradition of the Trojan War, Ajax was a hero characterised by his gift of invulnerability. Because of this power, he is the figure who protects his companions – dead or alive – *par excellence*. However, this ability probably also led him to become over-confident, and, accordingly, to reject Athena's support on the battlefield. Hence, the goddess's hostility towards him, which she demonstrated by making him lose the reward of ἀριστεία (Achilles' arms). His defeat made Ajax so angry that he became mad and committed suicide. I also show how this traditional Ajax has been adapted to fit into the *Iliad's* own aesthetics.

The second part – Ajax in Aegina – concentrates on the reception of Ajax in the victory odes of Pindar and Bacchylides for Aeginetan patrons. I argue that in the first part of the fifth century, Ajax becomes a figure imbued with a strong political dimension (especially with regard to the relationship between Athens and Aegina). Accordingly, I show how the presence of Ajax in Pindar's and Bacchylides' poems is often politically charged, and significant within the historical context. I discuss the influence this had on his representation.

Finally, the third part moves to Athens, as I consider Ajax's reception during three distinct periods: the sixth century, the first half of the fifth century, and finally the rest of the classical period. I equally insist on the political dimension of the figure. I demonstrate that his figure undergoes a shift of paradigm in the early fifth century, which deeply affects his representation.

By following in the footsteps of Ajax, this study prompts a series of reflections and comments on each of the works in which the hero features as well as on the relationship of these works to the historical context in which they were produced.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*In memoriam of Paul Robertson with whom
I shared the happiest years of my D.Phil.*

I would like to thank the following people; they know the myriad ways in which they have contributed to the completion of this thesis: Constantin Bondolfi, Julien Bovier, Alexander Drong, Noémie Ettlin, Jérôme Giller, Camille Jaccard, Sophie Godard Desmarest, Yuka Kodama, Jingjing Luò, Narin Hengrung, Mariel Manuel, Louis Minder, Lavinia Pucetti, Carole Revelly, Israel Rueda Fabila, Ugo Siciliani, Henry Spelman, Caroline Stucky, Christopher Taylor, Pierric Tenthorey, Branden Thornhill-Miller, Henry Uniacke, all my friends at ballet, and my family amongst many others. I am also much indebted to Danielle Bishop, Benjamin Passfield, Andrew Stiles, Enrico Prodi, Richard Rowley, Helen Slaney, Juliette Vuille, and my father who all patiently read and meticulously corrected my drafts.

I greatly benefited from the advice of Dr Currie, Prof. Pelling, Prof. Hornblower and Prof. Hutchinson who commented on my work at its various stages of examination as well as from that of Dr Athanassaki, Prof. Bremmer, Dr Bowie, Prof. Finglass, Prof Griffiths, Dr Kearns, Dr Meccariello, Prof. Most, Prof. Sandoz, and the late Dr West. I am particularly grateful to Prof. Fiona Macintosh for supporting my application to the University of Oxford as well as to Lincoln College, the Berrow Scholarship, and the Swiss National Fund.

Finally, I would like to warmly thank Dr Felix Budelmann. I feel very privileged to have had the chance to be supervised by him. His guidance and expertise have been invaluable. I am very thankful for his support, his extreme generosity with his time, and for the detailed criticisms and suggestions he gave me throughout the writing of this doctorate. I have learnt a great deal from him, and hope I have succeeded in emulating his outstanding intellectual clarity and his rigour.

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ABBREVIATIONS OF MODERN REFERENCE WORKS

<i>APF</i>	J. K. Davies, <i>Athenian Propertied Families 600-300 BC</i> (Oxford 1971).
<i>AR</i>	<i>Archaeological Reports</i>
<i>ARV</i>	<i>Attic Red-figure Vase-painters</i>
<i>ATL</i>	B. D. Meritt, H. T. Wade-Gery, and M. F. McGregor, <i>The Athenian Tribute List</i> , 4 vols (Princeton 1939-53).
<i>Barr</i>	R. Talbert (ed.), <i>Barrington Atlas of the Classical World</i> (Princeton 2000).
Beekes	R. Beekes, <i>Etymological Dictionary of Greek</i> , 2 vols (Leiden 2009)
<i>CAG</i>	<i>Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca</i> , 23 vols (Berlin 1882-1909).
Chantraine	P. Chantraine, <i>Dictionnaire Etymologique de la Langue Grecque: Histoire des Mots</i> (Paris 1977).
<i>EAA</i>	<i>Enciclopedia dell'arte antica</i>
<i>FgrHist</i>	F. Jacoby <i>et al.</i> , <i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (Berlin 1923–).
<i>LACP</i>	M. H. Hansen and T. H. Nielsen, <i>Inventory of Archaic and Greek Poleis</i> (Oxford 2004).
<i>IEG</i>	M. L. West, <i>Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati</i> , 2 vols (Oxford 1989-92).
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> (Berlin 1873-).
<i>LLMC</i>	<i>Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae</i> (Zürich; München 1981-97).
<i>LfgRE</i>	B. Snell <i>et al.</i> (eds.), <i>Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos</i> , 25 fascicles (Göttingen and Oakville, CT 1955–2010).
<i>LPGN</i>	P. M. Fraser, E. Matthews <i>et al.</i> , <i>A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names</i> , 5 vols in 7 so far (Oxford 1987-2014).
LSJ	H. Liddell and R. Scott, <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> , 9th ed. (Oxford 1996).
ML	R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, <i>A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century BC</i> (Oxford, 1969).
<i>PCG</i>	R. Kassel and C. F. L. Austin, <i>Poetae comici Graeci</i> (Berlin 1983–).
<i>PEG</i>	A. Bernabé, <i>Poetae epici Graeci. Testimonia et fragmenta</i> , i, 2nd edn (Stuttgart; Leipzig 1996). [1st edn 1987]
<i>PMG</i>	D. L. Page, <i>Poetae melici Graeci</i> , 2nd edn (Oxford, 1967). [1st edn = (1962)]
P. Oxy.	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , (London 1898–).
Privitera	G. A. Privitera, <i>Pindaro: Le istmiche</i> (Milan 1982).
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> (Amsterdam 1923-).
<i>SLG</i>	D. L. Page, <i>Supplementum lyricis Graecis</i> (Oxford 1974).
<i>Syll</i> ³	W. Dittenberger, <i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> , 3rd edn. (1915–24).
<i>TrGF</i>	R. Kannicht, S. Radt, and B. Snell, <i>Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta</i> , 5 vols (Göttingen, 1981-2004).

EDITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS OF ANCIENT AUTHORS AND WORKS

Unless specified otherwise, the abbreviations for ancient authors and works follow the Oxford Classical Dictionary.

A-Ω	Book from the <i>Iliad</i>	M.L. West, <i>Homeri Ilias</i> , 2 vols (Stuttgart; Leipzig 1998).
α-ω	Book from the <i>Odyssey</i>	P. von der Mühl, <i>Homeri Odyssea</i> (Basel 1962).
Aesch.	Aeschylus	S. Radt, <i>Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta</i> , vol. 3 (Göttingen 1985) 123-511. [=TrGF] H.J. Mette, <i>Die Fragmente der Tragödien des Aischylos</i> (Berlin 1959).
Alc.	Alcaeus	D. L. Page, <i>Supplementum lyricis Graecis</i> (Oxford 1974).
	Antisthenes	F.D. Caizzi, <i>Antisthenis fragmenta</i> (Milan 1966).
Ar.	Aristophanes	N.G. Wilson, <i>Aristophanis Fabulae</i> (Oxford 2007).
	<i>Ran.</i> <i>Frogs</i>	
Arist.	Aristotle	R. Kassel, <i>Aristotelis de arte poetica liber</i> (Oxford 1966). [reprint of (1965) edn with correction]
	<i>Poet.</i> <i>Poetics</i>	
Bacchyl.	Bacchylides	
	<i>Ode 13</i>	W.S. Barrett, <i>Greek Lyric, Tragedy, and Textual Criticism. Collected Papers</i> (Oxford 2007) 133-9.
Hdt.	Herodotus	N.G. Wilson, <i>Herodoti Historiae</i> , 2 vols (Oxford).
Hes.	Hesiod	G. Most, <i>Hesiod</i> , 2 vols (Cambridge, MA; London 2006-7).
	<i>Cat.</i> <i>Catalogue of Women</i>	
	<i>Op.</i> <i>Works and Days</i>	
	<i>Theog.</i> <i>Theogony</i>	
Pind.	Pindar	W. H. Race, <i>Olympian odes; Pythian odes Nemean odes; Isthmian odes; Fragments</i> , 2 vols (Cambridge, MA; London 2006-7).
Proclus	Proclus' summary of the cycle in the <i>Chrestomathia</i>	M. L. West, <i>Greek Epic Fragments from the seventh to the fifth centuries bc; edited and translated by Martin L. West</i> (Cambridge, Mass.; London 2003).
Σ(G) A-Ω	Scholion to book from the <i>Iliad</i>	J. Nicole, <i>Les scolies genevoises de l'Iliade</i> , 2 vols (Hildesheim 1966). [reprint of Geneva 1891 edn]
Σ(bT) A-Ω		H. Erbse, <i>Scholia Graeca in Homeri Iliadem (scholia vetera)</i> , vols. 1-5, 7 (Berlin 1969–1988).
Σ α-ω	Scholion to book from the <i>Odyssey</i>	W. Dindorf, <i>Scholia Graeca in Homeri Odysseam</i> , 2 vols, (Oxford 1855).
Σ <i>Aj.</i>	Scholion to Sophocles' <i>Ajax</i>	G.A. Christodoulos, <i>Tā ārchaiā scholia eis Aïan̄ta toū Sophoklēous</i> (Athens 1977).

Σ <i>Eq.</i>	Scholion to Aristophanes' <i>Equites</i>	N.G. Wilson <i>et al.</i> , <i>Scholia in Aristophanem, Pars I: Prolegomena de comoedia, scholia in Acharnenses, Equites, Nubes</i> , 5 vols (Groningen 1969-1977).
Σ <i>Ach.</i>	Scholion to Aristophanes' <i>Acharnae</i>	
Σ <i>Isthm.</i>	Scholion to <i>Isthmian ode</i>	A.B. Drachmann, <i>Scholia vetera in Pindari Carmina</i> , 3 vols (Stuttgart 1927).
Σ <i>Nem.</i>	Scholion to <i>Nemean ode</i>	
Soph.	Sophocles	P.J. Finglass, <i>Ajax</i> , edited with introduction, translation, and commentary by P.J. Finglass (Cambridge 2011).
<i>Aj.</i>	<i>Ajax</i>	

NOTE, TRANSLATION, AND TRANSLITERATION

All translations in this thesis are my own if not specified otherwise. I have chosen to Latinise the majority of Greek names (including Beazley's painter names) and terms used in this thesis, unless the Greek has become the commonly accepted form.

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INTRODUCTION

– τίς τάρ ὁδ' ἄλλος Ἀχαιοὺς ἀνὴρ ἧῶς τε μέγας τε
ἔξοχος Ἀργείων κεφαλὴν τε καὶ εὐρέας ὤμους;
– οὗτος δ' Αἴας ἐστὶ πελώριος ἕρκος Ἀχαιῶν.

– *Iliad*, Γ 226-8;9

Who is this noble and tall man that surpasses the Argives with his head and large shoulders? Like Priam, I have always been seized by wonder, when encountering Ajax. Helen answers: 'This is the great Ajax, bulwark of the Achaeans'. It is a succinct answer that she gives, but one that is characteristic of Ajax's portrayal in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

The Homeric poems are our earliest extant literary source mentioning Ajax, son of Telamon. Although the hero plays a central role in several important episodes in the *Iliad*, he himself remains somehow shrouded in mystery, as if Zeus refused to dispel the darkness surrounding him. No matter how memorable his Iliadic moments are, nothing really *happens to* him in the poem. Yes, he fights a duel against Hector, he appeals to Achilles, he desperately defends the Greeks' ships, and he even rescues Patroclus' body. But what constitutes *his* personal story? What is his background?

In the *Odyssey*, what we learn about Ajax is, by contrast, as crucial as it is condensed. In the Νεκυία, when Odysseus meets the hero in Hades, we understand that he died at Troy.¹ The encounter is short but unforgettable, as the angry soul of Ajax proudly refuses to speak to Odysseus. For the first time, we get the sense that the hero also had his own story. His behaviour, however, is difficult to understand with the limited information provided by the Homeric poems alone. Ajax's great silence may be more sublime than any word,² but, for all that, it is not very instructive.

Odysseus briefly alludes to the events that provoked Ajax's anger, and apparently led to his death:

¹ λ 543-64. This can also be inferred from ω 15-18.

² [Longinus] *Subl.* IX 3.

οἷη δ' Αἴαντος ψυχὴ Τελαμωνιάδαο
 νόσφιν ἀφεστήκει, κεχολωμένη εἵνεκα νίκης,
 τήν μιν ἐγὼ νίκησα δικαζόμενος παρὰ νηυσὶ 545
 τεύχεσιν ἀμφ' Ἀχιλλῆος· ἔθηκε δὲ πότνια μήτηρ,
 παῖδες δὲ Τρώων δίκασαν καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη.
 ὥς δὴ μὴ ὄφελον νικᾶν τοιῶδ' ἐπ' ἀέθλω·
 τοίην γὰρ κεφαλὴν ἔνεκ' αὐτῶν γαῖα κατέσχευ,
 Αἴανθ', ὅς περὶ μὲν εἶδος, περὶ δ' ἔργα τέτυκτο 550
 τῶν ἄλλων Δαναῶν μετ' ἀμύμονα Πηλεΐωνα.

λ 543-51

but the account is fragmentary. We can only reconstruct a very basic storyline which forms the following sequence: (i) Thetis organises a competition for Achilles' arms (ii) the Trojans and Athena are the judges (iii) Odysseus wins (iv) Ajax is angry (v) Ajax dies in circumstances that are linked to Odysseus' victory (vi) Ajax bears a grudge against Odysseus even in death.

There is no hint that Ajax committed suicide, no indication of the manner in which Athena and the Trojans judged the matter, no allusion to a debate, nor to Ajax's madness, but the passage would have nevertheless been perfectly intelligible to a contemporary audience. The popularity of the hero's *gesta* can already be witnessed from the end of the eighth century, as his suicide and his rescue of Achilles' body are popular themes in early archaic art. Odysseus' lacunary phrasing, therefore, is probably meant to invite the audience to engage with his account and contrast it with the traditional version(s) of Ajax's death in early Greek hexameter poetry.³ This, in turn, would have made the rhetorical strategy and underlying agenda of Odysseus in the passage more conspicuous, thereby enriching the aesthetic experience offered by the poem through 'traditional referentiality'.⁴

³ On the relationship between *tradition* and *reception* in the Homeric poems, see Budelmann and Haubold 2008: 19-23. As they rightly note, both words are flexible, and should be deployed on a case-by-case basis. My own usage throughout this study is rather simple. I employ *tradition* in relation to the horizon of expectation implied by the object I discuss. Any given material is considered to be traditional if it has become influential enough to shape the horizon of expectations of the primary audience receiving the given object. As for *reception*, it is used to describe the action of incorporating traditional material in a work at a synchronic moment in time. In Saussurian terms, one could say that *tradition* represents the perpendicular axis of diachrony, while *reception* the horizontal one of synchrony.

⁴ Foley 1991: 1-60; 1999: 13-34; Allan 2005: 14; Graziosi and Haubold 2005; Burgess 2006: 154; Kelly 2007: 5-17. Currie (2012: 185, 192) argues in favour of a model in which it is possible to distinguish between primary and secondary texts, as he considers that '[t]o think exclusively in terms of mythological intertextuality or traditional referentiality may be to limit unduly the possibilities of this poetic tradition'. I doubt that it is possible to systematically ascertain this type of relationship between early Greek hexameter poems in the current state of evidence. I prefer the term *traditional referentiality* to that of *intertextuality*, *allusion* or (*creative*) *imitation*, because it qualifies a weaker degree of relation, and does not necessarily presuppose the existence of written texts. It accounts for *allusions* within an oral framework (Danek 2002: 5). It must be noted that I do not share all of Foley's views. 'Even in oral traditions the form of one particular poem, even if not wholly and permanently fixed, may still be stable enough over a given period of time to become recognizable for an audience, and thus to be the object of allusion or creative imitation' (Rutherford 2012: 154-5).

One very straightforward implication follows from this observation. Given that the Homeric poems were apparently composed for an audience which was expected to be familiar with the larger tradition of the Trojan War (at the very least), acquiring a better comprehension of the pre-Homeric Ajax should contribute to refining our understanding of his character in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.⁵ However, the benefits are obviously not limited to the Homeric poems. When Pindar addresses the members of his audience in *Isthmian* 4.53b-55, he explicitly states that he expects them to know the story of Ajax's suicide:

ἴστε μάν	35
Αἴαντος ἀλκάν φοίνιον, τὰν ὀψία	35b
ἐν νυκτὶ ταμῶν περὶ ᾧ φασγάνῳ μομφὰν ἔχει	
παίδεσσιν Ἑλλάνων ὅσοι Τροίανδ' ἔβαν.	36b

By and large, it appears that throughout the classical period, pre-Homeric traditions still strongly shaped the horizon of expectation of a Greek audience, although their wide-spread diffusion seems to have gradually shrunk, the more authoritative the figure of Homer became.⁶ A good indicator, perhaps, of the culmination of this process is the creation of the first scholia which reflect the increasing need for information about the context.

When receiving a mythical character like Ajax as a modern audience, we thus find ourselves in a difficult position. On the one hand, a great amount of information has been lost to us, and what has come down to us, on the other hand, is inevitably partial. Each act of reception has added a filter through which we must look in order to see the object of our study. As Bloom argues, 'Poetic Influence always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet,'⁷ and, therefore, 'once the belated text is written by a strong poet, we can never read the precursor text the same way again.'⁸ (...) [The] strong misreading of the precursor text is so powerful, in other words, that it becomes our strong misreading.⁹ Consequently, the conception we have

⁵ Scodel (1997) is right to note that the knowledge of the traditions that are assumed in the Homeric poems would not have been equally shared among the members of the audience, and it is also true that the plot of the poems is easily followed with little or no prior exposure to these traditions. However, it does not follow that the external references made in the poem are mere artifice used to create a sense of intimacy between the poet and the audience, instead of being genuine cases in which the prior-knowledge of the audience is solicited. As Danek (1992:4) argues, the capacity for a work of art to be able to both please the naive and the experienced audience is 'something that applies to every kind of good literature.'

⁶ One advantage inherent to the use of mythical material lies in the fact that 'the attention of the audience is immediately focused on novelties of detail, the particular interpretation which the artist is putting on his subject' Griffin (1986: 4).

⁷ Bloom 1997 [1973]: 30.

⁸ It may seem odd that I refer here to Bloom's theory of influence, since the methodology I use is influenced by Reception Aesthetics. I do not share, for instance, the evaluative dimension of Bloom's views. However, this issue bears little weight on my present endeavour: what constitutes the corpus of influential works from archaic and classical Greece regarding Ajax has been shaped by the accidents of transmission.

⁹ Fry 2012: 184. Needless to say that one is entitled to equate 'a strong misreading' to a 'reinterpretation.'

of many mythical characters is often the fruit of a syncretism between (sometimes competing) paradigms that have been diachronically constituted. As a result, the later characterisations of one hero are often forcefully read into his earlier paradigms, and this can lead to misinterpretation.¹⁰

This is the main problem that arises when studying the reception of Telamonian Ajax, as we will have the occasion to see in the course of this thesis. No monograph – as of now – exists which offers a complete overview of the development of his myth, and so it is not at all surprising that several aspects pertaining to his figure still need to be disentangled.¹¹

In the present doctoral thesis, it is my endeavour to study the archaic and classical reception of Telamonian Ajax in a systematic manner. The methodology I have developed is a blend of Jaus's 'Reception Aesthetics', and simple Saussurian linguistic principles.¹² Drawing upon Jaus's theory, I place importance on the (ideal) first and secondary audiences of the works I analyse, on the horizon of expectations pre-supposed in them, and on the historical context within which they have been produced.¹³ In addition to this, I owe to Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale*, the emphasis I put on the fundamental distinction between synchrony (*l'étude des états*), and diachrony (*l'étude des évolutions*), as well as on the manner in which these two perspectives complement one another. This means that I inquire who 'Ajax' is in relation to other characters within the closed system of signs that a work and its *traditional referentiality* constitute at a precise point in time. However, I also pay attention to the history and evolution of the *signifiant* 'Ajax' in as much as it can shed light on some aspects of its meaning within each particular synchronic system. Synchrony and diachrony operate on two different planes and are thus represented as two perpendicular axes. Although a term is the product of its preceding significations, its

¹⁰ For instance, the motif of Achilles' vulnerable heel only appears in Hellenistic times, and it is consequently erroneous to interpret the Iliadic passage in which Achilles is wounded (Φ 166-7) as the departure from a tradition known to the poet(s) of the *Iliad*. See Burgess 1995.

¹¹ Currently, Toucheffeu (1981), in spite of her focus on iconographical representations, and Gantz (1993: 629-34) offer the most complete diachronic overview on the myth of Telamonian Ajax. Studies tend to focus on one single work or on the production of one single author, which means that external references usually serve the interpretation of the work (or body of works) in question. For instance, Trapp (1961) focuses on the hero's portrayal in the *Iliad*, while Calabrese de Feo (1984) concentrates on his representation in the poems of Pindar. Hesk (2003) and Finglass (2011) – one in a monograph, the other in a commentary on the *Ajax* – both address the question of Sophocles' sources, but their treatment of the material is understandably short, and hence inevitably superficial. Fitch (1924) does broach the question of the relationship between Homer's and Pindar's Ajax, but he mainly does so to argue that Pindar's conception of Homer was broader than ours, and included any early Greek hexameter poem based on the larger tradition of the Trojan War.

¹² Foley (1991: 19-22) provides a neat overview of how Saussurian linguistics provides a useful framework about traditions (in his case oral ones) and their evolution.

¹³ Jaus 1982; 1982b. For a useful summary of Jaus's theory and the problems it entails, cf. Nauta 1994.

meaning can only be deployed in relation to all of the other terms contained in the system of signs it belongs to.

Accordingly, I first establish the hero's defining attributes, and identify the constituent episodes of his *gesta* in early Greek hexameter poetry. This means that I seek to distinguish the features that appear to have formed the core of his identity for an archaic audience, by comparing the various elements of his character in the poetry of this period. This preliminary analysis serves as the basis of further investigations, in which I examine how Ajax's myth evolved in the course of its various receptions within the microcosm of different Greek *πολλεις*, in all kinds of media, such as literature, art, or cultic practice. Each work in which the hero features is put under close scrutiny, with a view to grasping the factors that influenced the development of his figure. I give special attention to the historical and socio-cultural circumstances in which each particular work was produced, as well as to its *genre*, or to the contemporary beliefs that were held concerning Ajax. This prompts a series of reflections on each work considered, thereby casting new light on several issues relating to them. It is my premise that the manner in which Ajax is portrayed is intimately connected to the reason(s) that motivated the use of his figure (when it can be traced). It follows from this view that understanding the history of the hero's reception is essential in order to fully appreciate the treatment of his figure in a given piece, and, by the same token, some of the central aspects of the works in which he features. Since the material I cover in this study is rather heterogeneous, I shall be more specific about the methodology I use in the introduction to each of the three parts that constitute this study.

The thesis is divided into three parts:

In the first, I consider Ajax's portrayal in early Greek hexameter poetry as well as in art. I begin my analysis by assessing the different traits pertaining to the hero that are often considered to come from a Mycenaean heritage. I then proceed to delineate the constitutive elements that formed Ajax's *gesta* in pre-Homeric traditions by gathering and analysing all the secondary sources that report some aspects of his treatment in early Greek hexameter poems, as well as by looking at visual representations of the hero. At the same time, I discuss how these elements may have been received and adapted in the Homeric poems.

In the second part, I examine how the hero has been portrayed in Aeginetan cultural production in the context of the Persian Wars and of Atheno-Aeginetan rivalry. The reception of the epic figure of Ajax in Aegina is influenced by two main factors: one internal and one external. On the one hand, the Aeginetans considered their island to be the symbolic homeland of all the Aeacidae, including Telamon and Ajax. This means that an important part of their identity was constructed around their link with this family of heroes, and that Pindar and Bacchylides necessarily had to take this fact into account when writing for Aeginetan patrons. On the other hand, the Greeks' naval victory at Salamis conferred on Ajax a new political dimension in the Panhellenic community, as he became associated with the battle, thereby influencing the way the hero was perceived both within and without Aegina.

In the final part, I look into the reception of Ajax in Athens. The material reviewed ranges from the early sixth century to the end of the classical period. During this long period of time, Athens undergoes many fundamental changes which are reflected in the attitude of its citizen towards Ajax, and in the manner in which they relate to him. Consequently, I have divided it into three sections reflecting consecutive periods of Athenian history: the time of the tyranny, the early years of the democracy (until the start of the First Peloponnesian War), and finally the Second Peloponnesian War with its aftermath. For each of these periods, I closely examine the mechanisms of Ajax's reception in relation to the mutations of Athenian society.

In addition to constraints of time and space, I have restricted this study to the Archaic and Classical eras primarily because these are the periods in which Ajax's myth undergoes its most important genetic changes, which remain largely fixed in its subsequent reception. By this, I mean that the hero's subsequent portrayals fail to reconfigure his myth so as to create a new paradigm. They are variations on existing motifs rather than fundamentally different representations. Even though Ajax does feature, for instance, in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, or in Quintus of Smyrna's *Post-Homerica*, these texts reinforce, and in the case of the *Metamorphosis* popularise, a pre-existing model.¹⁴

¹⁴ We find some rather original treatments of Ajax in works from authors of the Second or Third Sophistic such as Philostratus, Dictys of Crete, Dares Phrygius, or John Malalas. These works – Dictys' and Dares', in particular – were very influential during the Middle Ages, as they constituted the main source available on the 'matter of Troy'. Most medieval romances or chronicles are based on them, until Homer is rediscovered during the Renaissance (Beschoner 1992: 2-5). However, even in the case of these works, the innovative elements that they add to Ajax's portrayals are still closely related to Homer, and thus fail (or rather do not seek) to create a new paradigm.

PART 1

AJAX FROM SALAMIS

‘The gods weave misfortunes for men, so that the generations to come will have something to sing about.’ Mallarmé repeats, less beautifully, what Homer said; “tout aboutit en un livre,” everything ends up in a book. The Greeks speak of generations that will sing; Mallarmé speaks of an object, of a thing among things, a book. But the idea is the same; the idea that we are made for art, we are made for memory, we are made for poetry, or perhaps we are made for oblivion. But something remains, and that something is history or poetry, which are not essentially different.’

– Jorge Luis Borges, *Seven Nights*

In the first part of this study on the reception of Telamonian Ajax in archaic and classical Greece, I focus on his representations in early Greek hexameter poetry and in archaic art. The discussion is going to be directed by the nature of the two main issues we shall broach. They are (i) the portrayal of Ajax in pre-Homeric traditions, and (ii) the reception of this pre-Homeric Ajax in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. On the one hand, I aim to determine what the characteristic elements constitutive of Ajax’s *gesta* in the larger epic tradition were,¹ while showing, on the other hand, how this pre-Homeric Ajax is mediated in the Homeric poems. I propose that some aspects relating to the poems’ internal logic can be understood in more depth by analysing the mechanisms that underlie his treatment in these poems. In so doing, it will become clear that the example of Ajax supports the view that the Homeric poems, alongside many other epic poems, adapted a pre-existing epic tradition which they did not supplant before they became canonical and authoritative in the course of the fifth century.²

As we shall see, the two questions mentioned above are inevitably interdependent, especially since the reconstruction of the pre-Homeric *gesta* of Ajax that I propose paradoxically stems from readings of the *Iliad*. This reflects the great discrepancy in the degree of preservation of the different poetic traditions that emerged from the larger epic tradition of the Trojan war: we have over fifteen thousand lines of the *Iliad* against a few small fragments and summaries of a few dozen lines of other epic poems in which Ajax featured, such as the *Aethiopis* and the *Ilias Parva*. Thus, it is necessary to treat the question of the pre-Homeric Ajax, and that of his reception in the Homeric poems simultaneously, even though they form two distinct issues. For this reason, I have decided to articulate my discussion around unique features pertaining to Ajax in the *Iliad* – mostly left unexplained in the poem – which derive, I argue, from pre-Homeric motifs.

¹ On the use of the expression ‘larger epic tradition,’ cf West (1988: 181); Dué (2010: 4, 36).

² Burgess 2001: 130-1.

The argument is structured as follows. Before turning to the analysis of the material, I first make a small digression in order to address the question of the emergence of early Greek hexameter poetry. I do not claim to establish a novel position here, but my objective in taking this detour is to provide a frame of reference for the entire discussion of Part I. I wish to clarify my own assumptions concerning the manner in which I conceive of the larger epic tradition. Particular attention is given to the way early Greek hexameter poetic traditions relate to one another.³ I then begin my project by discussing some of the characteristics Ajax may have inherited from Mycenaean traditions. I am taking my lead here from the search for pre-Homeric Ajax common in treatments of the hero. The assumption in such discussions has usually been that pre-Homeric amounts to Mycenaean, which is unsurprising, given that these studies date from the early twentieth century, and thus from a time that preceded the decipherment of the Linear B.⁴ I then proceed to examine the hero's oldest depictions on pots, before turning to the analysis of particular motifs which, I propose, are pre-Homeric, and discuss how they have been adapted in the Homeric poems. Finally, I shall conclude Part I with a tentative reconstruction of Ajax's pre-Homeric myth, as well as with a discussion of several reasons that may account for the changes his figure underwent in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

³ The Homeric question is a notoriously thorny issue. Consequently, I shall only address what is relevant to my endeavour (so that I may remain as concise as possible); that is the question of the relationship between the Homeric poems and other early Greek hexameter poems. On this specific point, my views are fairly similar to those advanced by Burgess (2001; 2015). In particular, I think he has shown convincingly that, initially, the Homeric poems were only one of the many branches constituting the tradition of the Trojan War. Moreover, his approach by and large does not attempt to date exactly when the poems were composed or put into written form, unlike Janko (2012), or Neo-Analysts such as Kakridis (1949) and Currie (2012). It does not exclude either the possibility that a given poem could have already been stable (whether orally or in written form) from early on, or that it could be the work of one single poet rather than the product of generations of singers with no individual voice, as Oralists like Foley (1990, 1999), or Nagy (who prefers, however, not to be labelled so) (1984; 1992; 1996; 2001; 2004) hold. As such, it provides a useful framework to think about influence without requiring to commit to an Oralist or a Neo-Analyst model. This is much in line with recent developments in Homeric scholarship (Montanari 2012).

⁴ Girard (1905); Vürtheim (1907); Mühl (1930).

THE FORMATION OF THE EPIC TRADITION: SOME ASSUMPTIONS

ἐνθα μὲν Αἴας κείται ἀρήιος, ἐνθα δ' Ἀχιλλεύς,
ἐνθα δὲ Πάτροκλος θρόνον μῆστωρ ἀτάλαντος,
ἐνθαδ' ἐπὶ τρισσοῖσι παννείκελος ἡρώεσσιν
ψυχὴν καὶ βιότοιο τέλος Μουσώνιος ἦρωας.

— IMT Südliche Troas 694⁵

The Greeks believed that early hexameter poems transmitted the stories of their distant past, and that they were the descendants of the heroes and heroines populating these poems. Heroic ancestry was central to their identity, as it gave them a sense of belonging to a wider community whose members shared this common heritage, even though they lived in independent πόλεις.⁶ This is made obvious, for instance, by the manner in which Thucydides historicises the Trojan War and its aftermath in the *Archaeology*.⁷ They were nonetheless also aware of the opportunities for manipulation this material offered. An anecdote from the *Histories* fittingly illustrates the tensions between the authority attributed to myth and the room for manoeuvre it allowed. Herodotus recounts that the tyrant Cleisthenes attempted to expel the hero Adrastus from Sicyon. Finding himself unable to do so, he introduced the cult of Melanippus, Adrastus' worst enemy, in order to undermine his preeminence in the πόλις.⁸ Although powerless to erase the traditions concerning Adrastus, Cleisthenes nonetheless managed to weaken his presence through the introduction of new rites, which were acceptable as long as they complied with the mythical past of his πόλις. Myth was the chosen medium through which the nature of the relationships that linked individuals, groups of people, πόλεις, or divinities to one another, was expressed and could be regulated.

⁵ The inscription dates from the fourth century BCE.

⁶ This would have been all the more crucial, if Forrest (2002) is right in suggesting that amphictyonies (groupings of aristocrats from different *pre-πόλεις* that regularly gathered at a shrine, probably at the occasion of games, and followed concerted policies) constituted the most important form of political organisation before the crystallisation of the πόλις.

⁷ Thuc. I 9-11.

⁸ Hdt. V 67-8. Cleisthenes tried to get rid of Adrastus as he disliked the hero because of his Argive origin. The Pythia from whom he had sought advice on the matter objected with these words: Ἀδρηστον μὲν εἶναι Σικυωνίων βασιλέα, ἐκείνον δὲ λευστήρα. Consequently, Cleisthenes had to devise a plan that would allow him to diminish indirectly the honours paid to the hero in Sicyon. This is revealing with regard to the manner in which myth, and the authority it conveys operates. Cf. Hubbard 1992: 82-6; Nenci 1994: 257-8; Fredal 2006: 99-100, for instance.

Why was it so? The full answer is unrecoverable, but certainly connected to the conditions in which the epic tradition emerged. In the Mycenaean period, there were many Greek speaking independent centres that interacted with one another through trade, alliances, or war, thereby providing a common frame of reference within which each community could define itself, in accordance or by contrast. While never forming a uniformed whole, their regular contacts and the fact that they spoke the same language probably ensured, through the centuries, the formation, at least, of a shared social memory, which constitutes the corpus of stories that we commonly call Greek mythology.⁹ Their social memory – as with the social memory of any civilisation – was a mixture of aetiologies, customs, and folk traditions, but also of historical facts.¹⁰ It was a reflection of the past;¹¹ no matter how changed, it was a memory, nonetheless, that the early Greeks themselves truly believed to be rooted in reality.¹²

Around 1200 BCE, the Mycenaean world collapses.¹³ Many palaces are burnt, some populations move further inland, away from the coasts, thereby abandoning their settlements; others migrate far away.¹⁴ The entire trading network in the Aegean collapses, populations decrease everywhere, and the Mycenaeans even forget a technology as important as writing. These events are translated in the Greek world by the unprecedented isolation of its various communities. Since Michael Ventris succeeded in deciphering the Mycenaean tablets in the 1950s,¹⁵ continuity between the Mycenaeans and the Greeks from the archaic period can be proven by the fact that they share the same language.¹⁶ Words with strong

⁹ Burgess 2015: 75. Obviously, each community would have its own version of it, but what matters is that each of these versions would have the same referent, or, in other words, would be a singular conception of the same social memory.

¹⁰ On the question of myth as history, see, for instance, Burkert 1979: 26-9; Graf 1993: 121-41.

¹¹ 'the epic was not some kind of bad history. It was a poetic creation, what some eighth century Greeks thought the heroic world ought to have been like. (...) Iron Age Greeks manipulated material culture as a non verbal language through which they debated who they were and where they stood relative to each other, the larger east Mediterranean world, and the lost heroic past' (Morris 1997: 558).

¹² The *Chanson de Roland* provides an excellent parallel. It is an epic poem based on the Battle of Roncevaux which occurred in 778. It thus has strong ties with reality, in spite of the *circa* four hundred years that separate this historical event and the redaction of our earliest manuscript (MS. Digby 23 (Pt 2) made in the twelfth century). We know that Charlemagne existed, but wonderful elements have been included to the narration of the events, and their scale is excessively exaggerated. Interestingly, Charlemagne who spoke a Germanic language has been transformed into a French figure, and the poem is composed in Anglo-Norman.

¹³ The chronology of the end of the Bronze Age is mostly based on pottery style, and presents strong regional differences. Overall, in mainland Greece, Mycenaean palaces are burnt between 1200-1075 BCE. A sort of revival takes place in some locations such as Salamis *c.* 1150, followed by a second collapse *c.* 1100. By 1025, long-distance trade has stopped everywhere, only to resume in the tenth century. On this question, see Snodgrass 1971: 106-39; Morris 1997; Lemos 2002: 11; Dickinson 2006; Cline 2014.

¹⁴ For a detailed discussion on the Mycenaean collapse and post-palatial period, *cf.* Middleton 2010.

¹⁵ *Cf.* Chadwick 1990 [1958].

¹⁶ He postulated that they transcribed Greek instead of an indigenous non Indo-European language as everyone had first assumed. Finley (1964)[=1956] takes this discovery as further evidence that no memory of the Mycenaean period is preserved in Early Greek epics. See Dickinson 2006, Snodgrass 2006.

epic flavour such as *ἄναξ* - *wanaka* commonly appear in linear B, as do the name of major gods of the Greek pantheon such as Poseidon.¹⁷ Furthermore, during the period of isolation that constitutes the Dark Ages, people engaged in practices which suggest that they were aware of their Mycenaean heritage,¹⁸ and related to it.¹⁹ There is, for instance, evidence for feasting at otherwise abandoned Mycenaean sites as early as the tenth century.²⁰ This holds more or less for the majority of Greek communities, even though it does not happen synchronically but over the course of several centuries.²¹ By the eighth century, the first Panhellenic sanctuaries emerge.²² They are the sign of the progressive reconnection of Greek communities with one another, especially of their elite; the so-called ‘international aristocracy’.²³ They negotiate their relations through common cults which draw their authority from the body of myths that constitutes the fabric of their shared social memory. It has been preserved through the medium of oral poetry (though probably not exclusively) in spite of several centuries of isolation.

Small bronze dedications, pots, or pediments dating from as early as the end of the eighth century, which depict stories clearly drawn from the epic material of which we are aware, constitute a crucial alternative source of information for understanding what kind of tradition(s) circulated in early archaic Greece. Moreover, these objects also shed light on the manner in which the Homeric poems relate to the tradition they inherited. In addition to these images, we know of other early Greek hexameter poems such as the *Aethiopis*, the *Ilias Parva*, the *Iliou Persis*, or the *Catalogue of Women*, that narrate episodes drawn from the ‘matter of Troy’.²⁴ Although they were most likely fixed into written form after the

¹⁷ Perhaps even more striking is the Mycenaean origin of the goddess Dione, who memorably features in the *Iliad* as Aphrodites’ mother (E 370ff.). Cf. López-Ruiz 2015: 374.

¹⁸ Sherratt 2005: 135. By Mycenaean heritage, I mean that the population was conscious that wealthier and more prosperous men, living in imposing palaces, had existed in the past.

¹⁹ In this regard, it is telling that the Greeks thought – mythologically speaking – that the generation that sacked Thebes preceded the one that went on the second Trojan expedition. Although it may only be a coincidence, it corresponds rather well to what happened according to material evidence: first, the destruction of mainland palaces c. 1200 (followed by a sort of small Renaissance), before international trading networks collapsed c. 1100, which leads to the Greek ‘Dark Age’ proper (Desborough 1964: 20, 228; Deger-Jalkotzy 1994: 14, 19–21; Lemos 1998: 45–8, as referred to in Lemos 2000: 11). As Dickinson (2006: 1) notes: ‘although Greek tradition generally spoke of an age of heroes in the past (...), when kings ruled wide lands from palaces full of fabulous treasures, and great deeds were performed, it recognised no period of catastrophic decline intervening between this and more recent times. Rather, it presented the age of heroes as shading, after the Trojan War, into a period of less striking deeds that ended with the migrations by which, supposedly, the later map of mainland and Aegean Greece was largely created’.

²⁰ Morgan 1993: 14; Bookidis 1993; Hall 2014 [2007]: 85, 270–1; Jarosch-Reinholdt 2009. Cf. Polinskaya 2013: 382, n6.

²¹ On the development of these communities into *πόλεις*, see Davies 1997.

²² About the role of amphictyonies in making these sanctuaries ‘international’: Forrest 2002.

²³ Wade-Gery 1958: 245–6.

²⁴ The expressions ‘matter of Troy’ and ‘matter of Thebes’ are borrowed from Jean Bodel’s (1165–1210) useful classification of the legendary themes and literary cycles known to medieval literature.

Homeric poems became canonical, they are crucial witnesses of alternative, and – I wish to contend – often more conservative traditions.

In my view, the fact that stories from the ‘matter of Troy’ were transmitted by independent epic traditions is a decisive argument for postulating a common origin to the mythical tradition that is conveyed in epic poetry, dating back at least to the end of the Mycenaean times.²⁵ In spite of local variations, the names and the locations of mythological figures are stable overall. There are certainly exceptions, but they usually can be assigned to historical accidents. On the other hand, even a sand-counting Pythian priestess would be at loss to explain how Greek communities scattered across the Aegean (and even further) were able to refer to a coherent and articulated representation of what they considered to be their shared past, without assuming some kind of common origin between these communities.

Of course, the oral nature of this memory combined with the geographical disconnection of its different heirs favoured its heterogeneous development in a manner and in conditions analogous to the Romance languages, for instance, which all derive from vernacular Latin. What matters, however, is the fact that all the Greek speaking communities were aware of sharing a common identity (or at least believed this), and that they felt the need to find common ground in order to manage their interaction with one another;²⁶ hence, the two levels on which myth operates: the epichoric level, which regulates and organises internal affairs, and the Panhellenic, which constitutes a frame of reference for inter-*πόλεις* relations.²⁷ This explains the continual tension between myths shaped for a local audience and those shaped for an international one. It also accounts for the particular weight attached to myth and the priority it was given, when debating international issues, especially during the archaic period.²⁸

²⁵ ‘Almost everyone accepts that the Greek epic tradition goes back at least to late Mycenaean times’ (West 1988: 151). This does not necessarily mean that later elements cannot be at times more dominant. It must be noted that Haug (2002: 39-48) is sceptical about the existence of the so-called Achaeic (or Mycenaean) phase of the epic dialect as well as regarding the antiquity of the hexameter (25-8). However, he does not doubt the traditional character of the myths told in the *Iliad* (p. 163). For further arguments against the identification of Mycenaean elements in the epic dialect, see Hackstein (2002: 5–16).

²⁶ This nonetheless left room for the manipulation of the material to political ends, as long as it was made within this frame of reference and accepted by the Panhellenic community.

²⁷ Kistler 2014.

²⁸ As long as more than one *πόλις* is concerned by the issue, it is debated internationally, which is to say within the frame of pan-Hellenism. The quarrel between Athens and Megara over Salamis in the sixth century is revealing with regard to this. As we shall see in Part III: 135ff., some traditions report that the matter was arbitrated and settled by Sparta. Each *πόλις* quoted a line from the Catalogue of Ships in the *Iliad* in order to demonstrate their primacy over Ajax, since he was born on Salamis. Each contestant brings its own epichoric variant and the judge decides whose claim he considers better grounded (or which *πόλις* is best for himself or his own *πόλις*).

I do not wish to reduce early Greek epic poetry to the sole role of social mediator nor insinuate that it was only shaped by its function of conveying social memory. Indeed, it was also a source of aesthetic pleasure for its audience, of wisdom, and of practical knowledge, amongst other things. Nonetheless, the fabric of these poems did constitute the social memory of the early Greeks. Thus, they are made from material that is inherently political. Understanding this aspect is vital, in order to grasp not only the kind of concerns they project (and that of their audience), but also their wide diffusion, the authority attributed to them all over the Greek world, and the increasing uniformity of the material transmitted. There is evidence for the existence of a 'matter of Troy' from at least the eighth century.²⁹

As for the Homeric poems, it appears that they only gradually became canonical from the sixth century onwards,³⁰ while many other early Greek hexameter poems existed at the time: titanomachies, theogonies, poems drawing from the 'matter of Thebes', or from the 'matter of Troy' like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, for instance. Our earliest figurative representations of mythological episodes that can be identified on pots attest the popularity of these other epic poems during the archaic period. In fact, very few scenes can be linked to the Homeric poems before the end of the sixth century. When the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* became authoritative works, any other epic tradition relating to the 'matter of Troy' was gradually deemed as post-Homeric, and thus derivative of the Homeric poems. The authority of Homer grew so strong that any deviation from the Homeric canon has systematically been deemed as the invention of later poets,³¹ and this mainly for ideological reasons: *Omero poeta sovrano*.

²⁹ There is evidence for feasting at Mycenaean sites in the tenth century, suggesting an awareness of a 'Mycenaean past', and thus perhaps even the existence of an epic tradition (pp. 13, n20, 77), while the first Panhellenic sanctuaries as well as the first identifiable mythological scenes in art are usually dated from around this period.

³⁰ The influence of the Homeric poems is a growing process that culminates in the fifth century. There is no agreement regarding when it can first be traced. For instance, Kelly (2015a) already sees appreciation of Homer (as the 'author' of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) in Stesichorus, while Ford (1997) thinks it can first be noticed in Herodotus. Regarding the influence of epic poetry on pictorial representations, it has been convincingly demonstrated that no 'properly Homeric' scene is represented before the sixth (Snodgrass 1998), or even the fifth century (Lowenstam 1997), contrary to what Johansen (1967) and Ahlberg-Cornell (1992), for instance, have argued.

³¹ Aristarchus has been very influential in propagating this view. See Severyns 1928: 31ff.; Kullmann 1960: 18; Janko 1992: 25-9; Burgess 2001: 9. On the creation of the figure of Homer, see Graziosi 2000.

MYCENAEAN SUBSTRATUM

Telamonian Ajax is usually believed to be a hero who dates back to the early Mycenaean period,³² from ‘a generation much earlier than that of Agamemnon,’³³ and, consequently, one that belongs to the earliest material in the *Iliad*.³⁴ The assumption that Ajax is particularly old rests on arguments of various kinds: (i) his unique association with the tower-shield, (ii) the formulas applied to him alone which are considered to be archaic, and (iii) his lacunary genealogy in the Homeric poems. These arguments were in turn deployed to explain various aspects pertaining to his characterisation such as his solitary nature, or his gigantic appearance.³⁵ Ajax would thus be an uprooted hero,³⁶ inorganically incorporated into the tradition of the Trojan war, at times considered to have originally been a faded sky-god,³⁷ a ἥρως πρόμαχος from popular belief,³⁸ or a giant.³⁹

I shall proceed to re-examine these features that Ajax supposedly inherited from a Mycenaean *substratum*, in light of the recent discovery made on Salamis of a late Bronze Age palace. For this reason, I shall first make a short digression on the history of Ancient Salamis, since the new archaeological findings invite us to rethink Ajax's relation to the Mycenaean past. As we shall see, important implications for the manner in which one conceives of the hero in early Greek hexameter poetry follow from these new data.

³² Page: 1959 232-38; Broadbent 1968: 336; West 1988: 156-59; 2011: 63; Holt 1992: 324-5; Wathélet 2008: 12-3; Scafoglio 2014.

³³ Page 1959: 147.

³⁴ That is obviously in Analyst, or Neo-analyst terms.

³⁵ West 1988: 158.

³⁶ His association with the island of Salamis would then be a later invention (Wilamowitz 1884: 244 ff.; Robert 1901: 359, 411). This was the *communis opinio*, although Nilsson rightly expresses scepticism (1933: 257). The view is surprisingly still influential today.

³⁷ Girard 1905.

³⁸ Mühl 1930.

³⁹ Delcourt 1965

Ancient Salamis

The island apparently bears a pre-Hellenic name.⁴⁰ It is located in the Saronic Gulf near the coast, approximatively half way between Athens and Megara.

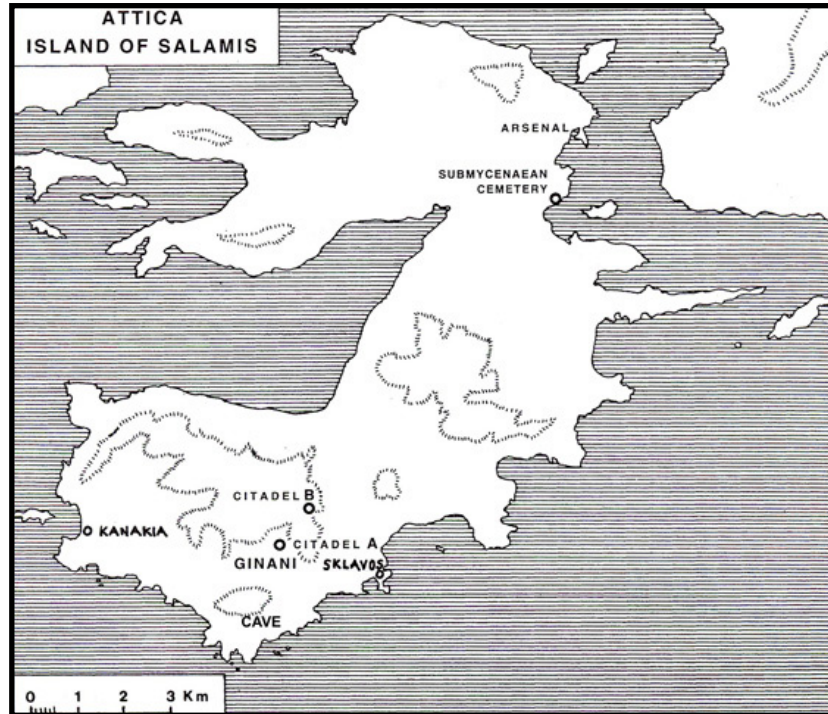


FIGURE 1

Map of the island of Salamis in the Saronic Gulf

Until recently, scholars had been sceptical about the existence of a Mycenaean citadel on the island. Only one single reference to a Mycenaean settlement on Salamis survives in ancient sources.⁴¹ After the enthusiasm in exploring the Mycenaean origins of early Greek hexameter poetry that followed Heinrich Schliemann's discoveries, the failure to find evidence for the palace of many amongst the most prominent heroes of the Homeric poems, led to general disillusionment and disbelief, thereby relegating

⁴⁰ Schwyzler 1959: 308. It was believed that the island had been named after the Asopid Salamis, just like Aegina is named after her sister, the nymph Aegina (Diod. Sic. IV 72.4; Apollod. *Bibl. Epit.* III 161.3). Strabo (IX 1.9) reports that in earlier times the island was named Sciras, Cychreia, or Pityussa. Both Sciras and Cychreia are names that refer to local heroes, while Pityussa means 'pine tree'. The identity of the hero behind Sciras has been disputed since antiquity. The Athenians claimed that he was Sciros, an Eleusinian hero, while the Megarian believed it was Scceiron, a previous king of theirs. Sciras is also an epithet given to Athena. She had a temple under this name on Salamis (Hdt. VIII 94), and at Phaleron (Paus. I 1.4). Cychreia is named after Cychreus. In most versions of the myth, he is the king of the island, the son of Poseidon and the nymph Salamis (Diod. Sic. IV 72.4; Σ Lyc. 451) from whom Telamon inherits kingship, either by marrying his daughter Glauce or because Cychreus is childless. However, it is reported that Cychreus was an autochthon serpent similar to Python whom a certain Eurylochos slew (Lyc. 451). These myths are difficult to disentangle. They seem to indicate nonetheless that at some point two distinct traditions merged: one indigenous and the other, linked to the Aeacidae, probably imported from Aegina. In addition to this, it is also possible to detect competing attempts in claiming the island's myths through genealogical manipulation on part of both Athens and Megara (Wickersham 1991: 16-31; Horn 2014).

⁴¹ IX 9.1. Pausanias seems to ignore the existence of these ruins.

the idea of a Mycenaean Salamis to the realm of fiction.⁴² However, this changed in the 2000s, when Lolos announced that he had found the ruins of a Mycenaean palace on the island which he named 'the capital of Ajax'.⁴³ While the claim is bold and probably aimed at creating sensation, the discovery is nonetheless exceptional. Whether a real Ajax existed or not is the wrong question, but knowing more about the historical reality of the place called Salamis is invaluable. It has now been established that an independent centre thrived on Salamis in the late Bronze Age, which seriously undermines the view that Ajax is a solitary hero from the Minoan-Mycenaean era.

The Bronze Age citadel, Kanakia, 'is best interpreted as the seat of a local ruler well connected to Mycenaean political and economic networks'.⁴⁴ It is situated in the South-West of the island, facing towards Aegina (**FIGURE 1**), contrary to the later archaic πόλις which is located next to the Piraeus, as indicated by Strabo. It 'consists of a double acropolis, spreading over two peaks, where the main settlement was located, had two harbours and was well-organised with a street plan.' The palace is built on four levels with at least fifty rooms stretching over no less than 750m².⁴⁵

There is no trace of massive destruction like on the Greek mainland.⁴⁶ The first results of the excavations indicate that the members of the Salaminian elite left shortly after 1150 BCE,⁴⁷ apparently taking with them all their riches, while the rest of the population moved to Ginani (**FIGURE 1**).⁴⁸ Lolos suggests that they first emigrated to Enkomi on Cyprus, before founding Cyprian Salamis shortly thereafter.⁴⁹ The hypothesis is certainly attractive: archaeological evidence suggests that its population probably had ties through trade with Cyprus at the time. Moreover, Cyprian Salamis was founded around 1100, shortly after Enkomi, situated 2.5 miles away, was abandoned. This rather conveniently corresponds to the mythical tradition that made Teucer the founder of the Cyprian Salamis, thereby accounting for the

⁴² Since the antiquity of Ajax is well attested, the lack of Mycenaean finds on the island has also led scholars to postulate that Ajax's tradition was much older than the 'matter of Troy' and that the hero was anachronistically inserted in it, resulting in anomalies such as his short entry in the Iliadic Catalogue of Ships (Lorimer 1950; Page 1959: 232-5). See also Kirk 1985: 208.

⁴³ Lolos 1996.

⁴⁴ Tartaron 2013: 239. See Vlachopoulos 2006, *supra*: Salamis.

⁴⁵ Lolos 2001.

⁴⁶ However, 'the site appears to have suffered a destruction in the transitional LHIIIB/C phase' (Middleton 2010: 76).

⁴⁷ Tartaron 2013: 240.

⁴⁸ *AR* 2002: 14-5.

⁴⁹ Lolos 1995; 2001: 132; Leriou 2007: 578; Middleton 2010: 77.

otherwise unexplained homonymy of the two places.⁵⁰ Some of the population – probably amongst its poorest members who did not possess ships – remained nonetheless on the island, although it moved further inland to protect itself from seaborne attacks. Little is yet known about the island's history up until the early sixth century, which is the period when ancient sources mention a conflict between Athens and Megara over its possession.⁵¹ What is certain, however, is that, by this time, only one settlement exists on the island, very far from the old Mycenaean citadel.⁵² It is the settlement situated just across the Piraeus, also known as Salamis.⁵³

A Mycenaean Hero?

As far as one can tell, Ajax has always been solidly rooted in Salamis,⁵⁴ and his origin even appears to be constitutive of his identity. In the Homeric Catalogue of Ships and in the Hesiodic Catalogue of Suitors,⁵⁵ he is introduced by the following formulaic hemistich:

Αἴας δ' ἐκ Σαλαμῖνος

His Salaminian origin appears to be the crucial piece of information the poet gives to distinguish him from his peers. It even supplants his patronymic, which surprisingly remains unmentioned in these passages.⁵⁶ This strong association between the hero and his place of birth is rather peculiar: Ajax is not the founder of Salamis, nor is he even buried on the island.⁵⁷ The stability of his connection with the island is equally surprising, given that it apparently never fully recovered political autonomy after the Mycenaean citadel was deserted *c.* 1150 BCE.⁵⁸ However, this would be even more surprising, if it turned out that the

⁵⁰ In the classical period, a dynasty of kings claiming to descend from Teucer was in power.

⁵¹ Cf. Part III: 131ff.

⁵² A sub-Mycenaean (*ca* 1075–1025 BCE) cemetery has been discovered close to the archaic Salamis which indicates that this new settlement dates back to this early period, although probably not before the Mycenaean palace was abandoned.

⁵³ This is the opposite to what happened on Aegina where the Mycenaean citadel was also deserted, but used soon after, at least from the tenth century BCE (Part II: 77). Furthermore, the new settlement that subsequently became archaic Aegina was built next to the Mycenaean complex which then became a sacred part of the πόλις.

⁵⁴ Polinskaya 2013: 479.

⁵⁵ *Il.* B 557; [Hes.] *Cat.*, fr. 204: 44. See also Euripides' adaptation of the formula: <Αἴας> Σαλαμῖνος στέφανος (*IA*: 194); Αἴας δ' ὁ Σαλαμῖνος ἐντροφός (*IA*: 204). On Ajax's entries in early epic catalogues, see Visser 1997: 447–54. See also Part III: 147–51.

⁵⁶ The absence of the patronymic is particularly problematic in the case of Ajax, since it distinguishes him from his homonym Ajax son of Oileus. See Porph. *In Aristotelis categorias* 1.64 [= *CAG* IV].

⁵⁷ He dies in Troad, and his tomb is believed to be in Rhoiteion (Euphorion, fr. 44; Σ(T) M 118b; Σ Hyp. *Aj.* 4; Strabo XIII 595).

⁵⁸ Two twin settlements at Ginani have been occupied by the local population from the LHIIIC to the Geometric periods, but they were small and poor (Lolos 2001: 121, 127; Demetriou 2007).

link between Salamis and one of the heroes belonging to the tradition of the Trojan War was entirely fortuitous.

The name of Ajax possibly dates back from Mycenaean times. Mühlestein has argued that the word *ai-wa* (FIGURE 2), found on Cnossos tablet 973, is the Mycenaean equivalent of *Aἶας*.⁵⁹



FIGURE 2

He takes it to be a diminutive of *αἰδῶλος* (*ai-wa: ai-woro* = **αἰδῶλος*), but his parallel has been received with scepticism for morphological reasons.⁶⁰ Moreover, *ai-wa* refers to an ox in the tablet.⁶¹ Other etymologies have been advanced. Wathelet argues that Ajax is probably a pre-Hellenic name, perhaps to be linked with *αἶα* (earth), while Tsopanakis takes it to be a diminutive of *Αἰακός*, Ajax's traditional grandfather, whose name may likewise be connected to *αἶα*.⁶² We shall come back to the question of a possible connection between Ajax and the earth.⁶³ As for Wilamowitz, he thought that both *Αἰακός* and *Αἶας* were hypocoristic forms of *αἰετός*.⁶⁴ In antiquity, beliefs differed, and divergent folk etymologies co-existed.⁶⁵ In absence of conclusive evidence, it seems advisable to leave the question open; as Lejeune notes: 'l'étymologie d'*Αἶας* demeure obscure'.⁶⁶

Αἶαντε

It is well-known that two different Ajaxes simultaneously exist within the tradition of the Trojan war. Both heroes are usually easy to distinguish from one another, although they often fight in pairs. Physically,

⁵⁹ Mühlestein 1967.

⁶⁰ 'Les hypocoristiques en -ας ont un génitif en -ας, et non en -αντος' Wathelet (2008: 12).

⁶¹ Chantraine: 27; Lejeune 1963: 7.

⁶² Wathelet 2008: 12; Tsopanakis 1979. The name Aeacus has been interpreted 'as signifying the Man or Son, of Earth' (Hutchinson 1901: 6).

⁶³ Part I 65-6.

⁶⁴ Wilamowitz 1884: 245; Kanavou 2015: 43. The connection is noted by the scholiast of Σ(T) Φ 189.

⁶⁵ Pindar (*Isth.* 6.52-4.) derives *Αἶας* from *αἰετός* (eagle), while Sophocles (*Aj.* 430-2) links it to *αἶα*, and *αἰάζω* (wail). Furthermore, a tradition, first attested in a poem by Euphorion (fr. 40-3), but which may possibly go back to earlier times, relates that the hyacinth sprang from Ajax's blood, and that, for this reason, the flower has the letters *ai ai* inscribed on it. See Alaux 2000: 50-2; Svenbro 2004; Scheid and Svenbro 2014.

⁶⁶ Lejeune 1963: 8. For a good overview of the different significations that the name Ajax can take, see Kanavou 2015: 36-44.

Telamonian Ajax stands out from other heroes in height, might, and beauty.⁶⁷ His namesake is much shorter, and is characterised by his swiftness.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the former is associated with his unique tower shield, while the latter fights with bow and arrows, and wears no heavy armour.⁶⁹

What is particular about their homonymy, however, is the use of their name in the dual form Αἶαντες.⁷⁰ As Wackernagel first noted, this use of the dual is irregular, because the dual is normally employed to designate two individuals or things that form a pair (like two eyes, two feet, two brothers), and the two Ajaxes have nothing in common except their name.⁷¹ Moreover, it has convincingly been shown that there was an old Indo-European usage of the dual that Nagy calls ‘elliptical dual’.⁷² In this case, one element is named ‘as a way of elliptically including the other.’⁷³ What is truly problematic, however, is the fact that Αἶαντες, at times, unambiguously means the two Ajaxes, while clearly referring, in other circumstances, to Ajax and Teucer, instead of the two Ajaxes.⁷⁴ Furthermore, it can equally mean one or the other in some limit cases. How can this discrepancy be explained?

The *opinio communis* holds that originally Αἶαντες meant Ajax and Teucer.⁷⁵ Two scenarios have been proposed to explain what happened. According to the first one, only one Ajax initially existed, and Αἶαντες was used to refer to him, when he was accompanied by his brother. When the dual started to fall into disuse, Αἶαντες started to be misunderstood, which led to the creation of a second Ajax.⁷⁶ As it then became necessary to distinguish between the two heroes in order to avoid confusion, the personality of each Ajax evolved in different directions. This, in turn, resulted in two homonymous characters with

⁶⁷ B 768-9; Γ 229; H 226-32; N 321-5; P 279-80; λ 469-70; 550-1; ω 17-8. Tzetzes notes his good nose, and beautiful beard (*Exegesis in Homeri Iliadem* Prol. 682-5).

⁶⁸ B 527-9.

⁶⁹ Kirk 1985: 201.

⁷⁰ Θ 262-6; M 335-414; N: 46. P 707.

⁷¹ Wackernagel 1877; Page 1959: 236; Ebbott 2003: 41; West 2011a. There is another case in the *Iliad* of a name in the dual case used to refer to two people: Μολίωνε at Λ 709; 750. However, in this case, the dual refer to the twins Kteatos and Eurotos, through the name of their grandfather Molos (Hainsworth 1993: 304).

⁷² Nagy 1997: 175-83. Cf. also Frame 1978: 141-2 about possible mortal/immortal opposition between the two members of the pair; Von der Mühl 1930 and Edgeworth 1985: 27-29 about Ajax and Teucer as originally a semi-divine or heroic pair.

⁷³ Ebbott 2003: 43.

⁷⁴ Δ 273; H 179-80; N 197. Cf. Wackernagel 1877: 302-10; Page 1959: 235-8. It should also be noted that Teucer is absent from the Catalogue of Ships.

⁷⁵ Wathelet 1988: 248-50; Mühlestein 1967: 48-9.

⁷⁶ Wathelet 2008. The advantage of this theory consists in offering a reason that explains why Telamon's name might originally rests on a misunderstanding of the epithet μέγας Τελαμώνιος. If Ajax was originally one character that divided into two, it follows that one of them would have needed a genealogy from scratch. Τελαμώνιος would have thus been reinterpreted as ‘of Telamon; son of Telamon’ rather than ‘with the baldric’ (Aitchison 1964). The scenario is possible although inconclusive. I find it particularly difficult to form any precise idea regarding the approximate date of such changes.

rather opposite distinctive features.⁷⁷ The second scenario is similar but posits the existence of two Ajaxes and Teucer from the start. In this case, the ambiguity of the term Αἰάντε results from a lexical widening of the traditional meaning (Ajax and Teucer), induced by the homonymy between the names of the two heroes. Both hypotheses are plausible.⁷⁸ I incline towards the first scenario, as I find it tempting to suppose that two distinct and irreconcilable Ajaxes emerged from the same tradition, following on the waves of emigration from mainland Greece that took place between c. 1125 and 800 BCE.⁷⁹ One could imagine, for instance, that the Salaminian elite who left their island at the end of the Mycenaean period split into two groups (or more?), and settled in different locations: possibly Cyprian Salamis and Locris.⁸⁰

The question might seem trivial, but it so happens that there is a series of curious parallels between the stories of the two Ajaxes, which are worth exploring. We shall do this at the end of Part I, once we have finished discussing the constitutive features and motifs that characterise the figure of Ajax in early Greek epic, in the following section.

Ἑπταβόειον σάκος

Αἴας δὲ κλονέει Τελαμῶνιος· εὐ δέ μιν ἐγνων·
εὐρύ γάρ ἀμφ' ὠμοῖσιν ἔχει σάκος·

Λ 526-7

One of the central arguments advanced by scholars to assert that the figure of Ajax goes back to early Mycenaean traditions is based on the identification of the unique shield he wields (σάκος ἥντε πύργον) with the Mycenaean 'tower-shield'.⁸¹ There is indeed a notable connection between Ajax and his weapon, as they appear to be indivisible.⁸² Even his distinctive fighting style is conditioned by the artefact: amongst

⁷⁷ The Lesser Ajax is notably short and quick, while Greater Ajax is tall (although not particularly slow). The two Ajaxes are carefully distinguished from one another in the Catalogue of Ships at B 527-9.

⁷⁸ The real bone of contention, however, lies in whether the poet of the *Iliad* is aware of this double meaning or not, and the implications this has on one's conception of the genesis of the poem.

⁷⁹ 'It is not unlikely that essential elements of what became the myth of the Trojan War began in the Bronze Age and developed as Greek tribes undertook a series of migrations in the post-Mycenaean period' (Burgess 2001: 2). See also Dickinson 2006: 1

⁸⁰ Interestingly enough, Hutchinson (1901: 19) posits a unique hero Phocus son of Aeacus, and Phocus, son of Ornytion also stems from one original Aeginetan Phocus.

⁸¹ Lorimer 1950: 181 ff.; Webster 1958: 101-2; 105; 169.

⁸² For instance, Hector's charioteer, Cebriones, recognises Ajax on the battlefield owing to his large shield (Λ 526-7).

all the other heroes of the *Iliad*, Ajax is the only character who recurrently fights in pairs with an archer, his brother Teucer (or the Lesser Ajax) who takes refuge behind his shield.⁸³

The shield is full-body size and made of seven layers of bull hide (ἐπταβόειον). Tychios of Hyle, in Boeotia, reportedly crafted it.⁸⁴ Ajax sometimes carries it on his back, with a τελαμών, when he fights with a sword.⁸⁵ Alternatively, some of his followers carry it for him.⁸⁶ It is usually considered to be a relic of early Mycenaean or/and Minoan warfare, and, accordingly, has been identified with the Bronze Age 'tower-shield',⁸⁷ which is attested in early Mycenaean iconography (FIGURE 3, 7), although no example of the artefact has been recovered. One can also see an archer hiding behind a similar shield in a hunt scene represented on a c. sixteenth-century dagger (FIGURE 4). Obviously, Ajax's shield could also simply correspond to an old and obsolete artefact which a poet came across at a time when it had already fallen out of use, rather than one whose memory and function has been crystallised and preserved only by oral poetry. In this case, its incorporation into tradition would translate contemporary fantasy about the past



FIGURE 3

Minoan fresco from Akrotiri, c. sixteenth century with soldiers wearing boar tusk helmets, and wielding cowhide body-size shields

⁸³ Θ 266-72. On archers fighting in conjunction with spear-and-shield-wielding warriors, see Kelly 2007: 263-4.

⁸⁴ H: 220-3. Concerning Tychios as a cobbler known by Homer, see *Vit. Hom.* 26.

⁸⁵ Ξ 403-5.

⁸⁶ Ν 13.

⁸⁷ This type of shield seems to have been 'current in the sixteenth century but unrepresented after the twelfth' (Greenhalgh 1973: 157-8).



FIGURE 4

Detail from the 'lion hunt' dagger, c. sixteenth-century BCE

rather than reflect actual *realia*.⁸⁸ The boar tusk helmet provides a good example.⁸⁹ While it is carefully described at K 260-71 (so much so that it was immediately identifiable to archaeologists, when they first excavated one), the description does not require any prior knowledge of the object. This means that its presence in the *Iliad* does not necessarily imply that poets passed on the memory of the way it was wielded in the early Mycenaean period through formulaic language. A poet could have made a contemporary description of a very old object accurately, without possessing any knowledge of its original use.⁹⁰

However, this case differs from the 'tower-shield' on two crucial points. Firstly, the boar tusk helmet is still attested in the tenth century (**FIGURE 5**).⁹¹ Secondly, the single description, made of it in the *Iliad*, does not presuppose any specialist knowledge concerning the manner in which a warrior would have used it. By contrast, the tower-shield had apparently ceased to exist by the fourteenth century;⁹² at any rate, no material evidence has yet been recovered that attest to its use after this time. Furthermore, little is said about the outward appearance of Ajax's shield in the passages that refer to it. They give a profusion of details regarding how it was wielded, and this suggests that it is modelled after some kind of reality.⁹³ Could the formulaic system of epic poetry really have preserved the memory of this elaborate

⁸⁸ See Finley 1964 [=1956]; Vermeule 1964; Dickinson 1986: 20-37.

⁸⁹ Petrakis 2006: 373; 'Athena's lamp' equally (Cook 1995: 163-8) [2006].

⁹⁰ 'Il ne fut jamais d'un usage très courant et il dut être toujours réservé aux personnages de haut rang' (Santerre and Tréheux 1947: 157).

⁹¹ See Kirk 1965: 75; Sage 1996: 9. The Mycenaean warrior with a boar tusk helmet carved on an ivory plaque (**FIGURE 5**) has been found in the foundation deposit of the temple of Artemis in Delos (which dates from c. seventh century BCE), but the object itself was probably crafted between the fourteenth and the thirteenth century. Interestingly, burying artefacts or pieces of metal in a foundation deposit is practice that originates from Mesopotamia. See Santerre and Tréheux 1947: 156-62.

⁹² Sage 1996: 9.

⁹³ When Ajax fights in pairs with Teucer, the latter hides behind it with his bow and arrows (Θ 266-72); Ajax can carry the shield on his back with a *telamon* (Λ 526-7); When Ajax becomes exhausted, his followers would carry it for him (Ν 709-11).



FIGURE 5

Mino-Mycenaean warrior carved on an ivory plaque, Delos.



FIGURE 6

Warrior with a Boeotian shield held on his back held by a telamon, Karditsa (Thessaly).

fighting technique for, roughly, six hundred years?⁹⁴ This seems rather unlikely. It has also been argued that Ajax's shield could in reality be the eighth-century Boeotian shield (FIGURE 6). This is possible, although there is certainly nothing unique about this shield, and several other heroes are represented with it. The theory fails to explain the idiosyncrasy of Ajax's use of a shield.

Another parallel exists in Assyrian art (FIGURE 7). Pairs of warriors, fighting in a manner strikingly similar to that of Ajax and Teucer, are often depicted on reliefs from Nineveh. Lorimer also notices the similarity,⁹⁵ but she dismisses it on the ground that Teucer is often described squatting behind Ajax and not standing as the second fighter on these Assyrian friezes.⁹⁶ I doubt that this constitutes a valid objection. Although Mesopotamia is very far from Greece, we know from Assyrian sources that they had contacts with the Ionians, as they had been militarily involved with them at certain times.⁹⁷ Cyprus appears to have been an important place of contact. Archaeological findings suggest that both Assyrian

⁹⁴ The case of the bow is revealing in this regard. Bows were hardly used in late Bronze age, and only became more common from the eighth century onwards. However, 'the bow as described in the *Iliad* could never have been used' (Sage 1996: 10).

⁹⁵ Lorimer 1950: 297.

⁹⁶ These reliefs are part of the British Museum's collection. A careful observation of the representation of the shield itself makes the parallel more compelling, as it is possible to count seven layers, with an eighth thinner one perhaps corresponding to the metal coating. It cannot be ruled out, however, that what I take to depict layers is the stylised representation of something else (width for instance?).

⁹⁷ Luraghi 2006.

and Greeks were active on the island during the eighth and seventh centuries.⁹⁸ Furthermore, Burkert, who makes a strong case for Near Eastern influence on early Greek hexameter poetry, even argues that the *Cypria* were probably composed in Cyprus, which was at the time one of the major centres where multiculturalism flourished.⁹⁹ It may not be a coincidence that Teucer is the mythical founder of Cyprian Salamis. For what it is worth, a small terracotta figure from Cyprus dating between the seventh and sixth century BCE seems to represent two warriors fighting in a manner reminiscent of Ajax's and Teucer's one (FIGURE 8). The character on the left appears to be fighting with a shield and spear, while the one on the right is shown squatting (depicted in a slightly naïve manner), as he probably held a bow. I take the object on his back to be his quiver.



FIGURE 7
Detail from the wall-reliefs of Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh (700-692 BCE)

⁹⁸ See Iacovou 2008: 625-48. By analysing balance weight from Lefkandi, Kroll (2008) demonstrates long-term continuity of trading with the Cypro-Levantine world with Euboean participation from at least the ninth century.

⁹⁹ Burkert 1992, 2005; Dupont-Sommer 1974: 87; Karageorghis 1988: 152; Kearsley 1999; Iacovou 2006; Steele 2013: 1; Bremmer 2015b.



FIGURE 8

* * *

It thus turns out that the view according to which Ajax belonged to the early Mycenaean period does not hold. Although some of the arguments advanced in favour of this position have some weight, none of them are definitive. Furthermore, the fact that Mycenaean Salamis prospered in the late Bronze Age leads me to think that if one wanted to identify the period from which the 'original' Telamonian Ajax dates, it would be more reasonable to suppose that his existence coincided with the time of Kanakia.

DEFINING FEATURES OF AJAX'S *GESTA* IN EARLY HEXAMETER POETRY

– μὴ δὴ ἄγε τὸν Παλαμῆδην ἐς Ἴλιον, μὴδὲ στρατιώτῃ χρώ,
μὴδὲ ὅτι σοφὸς ἦν εἴπηρ. ἐροῦσι μὲν γὰρ ἕτεροι ποιηταί,
πιθανὰ δὲ οὐ δόξει μὴ σοὶ εἰρημένα.
– αὕτη, ξένη, ἢ Ὀδυσσέως τε καὶ Ὀμήρου ξυνουσία, καὶ
οὕτως Ὀμηρος τὰ ἀληθῆ μὲν ἔμαθε, μετεκόσμησε δὲ πολλὰ
ἐς τὸ συμφέρον τοῦ λόγου ὃν ὑπέθετο.
– Philostratus, *Heroicus*: XLIII 15-6

Iconographic evidence suggests that the rescue of Achilles' body and Ajax's suicide were the defining episodes of the hero's *gesta* up until c. 550, as painters systematically appear to prefer depicting these two scenes instead of others. Not even a single archaic representation of Ajax in art – be it on pottery, bronze shields or monuments – depicts a scene rehearsed in the *Iliad*. This is telling, especially given his popularity as attested by the number of artefacts dating from the early archaic period on which he is depicted. It is probably not a coincidence that the popularity of these two non-Iliadic scenes decreases, just as the Homeric poems start inspiring painters.¹⁰⁰

This ties in neatly with the conclusions drawn by Burgess and Lowenstam regarding the scarcity of Homeric scenes in archaic art. No matter when the Homeric poems were composed, it seems that other poetical traditions were more widely diffused and popular, at least until at least the end of the sixth century.¹⁰¹ It thus follows that the expectations of the first audiences receiving the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had been shaped and influenced by those other epic traditions.¹⁰² For this reason, in what follows, my observations rest on the premise that the poet(s) of the Homeric poems is adapting and actively engaging

¹⁰⁰ The discussion of the material has been incorporated into the main arguments of Part I.

¹⁰¹ Lowenstam 1992, 1997; Burgess: 2001: 43-4. Kelly (2015a) argues that already in the first half of the sixth century the Homeric poems are perceived as stable poems by Stesichorus, as he interacts with them in a manner that is close to what we would call 'intertextual'. Even if he is right, it does not change the point that overall it is poems representing the larger epic tradition of the Trojan War and not the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* which appear to be most influential in the sixth century.

¹⁰² See Lowenstam 1992; Snodgrass 1998; Burgess 2001.

with the larger mythical tradition of the Trojan war.¹⁰³ This is suggested by the self-reflexive quality of the poems.¹⁰⁴ What then were their expectations about Ajax? And how are these expectations met by the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*? These two questions shall occupy us until the end of Part I.

The Genealogy of Ajax

Mistake me not, for sure, Aeacides
Was Ajax, called so from his grandfather
– Shakespeare, *Taming of the Shrew*

Ajax unmistakably is the son of Telamon in the *Iliad*, but no further indication is given about his lineage. This is very peculiar, for the father and grandfather(s) of all other important heroes are mentioned at some point in the Homeric poems.¹⁰⁵ Achilles, Agamemnon, Menelaus, Diomedes, Odysseus, Idomeneus, Nestor,¹⁰⁶ Hector and his brothers, Sarpedon, Glaucus and Aeneas all have their paternal grandfather named.¹⁰⁷ The only other exception is the Lesser Ajax, but the neglect is less striking, since the latter is not as important as his namesake.¹⁰⁸ In this section, I will argue that the tradition according to which Ajax was an Aeacid is probably pre-Homeric, and that the silence of the *Iliad* on the question does not disprove this view.

Telamon's father is almost unanimously reported to be Aeacus, which makes him the brother of Peleus. Our earliest decisive piece of evidence attesting to this only comes from Pindar's ἐπινίκια,¹⁰⁹ but

¹⁰³ By and large, my position differs from that of Neo-Analysts in that I do not see the need to posit the existence of written texts so that close interactions between the Homeric poems and other traditions could have taken place. Artistic representations show that the episode of Ajax's suicide had come into existence by the end of the eighth century, while we know that it was recounted in the *Aethiopis* and the *Ilias Parva*. See Kelly 2015b: 321. The exact date of these poems is not particularly important for our purpose, in as much as they are evidence of traditions that can be traced back to the eighth century, which are presupposed in the Homeric poems.

¹⁰⁴ On self-reflexivity in the Homeric poems, see, for instance, Goldhill 1991: 57n98; Segal 1994; Peradotto 1996.

¹⁰⁵ With no overlap, as is to be expected, according to Monro's law. Monro's law (1901: 325) states that the *Odyssey* 'never repeats or refers to any incident in the *Iliad*'. On the different ways this law has been interpreted, see Gumpert 2001: 11.

¹⁰⁶ Nestor's lineage is only given in details in the *Odyssey* but Nestor is a special case because he is from a previous generation than the other heroes of the *Iliad*. He came to Troy with his son Antilochus, so we actually have a lineage of three generations in his family as well.

¹⁰⁷ Achilles in B 860 (he is named Αἰακίδαο nineteen times, while Αἰακίδης is used five times but usually for Peleus), Agamemnon and Menelaus in B 104, Diomedes in E 813 and K 497, Odysseus in ξ 182, π 118 (Autolycus is mentioned in K 267, Idomeneus in N 452, Nestor in λ 235-60, Hector and his brothers in Υ 236, Sarpedon in Ζ 196-9, Glaucus in Ζ 196-7, 206, and Aeneas in Υ 239).

¹⁰⁸ The Lesser Ajax is presented as inferior to Telamonian Ajax in his own entry of the Catalogue of Ships (B 527-9). The absence of the Lesser Ajax's genealogy may perhaps be explained by the fact that the two Ajaxes may originally have been one single character. The issue is discussed at the end of the section: 64-6.

¹⁰⁹ Ajax and Telamon are considered to be members of the Aeacidae family throughout Pindar's poems. See Part II: 77. Interestingly, not a single scholion on Pindar's ἐπινίκια notes that the poet is innovating when he includes Ajax and Telamon among the Aeacidae.

two earlier sources suggest, although not conclusively, that Peleus and Telamon were considered to be siblings before the fifth century. The first one is fr. 1 *PEG* of the *Alcmeonis*:¹¹⁰

ἐνθα μιν ἀντίθεος Τελαμών τροχοιδεῖ δίσκῳ
πλῆξε κάρη, Πηλεὺς δὲ θοῶς ἐνὶ χειρὶ τινάξας
ἄξινην εὐχαλκον ἐπεπλήγει μέσα νῶτα. 1

Telamon's and Peleus' kinship is not specified in the fragment, but the circumstances that are recounted are well-known, and seem to imply that the two heroes were brothers in the poem. As a matter of fact, these lines clearly belong to an account of Phocus' murder at the hands of Telamon and Peleus, who are normally held to be his half-brothers.¹¹¹ The myth is particularly important in the *gesta* of both heroes, as it explains why they were exiled from Aegina.¹¹² The second one is fr. 387, by Alcaeus:

Κρονίδα βασιλῆος γένος Αἴαν τὸν ἄριστον πεδ' Ἀχιλλεα

One can infer that Ajax is an Aeacid because it is only through Aeacus that he descends from Zeus. Furthermore, ὁ ἄριστος πεδ' Ἀχιλλεα undoubtedly is a shorter variant of two recurring Homeric lines that typically qualifies Ajax: (...) ἄριστος ἔην εἰδός τε δέμας τε | τῶν ἄλλων Δαναῶν μετ' ἀμύμονα Πηλεΐωνα.¹¹³ Consequently, we can be certain that Alcaeus is alluding to Telamonian (and not Oilean) Ajax.

There is, however, one ancient author who attributes a different lineage to Telamon. According to Pherecydes (fl. 450 BCE), he was the son of Actaeus and Glauce, the daughter of Cychreus, king of Salamis:

¹¹⁰ Debiassi (2015: 277-8) places the *terminus ante quem* of the poem in the second half of the seventh century, if not the beginning of the sixth century, and 'locates its likely origin in the Corinthian cultural environment at the time of the Cypselids'. This is interesting because Miltiades was probably related to Cypselus (*APF* 295).

¹¹¹ Pindar alludes to the story in *Nem.* 5.9-13.

¹¹² One may argue that they could also simply be friends, but it would then be difficult to explain why Telamon would accept to help his friend kill Phocus, since Peleus had apparently no other motif for murdering his brother than the jealousy he felt towards him because of his superiority in athletic sports. (Apollod. *Bibl.* III 6-7; Paus. XXIX 2-3). Phocus is mentioned in Hes. *Theog.* 1003-5 as the son of the Nereid Psamathe and Aeacus, while Peleus is then named in the following line in the course of an account of his marriage to Thetis. However, his kinship with Aeacus or Phocus is not stressed. Telamon does not feature in the *Theogony*, but this is to be expected, since he does not have the privilege to be the son or the husband of a goddess.

¹¹³ Σ Heph. 34.21. The formula (or variants of it) is found at P 280; λ 470, 551; ω 18. It is also used at B 674 for the handsome Nireus (with the superlative κάλλιστος instead of ἄριστος). Hermippus adapted it into a parody written in dactylic hexameter (fr. 77.4-5 [*PCG*]).

Φερεκύδης δέ φησι Τελαμῶνα φίλον, οὐκ ἀδελφὸν Πηλέως εἶναι, ἀλλ'
Ἀκταίου παῖδα καὶ Γλαύκης τῆς Κυχρέως.¹¹⁴

Since Pherecydes is known to have written Philaid propaganda,¹¹⁵ it is very likely that this alternative lineage is a local tradition forged by him. The aim probably was to strengthen Cimon's influence in Athens, by dissociating Telamon and Ajax (whom his family claimed as ancestors) from the Aeacidae, and thus from Aegina.¹¹⁶ For this reason, Pherecydes created a genealogy in which Telamon was by birth Salaminian through his mother's side, and Athenian through his father's (Actaeus is the name of the first Athenian king).¹¹⁷ Fowler suggests that Pherecydes may also have aimed at divorcing Telamon and Ajax from Megara.¹¹⁸ The theory is appealing, but impossible to prove, since we do not know the identity of Telamon's wife in his genealogy.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the contention between Athens and Megara over Salamis is important over the course of the sixth century, but not particularly so in the fifth century anymore.¹²⁰ He might be right, however, that Megara was also targeted in some ways, although the manoeuvre would then be more similar to a mechanism of appropriation than to one of dissociation: by constructing an Atheno-Salaminian Ajax, the Athenians could potentially have laid a claim on the Megarid, in virtue of the fact that the hero technically is the heir to the Megarian king Alcathous.¹²¹ Finally, it is worth signalling that in fr. 60 Pherecydes still makes Telamon and Peleus friends in his account, which suggests that their traditional association could probably not be completely overlooked.

Since we have established that no alternative to Ajax's Aeacid lineage exists, and that his pedigree was probably recognised throughout the Panhellenic community from at least the end of the seventh century onwards, the whole argument can now be distilled into the following alternatives: (i) the tradition

¹¹⁴ Apollod. *Bibl.* III 158 = Pherec. fr. 60.

¹¹⁵ This is made apparent by fr. 2. On the question, see Fowler 2013: 476.

¹¹⁶ Fowler 2013: 713. On the Athenians' particular interest in Ajax, see Kowalzig 2006: 88-91.

¹¹⁷ Paus. I 2.5. See Kron 1976: 171-2.

¹¹⁸ Fowler 2013: 479.

¹¹⁹ The Megarians also claimed Ajax through his maternal line, as his mother Eriboia/Periboia was the daughter of Alcathous. She is named Epiiboia on the François vase. Theseus may have been Ajax's father in Pherecydes (Toepffer 1889: 271; Kron 1988: 301-2), for he is reportedly married to Phereboia (amongst other women) in fr. 153. Furthermore, according to Athenaeus (XIII 557), Istros (*FrHist* 334 fr. 10) calls Ajax's mother by Theseus Meliboia. Both Phereboia and Meliboia are probably variants of Eriboia rather than a different character (Fowler 2013: 479). It must be noted, however, that Plutarch (*Thes.* 28-9) explicitly states that Phereboia should not be confounded with Periboia, mother of Ajax, but he might think so, simply because it was inconceivable for him that Ajax could have another father than Telamon.

¹²⁰ Furthermore, the relationship between Athens and Megara is particularly warm during this period, as the latter even defects from the Peloponnesian League, c. 460, and becomes Athens' ally (Thuc. I 103) until after Athens' defeat at Coronea in c. 447 (Thuc. I 114).

¹²¹ Wickersham 1991: 24.

is post-Homeric and, accordingly, we have to postulate that the hero's genealogy remained lacunose until he was claimed by the Aeginetans and turned into a descendant of Aeacus; (ii) the tradition is pre-Homeric, and we must accordingly seek to explain the silence of the *Iliad* on the matter.

The first scenario is highly improbable, for it implies that Ajax and Telamon were not attached to any family until after the crystallisation of the *Iliad*.¹²² Even if one posits an eighth century *Iliad*, as do Powell or Janko,¹²³ the great variety of Ajax's epithets, and his presence on pots already attested in the early archaic period clearly indicate that he must have belonged to the tradition of the Trojan War for quite a while by then. This means that he would still have remained without ancestor or descendants for a long time,¹²⁴ and this is something that is simply inconceivable for a major epic hero, for epic poems like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are precisely concerned about the preservation of the memory of one's lineage. A hero without a lineage is like Plato without Ideas.

The second scenario is far more likely.¹²⁵ The difficulty, however, is that we have only shown its plausibility through an *argumentum ex silentio*. Consequently, we shall now examine possible signs of Ajax's Aeacid lineage in the Homeric poems in order to strengthen the case.

¹²² This did not escape Page (1959: 147, 257 ff.) who tries to solve the problem by supposing that Ajax is a hero who belonged to much older mythological cycles, and that he was artificially inserted into the tradition of the Trojan War. According to this scenario, Ajax does not belong to any heroic family in the *Iliad* because he is inorganic to the mythological material used in the poem. This has led commentators to suppose that Telamon is a made up character created from Ajax's epithet Τελαμώνιος, which originally meant 'armed with a Telamon' and not 'son of Telamon' (Anselmi 1998). This is ingenious but as discussed in Part I: 19-27, none of the arguments put forward to prove Ajax's antiquity (*i.e.* as a hero from the early Mycenaean period) hold, and the excavations in Salamis do not corroborate this thesis.

¹²³ For instance in Powell 1997 and in Janko 2012.

¹²⁴ Philaios is first attested as the son of Ajax, and the first member of his line to dwell in Athens in Hdt. VI 35 as well as in Pherec. fr. 149. As for Eurysaces, he is first mentioned in Sophocles' *Ajax*, but we know that there was an Εὐρυσάκειον in Melite. Kearns (1989: 82) suggests that it may have been linked with Ajax over the course of the sixth century to strengthen Athens' claim over Salamis. See Ferguson 1938; Wycherley 1957: 90-3. Ajax's mother is first referred to in Bacchyl. *Ode* 13 as Ἐπίβοια, but she may already appear on the François Vase (570/60 BCE) as ΕΠΙΒΟΙΑ (Simon and Hirmer 1981: 73-4). Ajax's legitimate wife, Lysidice, who is the mother of Philaios is only named by late sources (Hdn. III/1 68.11; Steph. Byz. *s.v.* Φιλαῖδαι; Tzetz. Σ Lyc. 53, *Chil* III 76). See Dolcetti 2011: 349-51. However, it must be noted that Heraclides Ponticus (fourth century BCE) mentions that the real name of Periander's wife precisely was Lysidice (fr. 144). Given that the Philaidae were related to Periander's family, probably through the marriage of a female Philaid to a male Cypselid (Wade-Gery 1958: 194 n.3; *APF* 299), it is tempting to identify this Lysidice as a Philaid. If this is true, the tradition of Ajax's legitimate wife was probably already current by the end of the seventh century. Finally, Eurysaces' mother, Tecmessa, is first attested in Sophocles' *Ajax*, although she is perhaps depicted on an early fifth century vase (*LIMC* Aias I 140) according to Shefton (1973).

¹²⁵ One may protest that the epithet Αἰακίδης/Αἰακίδαο exclusively qualifies Achilles (and to a lesser extent Peleus) in the Homeric poems, but a comparison with the use of Τελαμώνιος/Τελαμωνιάδαο shows that the argument is not as strong as one might suspect. When looking at all the 41 occurrences of Τελαμώνιος/Τελαμωνιάδαο in the poem, one notices that the designation applies only twice to Teucer – although he equally is the son of Telamon – while all of the 39 other occurrences qualify Ajax. Furthermore, the variant Τελαμωνιάδαο, is exclusively used for Ajax. In M 349-50, 362-63, Τελαμώνιος only qualifies Ajax, even though Teucer is named in the following line. Hence, if we draw a parallel, it appears that the fact that only Achilles is called Αἰακίδης/Αἰακίδαο probably does not, for all that, exclude Ajax from the Aeacidae, since no alternative lineage is given. In fact, cousinship is seldom mentioned, as the case of Glaucus and Sarpedon shows.

Ajax and Achilles share many attributes and functions that are constitutive of their heroic identity, something that can be noticed throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. For instance, they occupy a parallel position in the Greek army, as their huts are located at each of its ends:

ἦ ῥ' ἐν μεσσήτῳ ἔσκε γεγωνέμεν ἀμφοτέρωσσε,
 ἡμὲν ἐπ' Αἴαντος κλισίας Τελαμωνιάδῃ
 ἡδ' ἐπ' Ἀχιλλῆος, τοί ῥ' ἔσχατα νῆας εἴσας
 εἵρυσαν, ἡγορέῃ πίσυνοι καὶ κάρτεϊ χειρῶν. Θ 223-6; Λ 6-9

Moreover, they are the best warriors among the Achaeans, and the only ones able to stand up to Hector.¹²⁶ When Achilles, upon hearing of Patroclus' death, tells Iris that he no longer has a weapon to fight with, he states that the only other weapon that he could use is Ajax's shield:

ἄλλου δ' οὐ τευ οἶδα τεύ' ἂν κλυτὰ τεύχεα δύω,
 εἰ μὴ Αἴαντός γε σάκος Τελαμωνιάδῃ. Σ 192-3

Achilles' remark hints at the fact that both of them were traditionally very tall, and thus that only Ajax's shield would have been big enough for Achilles, which is likely a sign of their kinship.¹²⁷

In the *Odyssey*, they are singled out along with Patroclus and Antilochus as belonging to a distinct group of heroes, whom Nestor calls the ἄριστοι: the best fighters among the Greeks who all died at Troy. In this respect, the four characters are expectedly represented together in Hades in both the *Νεκυία* and *Ψυχοπομπία*. However, if it seems natural to find Patroclus and Antilochus in Achilles' entourage, the inclusion of Ajax in the group would be surprising without the knowledge that he is Achilles' kin in his capacity as Aeacid.¹²⁸ This probably also explains why Ajax to some extent succeeds in reaching out to Achilles during the *Πρεσβεία*, while he is otherwise never directly associated with the hero in the whole *Iliad*.¹²⁹ Furthermore, the lack of interaction in the poem between the two heroes is only due to the particular circumstances attached to the events that are recounted. Ibycus, for instance, clearly stresses the

¹²⁶ Another warrior, for instance, who is especially impressive in the *Iliad*, is Diomedes, but the parallel that can be drawn between Achilles and him (Kelly 2006) is structural, and thus of a different nature (*pace* Van der Valk: 1952). His *ἀριστεία*, which takes place in E, is of a different nature. After being mortally wounded by Hector, he engages in a fight with Aphrodite and Ares with the help of Athena. In fact, the fight exceeds in some sense the realm of the merely human, and no mortal actually witnesses Diomedes' deeds. As Whitman (1958: 168) states, '[b]oth of these triumphs [Diomedes' victory over Aphrodite and Ares] are full of sound and fury, signifying, if anything, the inconsequence of what is done. Indeed, nothing is really done. Aside from motivating Hector's journey to Troy in the next book, Diomedes' *ἀριστεία* has no effect on the war, and his enormous thundering gradually fades away until he is wounded in A'. See also Hinckley 1972: 215.

¹²⁷ About the parallelism between Achilles and Ajax, see Lissarrague 2007: 21.

¹²⁸ Both Patroclus and Antilochus appear to be Achilles' intimate friends, but no similar proximity is ever represented between Ajax and Achilles. Their kinship is of a different nature.

¹²⁹ Trapp 1961: 272; Lloyd-Jones (1983: 18-9); Arcti 1986: 21; Hainsworth 1993: 141.

traditional connection that exist between Ajax and Achilles, as he pairs them in a passage in which he plays on the Catalogue of Ships:¹³⁰

χ]αλκάσπ[ιδες υἱ]ες Ἀχα[ι]ῶν
 τ]ῶν μὲν πρ[οφ]ερέστατος α[ι]χμᾶι
 ...]. πόδ[ας ὦ]κὺς Ἀχιλλεύς
 καὶ μέ]γας Τ[ελαμ]ώνιος ἄλκι[μος Αἴας
]. ατ[.....]γυρός.
 35
 Ibycus, fr. 1: 31-5

The context is clearly that of the Trojan War, but one can infer from the mention of Troilus in the following lines that the poem refers to a much earlier stage of the story than the *Iliad*, and thus before Achilles decides to stop fighting.

Another sign of Ajax's Aeacid lineage can be seen in his frequent display of ἀλκή, a quality that is specific to this family of heroes, according to Hesiod:¹³¹

ἀλκὴν μὲν γὰρ ἔδωκεν Ὀλύμπιος Αἰακίδῃσι,
 νοῦν δ' Ἀμυθαονίδαις, πλοῦτον δ' ἔπορ' Ἀτρεΐδῃσι.
 Hesiod, fr. 249

Chantraine defines ἀλκή as 'la force qui permet de se défendre', which applies well to Ajax: he saves Odysseus, shields Teucer when they fight together, animates the Achaean defence during Achilles' absence and protects Patroclus' body. Furthermore, the word ἀλκή also appears in a Homeric formula that exclusively apply to Ajax: δὺ' Αἴαντες θοῦριν ἐπιειμένοι ἀλκὴν.¹³² Moreover, in I 39, Diomedes says that Agamemnon did not receive any ἀλκή from Zeus, which seems to corroborate what is stated in fr. 249: he has received πλοῦτος instead of ἀλκή, since he is an Atreid. More recently, Collins has proposed a new definition of the notion of ἀλκή, as a force that possesses the hero on the battlefield and drives him to kill or be killed.¹³³ Again, Ajax meets every expectation that one may have of a hero with ἀλκή bred into him. One implication of Collins' definition is that the hero who is full of ἀλκή should never flee, but ought to

¹³⁰ Despite the lacunae, it is clear that Ajax is named at l. 34 (this can be inferred from T[.....]ωνιος). Since both names are in the nominative, the conjectured καὶ in the lacuna is very likely. Scholars usually assume that Ibycus is engaging with Homer by alluding to the Catalogue of Ships (Hutchinson 2001: 235-6). However, it is probably more accurate to say that Ibycus is playing on epic material stemming from the larger tradition of the Trojan War.

¹³¹ It is reported in *Cat.* fr. 206, that the Aeacidae delight in fighting and in feasting, a feature that Ajax undoubtedly shares.

¹³² H 164, Θ 262, Σ 157. The expression designates the two Ajaxes to be precise. It is probable that δὺ' Αἴαντες θοῦριν ἐπιειμένοι ἀλκὴν originally designated Ajax and his brother (Part I: 20-2), and thus it would only apply to characters of Aeacid descent.

¹³³ Collins 1998: 40.

keep fighting no matter what the outcome turns out to be. Hence, the fact that Ajax is the only hero, besides Achilles, never to retreat from the battlefield is probably a sign of his Aeacid lineage.

For all of these reasons, it seems clear that the tradition that made Telamon and Ajax the direct descendants of Aeacus is not local, but was Panhellenic from early times (and thus probably pre-Homeric) despite the absence of any direct allusion to it in the Homeric poems. It is obviously impossible to present a decisive argument in favour of this view, but the cumulative weight of evidence leans towards this conclusion. As argued in Part I, it seems that many traditional elements are left untold in the *Iliad*, while nothing in the poem directly disproves them. Quite the opposite, the poet(s) is surprisingly consistent with traditional elements that he does not directly mention.

If this hypothesis is correct, it still remains to understand why Ajax is not explicitly made the grandchild of Aeacus in the *Iliad*. I see two possible explanations. One is related to the overall agenda of the poem (and is thus internal to it), while the other implies that the poem was manipulated in the course of its literary tradition (and is thus external to it). The full answer is perhaps a combination of the two.

The first explanation, which is internal to the *Iliad*, is connected to the fact that the poem focuses on the figure of Achilles. Considering that its subject is the hero's μῆνις,¹³⁴ it is only natural that he should be portrayed so as to stand out. Hence, explicitly characterising Ajax as another Aeacid may have weakened the impression that Achilles is unique. It is true that to have Thetis for a mother is what truly makes Achilles special amongst all heroes (not so much so because she is a goddess as because she was destined to give birth to a son that would be stronger than his father, and that she was given in marriage to the best of men),¹³⁵ but to be Aeacus' grandson is nonetheless important since Achilles descends from Zeus by this token, as the hero makes it explicit in Υ 189-91. In fact, it appears that Αἰακίδαο or Αἰακίδης is mainly used in the *Iliad* so as to distinguish Achilles from other heroes, rather than for reminding the audience about his filiation.

The second explanation, which is external to the *Iliad*, presupposes that pieces of information regarding Ajax's genealogy in the poem were deleted, probably for political reasons. This is corroborated by the fact that the hero's entries in the Catalogue of Ships and in the Τειχοσκοπία have manifestly been

¹³⁴ Μῆνις is on a wholly different level from the other Homeric words for 'wrath' (Watkins 1977: 694); it is divine in scope.

¹³⁵ On the Iliadic allusions to this myth, see Slarkin 1995 [1991]: 96-8, 101-4, 108.

pruned.¹³⁶ Moreover, the divergent (and unambiguously Athenian) lineage transmitted by Pherecydes suggests some Athenians were anxious about Ajax's Aeacid kinship, probably because this family of heroes was strongly associated with Aegina. It is true that there is no metrical equivalent among Ajax's epithets for Αἰακίδαο or Αἰακίδης. Hence, it would have been difficult to modify a line in which Ajax was called the grandson of Aeacus. However, it is quite probable that Ajax's ancestry was not expressed through this epithet, like Achilles, for reasons stated above, but that his full lineage appeared once, as is the case for most characters.

An Invulnerable Hero

ὑπερμενὲς ἀκαμαντοχάρμαν Αἴαν

— Pindar, fr. 184

In *Isthmian* 6, Pindar appears to allude to the tradition of an invulnerable Ajax,¹³⁷ as he recounts how Heracles, like a typical *fata* of folklore, barged into Telamon's house to make him come on an expedition. He finds him about to start his nuptial feast,¹³⁸ and hence his friend invites him to join the celebrations, as he holds out a φιάλη to him. Staying in his fairy god father character, he raises his cup, before praying that the newly-wed couple beget a brave son with a nature and θυμός similar to that of the Nemean lion. An eagle appears in the sky, which Heracles understands as the sign that Zeus has granted the request. He then enjoins the future father to name his child Αἴας after the good omen he saw (the αἰετός).¹³⁹ The prayer goes as follow:

τὸν μὲν ἄρρηκτον φύαν, ὥσ-	47
περ τόδε δέρμα με νῦν περιπλανᾶται	
θηρός, ὃν πάμπρωτον ἀέθλων κτεῖν' ἐν Νεμέᾳ	48
θυμὸς δ' ἐπέσθω. ¹⁴⁰	

¹³⁶ Part III: 135-9.

¹³⁷ Privitera 1982: 210.

¹³⁸ The wedding is a conjecture. There is a lacuna at l. 36 which is usually filled by γάμους or γάμον because of the context. See Mühlh 1957: 130-2; Privitera 1982: 208.

¹³⁹ On the etymology of the name Ajax, see. Part I: 12-3. Ajax often has an eagle depicted on his shield (**FIGURE 9**). The folk etymology between Ajax's name and the eagle appears to be well established.

¹⁴⁰ Lines 47-9.

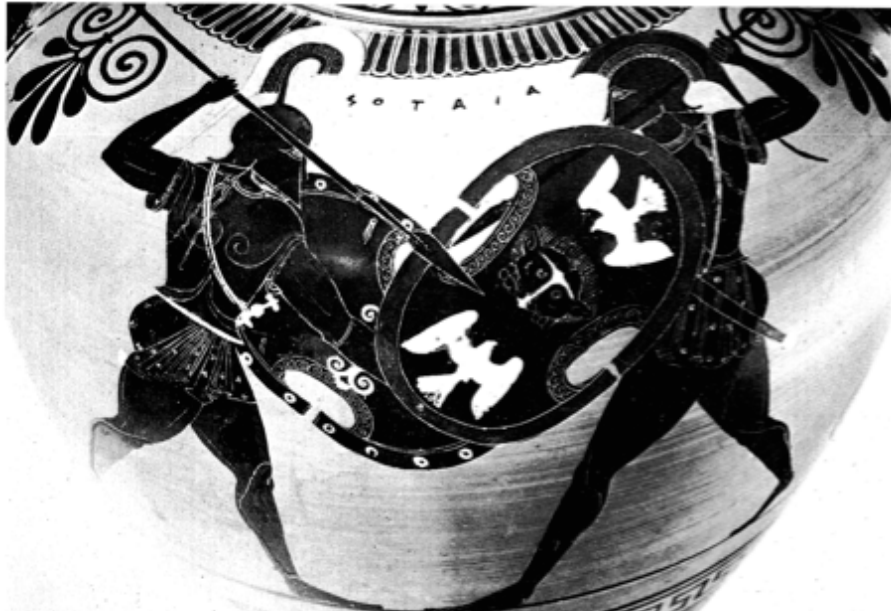


FIGURE 9

If Ajax's nature is 'not to be pierced,' like the skin of the Nemean lion (a creature which was notoriously unassailable, and that Heracles was only able to kill by throttling),¹⁴¹ the hero should accordingly also have an 'unbreakable' nature and, hence, a skin that cannot be wounded.¹⁴² For this reason, the ἄρρηκτος φύα which is bestowed upon Ajax is usually interpreted to refer to a gift of invulnerability.¹⁴³

If one can safely infer that Pindar knew a tradition in which Ajax was invulnerable,¹⁴⁴ the question of his sources is more contentious.¹⁴⁵ In this section, I wish to argue that the motif is pre-Homeric, and belonged to the larger epic tradition of the Trojan War. Furthermore, I shall suggest that the poet(s) of the *Iliad* flirts with it – consciously or unconsciously – in some passages of the poem.

¹⁴¹ Apollodorus is our earliest literary source for the story, but Heracles is already depicted strangling the Nemean lion on vases from the archaic period. Cf. *LIMC* Heracles 1762-1888 (in particular 1762, 1765, and 1775). A bent sword lies on the floor, next to Heracles who is depicted strangling the lion (1882). It must be noted that on one representation of the scene, the lion gets stabbed (1846). Contrary to what Privitera (1982: 210) states, the case is unique, and does not appear to be older than the images on which the lion is strangled. Moreover, it is clearly no standard lion: Hesiod makes it an offspring of Echidna (*Theog.* 325-30).

¹⁴² Invulnerable is the meaning that ἄρρηκτον logically takes when it designates δέρμα. There are two parallels for the expression (Hdt. II 68; *Historia animalium*: 503a 8-11), and in both cases it is used to describe the skin of a crocodile.

¹⁴³ This agrees with the scholiast's interpretation at *Σ Isthm.* 6.67c. Tzetzes equally appears to understand that the passage refers to the story of Ajax's invulnerability: Ἡρακλῆς τῷ τοῦ λέοντος δέρματι τὸν Αἴαντα περιεκάλυπεν, ὅπως ἄτρωτος εἴη. μαρτυρεῖ δὲ τοῦτο καὶ Πίνδαρος (Σ Lyc. 455). For Ajax's invulnerability: Vellay 1935; Bremmer 2015b: 277; If it ever existed during the archaic period, it appears to have disappeared by the end of the fourth century. Pace Severyns (1928: 327) who thinks that the motif only emerged as a consequence of the fact that Ajax is never wounded in the *Iliad*.

¹⁴⁴ Hirshberger (2004: 448-9), D'Alessio (2005: 193-4) and Indergaard (2010: 315-6) argue that Pindar only subtly toys with the motif, by suggesting details in his account that are clearly referring to the Hesiodic tradition, while avoiding any explicit imputation of invulnerability to Ajax. I am sceptical about this explanation, for the expression ἄρρηκτος φύα seems straightforward to me, especially to an audience which was familiar with the story. Φύα, which is a poetic equivalent of φύσις, refers to 'the natural form or constitution of a person or thing as the result of growth' (LSJ s.v. φύσις II). As Bury (1892: 299) notes, it both consists in form and matter. Therefore, if ἄρρηκτος φύα can surely also have a metaphorical meaning (Ajax is going to be someone who never yields), it unambiguously also qualifies the physical quality of Ajax's body.

¹⁴⁵ The question was already discussed during antiquity, as several scholia attest. See, for instance, Vellay 1935 and Severyns 1928: 325-8.

From Σ *Isthm.* 6.53a, we learn that Pindar adapted a story found in the *Megalai Ehoiai*. The poem obviously precedes Pindar's odes, but it is usually considered to date from the late archaic period,¹⁴⁶ and thus does not provide a decisive argument to prove the antiquity of the motif:

εἰληπται δὲ ἐκ τῶν μεγάλων Ἑοιῶν ἡ ἱστορία· ἐκεῖ γὰρ εὕρισκεται
ἐπιξενούμενος ὁ Ἡρακλῆς τῷ Τελαμῶνι καὶ ἐμβαίνων τῇ δορᾷ καὶ εὐχόμενος,
καὶ οὕτως ὁ διόπομπος αἰετὸς, ἀφ' οὗ τὴν προσωνομίαν ἔλαβεν Αἴας.¹⁴⁷

There is, however, more to it. By ἱστορία, the scholiast does not designate the motif of Ajax's invulnerability as such (although the myth does indeed imply its existence) but the circumstances in which he acquired this extraordinary quality.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, if it is possible to infer from this scholion that the myth of *Isthmian* 6 derives from the *Megalai Ehoiai*, it does not necessarily follow from this that the tradition of an invulnerable Ajax was specific to the poem.

We find another clue regarding the diffusion of the motif in Σ(h) Ξ 406. The scholiast contrasts the vulnerable (τρωτός) Ajax in the *Iliad* to the invulnerable (ἄτρωτος) one portrayed by the νεώτεροι:

διὰ τούτων παραδίδωσιν τρωτὸν αὐτὸν ὁ ποιητής, καὶ οὐχ ὡς οἱ νεώτεροι
αὐτὸν ἱστοροῦσιν ἄτρωτον.

It is true that the term νεώτεροι can apply to any author that was believed to have come after Homer (Hesiod, the Cyclic poets, the lyric poets, and the tragedians),¹⁴⁹ and that, consequently, it could simply refer, here, to Hesiod, Pindar, and Aeschylus who is known to have exploited the motif in his *Thracian Women*.¹⁵⁰ However, as Nünlist notes, the expression usually includes the poets of the Cycle, if not stated otherwise; especially in the scholia by Aristarchus in which Homeric mythology is systematically contrasted to 'later' variants, in his scholarly effort to retrieve Homer's uncorrupted text.¹⁵¹

Furthermore, Plato alludes to the story in the *Symposium* in a manner that suggests that he expected his audience to be familiar with it.¹⁵² The same goes for Lycophron who covertly mentions it in

¹⁴⁶ Hirshberger 2004: 83; Janko 2012: 42. West (2012: 240) thinks it might have been composed even later.

¹⁴⁷ = fr. 250 [MW] of the *Megalai Ehoiai*.

¹⁴⁸ Pindar departs from the *Megalai Ehoiai* on several points (Σ *Isthm.* 6.47c, 57, 67b).

¹⁴⁹ Severyns 1928: 31 ff., 49-51, 213 ff.; Valk, van der 1964: 84 ff., 224 ff.; Pfeiffer 1968: 225 ff.; Cingano 1992: 6.

¹⁵⁰ Σ *Aj.* 833a.

¹⁵¹ Nünlist 2009: 14; 258.

¹⁵² *Symposium*, 219E: εὐ γὰρ ἤδη ὅτι χρήμασί γε πολὺ μᾶλλον ἄτρωτος ἢ πανταχῇ ἢ σιδήρῳ ὁ Αἴας, ὃ τε ὥμην αὐτὸν μόνῳ ἀλώσεσθαι, διεπεφεύγει μὲ. Bury (1909:159) and Dover (1980: 172) deny that it does, but parallels show that Plato's σιδήρῳ ἄτρωτος does indeed imply an invulnerable Ajax.

his *Alexandra*.¹⁵³ Furthermore, the scholiast of Σ *Aj.* 833a is intriguingly keen to conciliate the staging of the hero's suicide in the play with the tradition that had him invulnerable, as if he considered it to be the standard version of the myth.¹⁵⁴

It appears that several versions of Ajax's death existed. The following variants are listed in the hypothesis to the *Ajax*, at the lines 54-60:

Διαφόρως δὲ ἱστορήκασι περὶ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ Αἴαντος. οἱ μὲν γάρ φασιν ὅτι
ὑπὸ Πάριδος τρωθεὶς ἦλθεν εἰς τὰς ναῦς αἱμορροῶν, οἱ δὲ ὅτι χρησμὸς ἐδόθη
Τρωσὶ πηλὸν κατ' αὐτοῦ βαλεῖν, σιδήρῳ γὰρ οὐκ ἦν τρωτός, καὶ οὕτω τελευτᾷ· οἱ
δὲ ὅτι αὐτόχειρ αὐτοῦ γέγονεν, ὣν ἔστι καὶ Σοφοκλῆς. περὶ δὲ τῆς πλευρᾶς ὅτι
μόνην αὐτὴν τρωτὴν εἶχεν ἱστορεῖ καὶ Πίνδαρος, ὅτι τὸ μὲν σῶμα, ὅπερ ἐκάλυψεν
ἡ λειοντῆ, ἄτρωτον ἦν, τὸ δὲ μὴ καλυφθέν, ὅπερ ἦν ἡ πλευρά, τρωτὸν ἔμεινε.

In the first version, Ajax dies after being wounded by Paris. The story is unknown, and it is unclear whether it presupposed a vulnerable or an invulnerable Ajax, but the circumstances of his death are strangely similar to that of Achilles.¹⁵⁵ The manner in which he dies is also reminiscent of Talos' death, another invulnerable character from mythology. After being wounded (τρωθεὶς), Ajax is said to die because he is losing blood (αἱμορροῶν), while Talos' (immortal?) blood (ιχώρ) ran out of him from the wound he received at the heel, his only vulnerable spot.¹⁵⁶ The second one also comes from a lost work, but it is possible to infer from a fragment by Sophron that the story was already circulating in the fifth century.¹⁵⁷ In this case, there is good ground for arguing that the myth comprised an invulnerable Ajax.¹⁵⁸ Throwing earth (πηλός) in order to kill someone seems to be a death typical of invulnerable characters: the indestructible Caineus was killed in a similar fashion by Centaurs.¹⁵⁹ Finally, the third variant is the one

¹⁵³ Lyc. 455-7. See Hornblower 2015: 223-4.

¹⁵⁴ In fact, it might even be true that Sophocles chose not to contradict the tradition of Ajax's invulnerability, even though he did not exploit it. Ajax's formulation of how he is going to kill himself, at line 833-4, makes it indeed a likely possibility.

¹⁵⁵ It is usually Achilles rather than Ajax who is considered to be invulnerable (except for his heel). However, the story of his invulnerability does not seem to have existed before the Hellenistic period. Its earliest attestation is found in Statius' *Achilleid*: 133-4; 268-70; 480-1. On the question, see Burgess 1995; 2009: 9ff., 75.

¹⁵⁶ Apollod. *Bibl.* I, 9, 26; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* IV, 1638-1693.

¹⁵⁷ Sophron, fr. 31 K-A. The story is also recounted in Dares (*De Exidio Troiae Historia* XXXV), who adds an intriguing detail: Ajax was fighting without armour, (and he was mortally wounded by Paris whom he managed to kill before returning to the Greek camp where he died as soon as the arrow was taken out of his body).

¹⁵⁸ West 2007: 444-5.

¹⁵⁹ Bremmer 2015b: 277-8. On most archaic and classical pictorial representations of Ajax's suicide (**FIGURE 10**), his sword is planted into a small mound. Could this have any connection with this tradition that had him impervious to iron, but vulnerable to earth (the iron now able to pierce him because it is planted in the earth)?



FIGURE 10

Metope from the temple of Hera in Paestum; Mid-sixth century BCE

that appears to have featured in the *Megalai Ehoiai*, and to which Pindar alludes.¹⁶⁰ Very interestingly, the scholiast also puts Sophocles' version under this category, thereby indirectly hinting, just like Σ *Aj.* 833a, that the hero was expected to be invulnerable by default.

But this is not all. Several variations on the third version of Ajax's death are also recorded. It concerns the location of his only vulnerable spot. In the passage quoted above, it is situated around his side (πλευρά),¹⁶¹ while the scholiast of Σ(D) Ψ 821 places it around his throat (αὐχμήν).¹⁶² When explaining the veiled allusion to Ajax's invulnerability at line 455 of the *Alexandra*, Tzetzes equally records alternative traditions:

¹⁶⁰ The scholiast also mentions Pindar but does not note that his version was apparently slightly different from the one in the *Megalai Ehoiai* (Σ *Isthm.* 6.53a).

¹⁶¹ See **FIGURE 11**. This protocorinthian ἀρύβαλλος (early seventh century BCE) is one of the earliest representations of Ajax. Unlike in most depictions of his suicide, the hero is falling on the sword on his side. This choice makes the position of the hero rather awkward, and may perhaps explain why painters usually depict him falling frontally.

¹⁶² He mentions as well the circumstances in which Ajax was made invulnerable. It is slightly different from the version in Pindar, for the hero is already born when Heracles arrives.

μίαν ὁδὸν φησι πρὸς τὸν Ἄϊδην εἶναι, παρόσον ὑπὸ τοῦ γωρυτοῦ κρυφθεὶς
τόπος τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Αἴαντος τρωτὸς ἦν, τὸ δὲ ἄλλο σῶμα ἄτρωτον.
τοῦτον δὲ οἱ μὲν περὶ τὴν κλεῖδά φασιν εἶναι, οἱ δὲ περὶ τὰ πλευρά, ὡς
Αἰσχύλος ἐν Θρήισσαις φησίν.¹⁶³

Ajax's side (or sides), and his neck are mentioned again,¹⁶⁴ but this time in the same scholion. Furthermore, Tzetzes' use of οἱ μὲν... οἱ δὲ clearly signals that he is referring to two different traditions.

We know that Ajax is likely to have been invulnerable in the following works: the *Megalai Ehoiai*, *Isthmian* 6, and Aeschylus' *Thracian Women*. In the *Megalai Ehoiai* Ajax's fatal spot appears to have been around his side.¹⁶⁵ Pindar, in the extant corpus of his poems, does not explicitly note Ajax's vulnerable spot. In *Nemean* 7. 26, Ajax kills himself by bringing in his sword διὰ φρενῶν. This could seem, *prima facie*, to be yet a different place (if we assume that Pindar had an invulnerable Ajax in mind). The scholiast of Σ *Nem.* 7.39a explains, however, that we are meant to understand that the sword pierces Ajax on his side, and that the blade runs through his thorax upwards until the occipital bone;¹⁶⁶ hence the use of the word φρήν (which can be translated as the midriff). Consequently, it would appear that Pindar's version also follows



FIGURE 11

¹⁶³ He makes a mistake when he stipulates that Ajax is vulnerable around the flanks (περὶ τὰ πλευρά) in the *Thracian Women*. Aeschylus appears to situate the hero's fatal spot at yet another place: μασχάλη (armpit). Cf. Part III: 175-6.

¹⁶⁴ Tzetzes, however, uses a different expression for designating neck: περὶ τὴν κλεῖδά. Literally, it means around the clavicle, which is where the neck starts,

¹⁶⁵ See the *hypothesis* to the *Ajax* (ll. 59-60). Although the *Megalai Ehoiai* is not named, the scholiast mentions the story of the lion skin.

¹⁶⁶ Euphorion, fr. 45 [Lightfoot] which is quoted by the scholiast. Lightfoot (2009: 278-9, n77) suggests that 'this is an attempt to reconcile two traditions about Ajax's wound.'

the *Megalai Ehoiai* in this case. As for Aeschylus, he situates the spot under the armpit (κατὰ τὴν μασχάλην),¹⁶⁷ but this appears to be an innovation he introduces.¹⁶⁸

It follows from this that probably another tradition existed in which Ajax's fatal spot was placed around the neck (in addition to the one in which the Trojans throw earth at him, and perhaps the one in which Ajax was killed by Paris).¹⁶⁹ The potential candidates among the works in which Ajax is known to have featured prominently are the *Aethiopis*, and the *Ilias Parva*,¹⁷⁰ which draw heavily upon pre-Homeric material.¹⁷¹ The fact that so many versions of an invulnerable Ajax circulated is a good indication that the motif belonged to the larger mythical tradition of the Trojan War; especially since it seems to disappear from the fourth century onwards,¹⁷² as the authority of the Homeric poems grew stronger.

In terms of iconographical evidence, an invulnerable Ajax has been thought to be represented on two pots. On the first one (FIGURE 12), which dates from c. 600 BCE,¹⁷³ Ajax is depicted dead, impaled



FIGURE 12

¹⁶⁷ Σ *Aj.* 833; Σ Ξ 404.

¹⁶⁸ Part III: 175-6.

¹⁶⁹ The scholiast mentions the tradition of Ajax being vulnerable only at his throat (ἀγχήν) to explain why the Greeks, fearing for Ajax's life, interrupt his duel against Diomedes during Patroclus' games. Interestingly enough, the story of the death of an almost invulnerable character at some kind of games (like the Scandinavian god Baldr who was only pervious to mistletoe, or the Ossetan hero Soslan who was only vulnerable at the knee or the leg) appears to be an old Indo-European motif, according to Dumézil (1986 [1968]: 423-28).

¹⁷⁰ West considers that an invulnerable Ajax is likely to have featured in the *Aethiopis* (2013: 162). Quintus Smyrnaeus (V 483), who closely imitates Homer, while adapting material from the Epic Cycle in his *Post-Homerica* (Maciver 2012: 7), does not make Ajax invulnerable (as is to be expected from an author striving to be as Homeric as possible), but makes him, nonetheless, kill himself by thrusting his sword δι' ἀγχέος. On the plot of the *Ilias Parva*, see Kelly 2015b: 322-6.

¹⁷¹ Burgess 2001: 7-12; Kullmann 2012: 15; Scodel 2012: 514-5; *pace* West 2013: 135-6.

¹⁷² The *Alexandra* is the only exception, as far as I know. It seems that the motif was transferred onto Achilles in the Hellenistic period, or perhaps even later (Burgess 1995; 2009). Tzetzes' harsh dismissal of it (Σ *Ly.* 455), and rational explanation of its 'invention' is symptomatic of Ancient scholars' attitude towards any tradition that was not explicitly told in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. It would be deemed as post-Homeric, and of little or no value (if it came from a cyclic poem).

¹⁷³ *LIMC* Aias I 120.

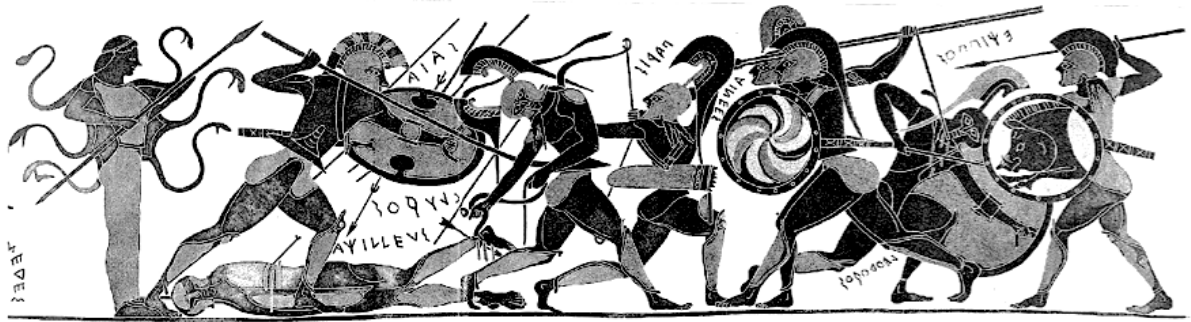


FIGURE 13
550-40 BCE

on his sword. Gantz argues that the sword is split because of his ἄρρηκτον δέρμα,¹⁷⁴ but what he takes for the two parts of the sword seems more likely to represent blood, as the French illustrator who drew the picture on the right understood. The position in which Ajax is represented in this image is standard, especially in protocorinthian art, and does not appear to follow any of the traditions we have mentioned above. Instead of positing yet another version of the hero's death, I think it makes more sense to understand this difference in terms of the particular constraints imposed by the materiality of the medium.

On the second vase (FIGURE 13), Ajax is represented fighting the Trojans alone over the body of Achilles. He is about to kill Glaucus (the names are written), who was trying to attach a lace around Achilles' heel in order to drag his corpse to the Trojans' side. Athena is represented on the left side, but she is rather distant from the scene. Many arrows and spears surround Ajax – and only him – but he does miraculously not appear to sustain any injury, which may be an allusion to his invulnerability.

I now wish to argue that several Illiadic passages which concern Ajax were probably composed for an audience that expected, or was at least familiar with, an invulnerable Ajax. This is obviously not something that can be proved, but I hope that my readings shall constitute another argument in favour of this hypothesis. In the *Iliad*, Ajax is notably never wounded.¹⁷⁵ Although he occupies the battlefield for the longest time in the poem, he is the only major hero whom the Trojans recurrently fail to strike,¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Gantz 1993: 633.

¹⁷⁵ Severyns 1928: 327; Janko 1992: 213 *s.v.* Ξ 402-8; Burgess 1995: 219, n. 6. On non-fatal wounds in the *Iliad*, cf. Neal 2006: 13-45.

¹⁷⁶ Δ 489-91; Π 101-11

unlike Diomedes, Agamemnon, Menelaus, Odysseus, or even Achilles.¹⁷⁷ In Ξ 402-6,¹⁷⁸ Ajax avoids a blow in quite extraordinary circumstances:

Αἴαντος δὲ πρῶτος ἀκόντισε φαίδιμος Ἴκτωρ
 ἔγχει, ἐπεὶ τέτραπτο πρὸς ἰθὺ οἱ, οὐδ' ἀφάμαρτε,
 τῇ ῥα δὺν τελαμῶνε περιστήθεσσι τετάσθην,
 ἥτοι ὁ μὲν σάκεος, ὁ δὲ φασγάνου ἀργυροῦλου·
 τῷ οἱ ῥυσάσθην τέρενα χροά. 405

Hector manages to reach him with his spear, but it strikes him in the place where his two baldrics intersect, which stop it.¹⁷⁹ Griffin observes that 'an un-killable warrior in the *Iliad* is an absurdity' and that 'invulnerability, too, is un-Homeric.'¹⁸⁰ Fantastic elements, which abound in other poetic traditions, seem to be deliberately reduced to the bare minimum in the poem.¹⁸¹ In these conditions, the fact that the two baldrics miraculously prevent Ajax from being wounded may be the translation of his invulnerability into rationalised terms.

The blows that rain down in abundance on the son of Telamon appear to be completely ineffective, which is all the more incongruous in light of the exceptionally perilous situation with which he has to contend. During the battle of the ships, he is left to fight almost single handedly an innumerable crowd of foes, as he stands against the Trojan onslaught alone.¹⁸² All the other Greeks are wounded or have fled. This is a rather unusual situation, for encounters on the battlefield, as a rule of thumb, take place on a 'one against one' or a 'one against two' basis, even if there is a succession of these contests in a row.¹⁸³ Moreover, at Λ 575-85, Eurypylus arrives in order to assist Ajax, but he is almost immediately injured, thereby drawing attention to the peculiarity of Ajax's case, as he remains unscathed, as if by magic, in these extreme circumstances.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁷ Asteropaeus, son of Pelagon, wounds Achilles at the elbow (πῆχυς), in Φ 166-7.

¹⁷⁸ In Σ(A, h) Ξ 406, the scholiasts use the passage to rule out that Ajax may be invulnerable in the *Iliad*. The remark should, however, be treated with scepticism, since it was written on the assumption that the Homeric poems were earlier works than those of the Cycle.

¹⁷⁹ In M 400-3, Sarpedon also receives a hit on his baldric, but Zeus still averts death from him, says the poet.

¹⁸⁰ Griffin 2001 [1977]: 368.

¹⁸¹ Griffin 2001 [1977]; Dowden 2004: 202. Cf. Aris. *Poet.* XXIV.

¹⁸² Τρῶες ὑπέρθυμοι πολυηγερέες τ' ἐπίκουροι (Λ 564).

¹⁸³ Fenik 1968. In Λ 401-88, Odysseus is the only other hero to face a similar predicament, but, revealingly, he has to be rescued by none other than Ajax.

¹⁸⁴ The humanisation of Ajax's invulnerability would then be similar to what happens to Horatius Cocles, according to Dumézil (1942: 133ff). 'Si notre explication est juste, cette aventure montre d'une manière très claire comment s'est opérée l'humanisation de la mythologie romaine: l'empirisme, le gros bon sens, le goût du tangible et du vérifiable qui caractérisent les Latins ont d'abord dépouillé de leur prestige et par conséquent de leur efficacité les ressorts merveilleux qui, chez les Indo-Européens, animaient la Souveraineté par exemple ou la Force guerrière.'

Another passage is particularly revealing in this regard. In Π, Hector finally manages to set fire to the Greeks' ships, an action he has been attempting to perform since the beginning of Λ. Since Zeus had announced that Hector's success was part of his master plan in O 14-133, Hector receives profuse divine support for accomplishing his enterprise. In spite of all this help, however, it takes him no less than six books to accomplish his fated feat, as he struggles to overcome the last obstacle: Ajax.

The conditions in which the son of Telamon, at last, disengages from the battle are revealing. Usually, a warrior leaves the battlefield if he is wounded, or feels overpowered by his enemies.¹⁸⁵ Since Hector fails to break through Ajax's defence, Zeus has to intervene directly so that his plan may be fulfilled.¹⁸⁶ Interestingly enough, Zeus does not attempt to have Ajax wounded. Instead, he has his weapon broken,¹⁸⁷ which incidentally appears to be the only resort to get rid of an invulnerable warrior.¹⁸⁸ Ajax immediately recognises the hand of Zeus, and disengages from battle for a short time to seize a new weapon.¹⁸⁹ As soon as he does so (in the next line), Hector finally succeeds in putting fire to Protesilaus' ship.

Thus, unlike all major Greek characters who are wounded,¹⁹⁰ and thereafter depart from the battlefield, leaving the way clear for Hector, Ajax receives a different treatment. After the numerous attempts by Hector and the other Trojans to injure him, Zeus only manages to render him unable to fight by depriving him of his spear. Thus it seems that even the gods are unable to create a situation in which Ajax could be wounded. Hector is assisted several times by Apollo, but fails, nonetheless, to strike the hero. A comparison with Hector, a character for whom divine aid is crucial, is revealing. In Ξ, Hera puts Zeus to sleep, thereby preventing him from watching over the battlefield. As soon as this happens, Ajax is able to wound the Trojan champion severely.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ There are several exceptions though. In Z 86ff, Helenos asks Hector to go back to the city in order to tell Hecabe to appeal to Athena, or in Γ, Paris is swept away from the battlefield by Aphrodite during his duel against Menelaos. However, these are not the norm in the sense that the hero himself does not decide to leave.

¹⁸⁶ Ζηρός νόος at O 104.

¹⁸⁷ On Ajax's weapon: Frazer 1983. See also Neal 2006: 13-4, in particular n4.

¹⁸⁸ As a member of the Aeacidae, Ajax is also a warrior full of ἀλκή, and accordingly he is not very likely to withdraw from battle (cf. above p. 34). Even when Zeus infuses fear in Ajax, he keeps on fighting (Λ 543).

¹⁸⁹ 'With Ajax momentarily helpless, the Trojans finally set fire to the first ship' (Whitman 1958: 136).

¹⁹⁰ Except for Achilles, obviously, since at that time he is refusing to fight.

¹⁹¹ Ξ 402-20.

Finally, I would like to examine two further passages in which the tradition of Ajax's invulnerability appears to re-surface through the unintentional memory transmitted by the epic language. In Λ 545-74, Ajax is about to retreat in order to protect the Achaeans' ships. He is fighting the Trojans alone, since everyone else is wounded, or has fled. In a famous simile, he is first compared to a lion, which attempts to attack a cowshed but is repelled by the men and the dogs defending it; and then to a donkey, which does not move from his position before he has eaten as much as he wishes, despite being beaten by children:¹⁹²

στῇ δὲ ταφῶν, ὅπιθεν δὲ σάκος βάλεν ἑπταβόειον,	545
τρέσσε δὲ παπτήνας ἐφ' ὀμίλου θηρὶ ἐοικῶς	
ἐντροπαλιζόμενος ὀλίγον γόνυ γουνὸς ἀμείβων.	
ὥς δ' αἰθωνα λέοντα βοῶν ἀπὸ μεσσαύλοιο	
ἐσσεύαντο κύνες τε καὶ ἄνδρες ἀγροιώται,	
οἳ τέ μιν οὐκ εἰῶσι βοῶν ἐκ πῖαρ ἐλέσθαι	550
πάννυχτοι ἐγρήσσοντες· ὁ δὲ κρειῶν ἐρατίζων	
ἰθύει, ἀλλ' οὐ τι πρήσσει· θαμέες γὰρ ἄκοντες	
ἀντίον αἵσσουσι θρασειάων ἀπὸ χειρῶν	
καίόμεναί τε δεταί, τάς τε τρεῖ ἐσσύμενός περ·	
ῥῶθεν δ' ἀπὸ νόσφιν ἔβη τετιηότι θυμῷ.	555
ὥς Αἴας τότε ἀπὸ Τρώων τετιημένος ἦτορ	
ῆε πολλ' ἀέκων· περὶ γὰρ διέ νηυσὶν Ἀχαιῶν.	
ὥς δ' ὅτ' ὄνος παρ' ἄρουραν ἰὼν ἐβίησατο παῖδας	
νωθής, ᾧ δὴ πολλὰ περὶ ρόπαλ' ἀμφὶς ἐάγη,	
κεῖρει τ' εἰσελθὼν βαθὺ λήϊον· οἳ δέ τε παῖδες	560
τύπτουσιν ροπάλοισι· βίη δέ τε νηπίη αὐτῶν·	
σπουδῇ τ' ἐξήλασσαν, ἐπεὶ τ' ἐκορέσσατο φορβῆς·	
ὥς τότε ἔπειτ' Αἴαντα μέγαν Τελαμώνιον υἱὸν	
Τρῶες ὑπέρθυμοι πολυηγερέες τ' ἐπίκουροι	
νύσσοντες ξυστοῖσι μέσον σάκος αἰὲν ἔποντο.	565

In both similes, he is compared to a solitary animal fighting against a crowd of opponents who strike numerous blows: the emphasis is put on the numbers. Interestingly, the blows are completely ineffective in both cases. The lion is in reality not exactly repelled; he is only prevented from attacking the cattle and goes away of his own volition at dawn. The donkey completely ignores the children and also moves of his own volition, once he has satisfied his appetite. In the donkey simile another point should be raised. The Trojans are compared to children whose strength is νηπίη ('like that of a child') against the donkey they try

¹⁹² The simile has often been wrongly understood to suggest that Ajax was already considered to be slow and stupid in the *Iliad* (e.g. Bowra 1930: 204-5; Mansur 1950: 91; Highet 1953: 273). Cf. Trapp 1961: 271-2. See pp. 222-3.

to drive away. Hence, keeping in mind the scenario of a traditionally invulnerable Ajax, the simile appears to be particularly well chosen and appropriate: fighting the hero puts the Trojans in the same position as weak children, since none of their blows are effective. Moreover, it is also worth noting that the donkey's ribs are said to be tougher than the children's cudgels – so much that the cudgels break when striking its sides.

The second passage consists in an exchange between Idomeneus and Meriones regarding Ajax's strength:¹⁹³

ἀνδρὶ δέ κ' οὐκ εἴξειε μέγας Τελαμώνιος Αἴας,
 ὃς θνητός τ' εἴη καὶ ἔδοι Δημήτερος ἄκτῃν
 χαλκῷ τε ῥηκτός μεγαλοισί τε χερμαδίοισιν.
 οὐδ' ἂν Ἀχιλλῆϊ ῥηξήνορι χωρήσειεν
 ἐν γ' αὐτοσταδίῃ· ποσὶ δ' οὐ πῶς ἔστιν ἐρίζειν.

325

Two points are particularly worth noticing here. First, at lines 322-3, Idomeneus defines a mortal man (θνητός ἀνὴρ), whom he somehow contrasts with Ajax, as χαλκῷ τε ῥηκτός μεγαλοισί τε χερμαδίοισιν, which is precisely what an invulnerable Ajax would not be.¹⁹⁴ Incidentally, the adjective used by Idomeneus, ῥηκτός, is the form from which ἄρρηκτος – the word Pindar employs to describe the special nature that Heracles grants Ajax in *Isthmian* 6 – is derived, with the addition of a privative alpha. Furthermore, Idomeneus then goes on saying that even Achilles ῥηξήνωρ ('breaking armed ranks') would not manage to pass through Ajax in a stand-up fight. The adjective ῥηξήνωρ¹⁹⁵ is formed on the same root as ῥηκτός and ἄρρηκτος.¹⁹⁶ Hence, by correlation, one may infer from this remark that Ajax is implicitly qualified as ἄρρηκτος.

This passage, therefore, may arguably also form another case in which the motif of Ajax's invulnerability is resurfacing in the poem. The resurfacing of traditional elements that are no longer considered to be suitable in the context of performance is a phenomenon that often occurs in epic

¹⁹³ N 321-5.

¹⁹⁴ By saying that Ajax would not yield to any mortal man, he distinguishes the hero from normal men, although he is, of course, part of them.

¹⁹⁵ In Homer, ῥηξήνωρ is an epithet exclusively used for Achilles.

¹⁹⁶ Chantraine *s.v.* ῥήγνυμι.

poetry.¹⁹⁷ In these conditions, Ajax's epithet ἔρκος Ἀχαιῶν probably also hints at his invulnerability, and consequently should probably be understood literally. At any rate, the hero is indeed portrayed in the manner of a living ἔρκος in the *Iliad*.

τὸ ἔρκος Ἀχαιῶν

Now that we have examined possible allusions to the tradition of an invulnerable Ajax in the *Iliad*, I wish to explore the relationship between the traditional motif of his invulnerability and his function as a hero. As noted above, throughout the archaic period, the artistic motif of Ajax carrying Achilles' corpse back to the Greek camp is widespread,¹⁹⁸ so much so that the episode must have been central to his myth, although it is left untold in the *Iliad*. Nevertheless, the rescue of Patroclus' body, in P, constitutes a close parallel.¹⁹⁹

Firstly, I wish to argue that Ajax plays the leading part in the rescue of the bodies of both Achilles and Patroclus, although his role in the *Iliad* changes from the one he traditionally had (in the *Aethiopis*, for instance). Secondly, I would like to make a connection between Ajax's invulnerability, and his leading role



FIGURE 14



FIGURE 15

¹⁹⁷ The resurfacing of traditional elements that are no longer considered to be suitable in the context of a performance is a phenomenon that occurs often in epic poetry. 'Where the association is not linear, it seems to me that we are dealing with a force or 'tension' that might be termed 'submerged.' The habit is hidden, but felt. It arises from the depths of the tradition through workings of the traditional processes to inevitable expression' (Lord 1971 [1960]: 97).

¹⁹⁸ We know that the scene at least featured in the *Aethiopis* (according to Proclus' summary). Given the popularity of the scene on vases and bronze shield band, it probably belonged to the larger mythological tradition of the Trojan War, and hence would have been narrated in several epic traditions.

¹⁹⁹ 'Among the many arguments of neoanalysts, perhaps the proposal that the death of Patroclus corresponds to the death of Achilles has gained the widest acceptance' (Burgess 2001: 74). Cf. for instance, West 2003; Kullman 2005 (which is an answer to West's paper); Currie 2006: 38-41.

in retrieving the bodies of both Achilles and Patroclus, by suggesting that his special power makes him perfectly suited to the role of retrieving the corpses of fallen comrades. Indeed, being immune to blows presents a considerable advantage in such circumstances, as it thus becomes possible to turn one's back to the enemies without risking being hit by deadly arrows, or spears.²⁰⁰

Let us investigate the first point. In Σ(A) P 719, Aristarchus claims that Homer would never have represented Ajax carrying Achilles' body as the νεώτεροι do:

ἡ διπλή ὅτι ἐντεῦθεν τοῖς νεωτέροις ὁ βασταζόμενος Ἀχιλλεύς ὑπ' Αἴαντος, ὑπερασπίζων δὲ Ὀδυσσεὺς παρήκται. εἰ δὲ Ὅμηρος ἔγραφε τὸν Ἀχιλλέως θάνατον, οὐκ ἂν ἐποίησε τὸν νεκρὸν ὑπ' Αἴαντος βασταζόμενον, ὡς οἱ νεώτεροι.

Obviously, in the time of Aristarchus, the dominant view was that all the poems of the Cycle had been composed after those of Homer, and were thus derivative in relation to them. Their quality was also implicitly considered to be inferior, so much so that any element diverging from its Homeric precedent would be criticised systematically. The scholion, nonetheless, addresses a question that is at the heart of the *ὅπλων κρίσις* in later traditions. Who was the bravest on the day Achilles died? Was it more dangerous to carry away the body, or to fight off the Trojans? Ajax is clearly the central character of the scene in the *Iliad*,²⁰¹ and Odysseus is not even present. He supervises the operations, while preventing the enemies from taking Patroclus' corpse at the same time. Then, no fewer than two characters – Menelaus and Meriones – are needed to bring the body back to the Greek camp,²⁰² while the two Ajaxes keep on fighting, *ἴσον θυμὸν ἔχοντες ὁμώνυμοι*, and they succeed only when Achilles shouts.²⁰³ Therefore, Aristarchus' view (that Homer would never have represented Ajax carrying Achilles' body) implies that he considers Ajax's role in the



FIGURE 16

²⁰⁰ Carrying the corpse of a dead comrade on one's back in order to bring it to a safe place is very dangerous in the middle of the battlefield, as it requires turning one's back on the enemy and consequently makes self-defence impossible.

²⁰¹ Menelaus also plays an important part in the passage, since he asks Ajax to help him retrieve Patroclus' body. However, as soon as Ajax arrives, he takes the lead and become the dominant figure of the scene (*pace* Whitman 1958: 169-71).

²⁰² P 715-21. Apollodorus does not mention Menelaus and Meriones in his summary of the episode, but he unequivocally assigns all the merit to Ajax (IV 7.1-3).

²⁰³ P 720.

Aethiopis to be less worthy of him.²⁰⁴ This view, however, appears to rest on a misunderstanding, probably caused by Aristarchus' prejudice against 'post-Homeric' material.

We do not know the exact details of the scene in the *Aethiopis*, or any other early Greek epic, apart from the fact that Ajax apparently carried Achilles' body on his own.²⁰⁵ Odysseus perhaps fought off the Trojans in some traditions.²⁰⁶ However, artistic evidence clearly shows that Ajax had the leading role in this episode as well. On most representations, Ajax is represented alone with the gigantic body of Achilles on his shoulders (FIGURE 14-18).²⁰⁷ Since the objects on which the scene is depicted come from different workshops located all over Greece, and span a period of around two hundred years,²⁰⁸ it seems logical to infer that they reflect a stable tradition; one that is equally transmitted in the *Aethiopis*. Moore, in her inventory of all the vases that either represent the fight over Achilles' body, or its rescue by Ajax, mentions only one vase – and with considerable caution – on which Odysseus might appear. However, he is not named, nor is he even fighting.²⁰⁹ In fact, when another warrior – other than Achilles or Ajax – is depicted, he usually is identified as Teucer.

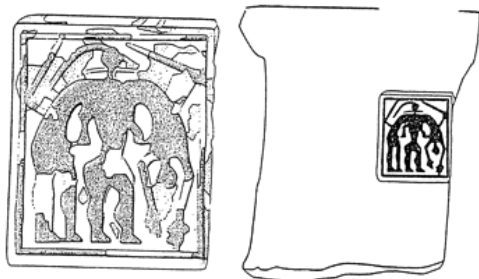


FIGURE 17

Stamp on the neck of an amphora found in Pithecusae; c. 700.



FIGURE 18

Ivory seal from Peracusa; late eighth century

²⁰⁴ This is how Severyns (1928: 320-1), and Vian (1959: 32) understand Aristarchus' comment. Furthermore, it is also what Athena cunningly suggests to the Greeks in the *Ilias Parva* to make Ajax lose the $\delta\pi\lambda\omega\nu\ \kappa\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ($\Sigma\ Eq.$ 1056).

²⁰⁵ West 2013: 151-3. On the interpretation of P. Oxy. 2510 (a fragment from an epic poem which gives an account of the scene), see Bravo 2001.

²⁰⁶ According to the scholion, Odysseus fought off the Trojans, while Ajax rescued the corpse. This is also the version reported by Proclus (summary of the *Aethiopis*, ll. 193-5) and Apollodorus (*Ep.* V 5).

²⁰⁷ Depictions of the rescue of Patroclus' body (*Aias* I 45-6, 48-9) start appearing c. 540 (if the identification of the scene is correct). Not all the names are inscribed. See Moore 1980: 422.

²⁰⁸ The earliest representations date from the late eighth century. Ajax is not named, but it is usually assumed to be him, as no other mythological figure is known to have carried his companion's corpse back to safety. Seals/stamps: FIGURE 14, 17, 18; terracotta relief: FIGURE 16; shield band: FIGURE 15.

²⁰⁹ Moore 1980: 427-8.

Therefore, available evidence suggests that Ajax is the character most strongly associated with the rescue of an ally, dead or alive.²¹⁰ In all our extant representations of this type of scene, Ajax plays the leading part, while no other mythological figure appears to assume a similar function.²¹¹ In these conditions, it seems likely that Ajax's function as 'rescuer' was connected to his traditional gift of invulnerability. We tend to forget how perilous bringing back Achilles' body is supposed to be. It involves kneeling down in the heat of the battle in order to take the corpse on one's shoulders, and turning one's back to the enemies, while bringing the body all the way back to the Greek camp. This provides countless occasions in which one could be wounded. Consequently, the motif of invulnerability was probably an essential element of the episode, and its centrality may be behind the change of Ajax's role in the fights over the bodies of Achilles and Patroclus.

As we have seen above, it emerges from artistic evidence that the motif of Ajax rescuing Achilles' body was traditional, and very popular. Consequently, it seems reasonable to infer that an archaic audience would have expected the hero to act likewise in the case of Patroclus.²¹² For some reasons, however, the poet(s) of the *Iliad* altered the traditional paradigm by representing Ajax fighting off the Trojans instead of retrieving his friend's body. As discussed in the preceding section, there is a tendency in the *Iliad* to avoid 'the fantastic, the miraculous, and the romantic.'²¹³ Accordingly, invulnerability, which



²¹⁰ In t

²¹¹ There are two other notable fights over a body in the *Iliad*, that of Cebriones (II 751-83), and that of Sarpedon (II 569-683). But both of them are Trojans, and the corpses failed to be defended. Although the dead Sarpedon is snatched away from the battlefield by Apollo in the end, the Greeks nonetheless manage to strip him of his arms.

²¹² The scene of the fight over Patroclus' body is probably modelled on Achilles' *Leichenkampf*. See Currie 2006 23-45.

²¹³ Griffin 2001 [1977]: 367.



FIGURE 20

Attic amphora from Vulci; c. 540 BCE



FIGURE 21

obviously falls under one of these headings, is not at home in the Homeric poems. It follows that an invulnerable Ajax, who was, arguably, indispensable in the episode of Achilles' death, could probably not feature conspicuously in the *Iliad*. Therefore, it appears that Ajax's traditional role as corpse bearer had to be adapted to the aesthetics of the poem, since having him bring back Patroclus' body on his own would have drawn attention to his invulnerability. For this reason, the focus of the scene, in spite of the changes, is kept on Ajax's preponderant role in the action. His worth is even enhanced in the process, as two people instead of one are then needed to carry the body while he fights, and Odysseus is not even present.

Artistic evidence seems to corroborate the hypothesis. Depictions of the fight over Patroclus' body start emerging, in Attic art only, around the middle of the sixth century.²¹⁴ That is over a century later than our earliest examples of Ajax carrying the dead Achilles. Incidentally, it is also around the middle of the sixth century that we find for the first time variations on the episode of Achilles' death. What is particularly interesting about them, especially in connection to the present discussion, is the fact

²¹⁴ This corresponds to the time when the first 'Iliadic episodes' start to be represented on vases, a fact that may be connected to the growing authority of Homeric poetry. The vases are not in *LMC* apart from one. Therefore, I give instead their number in the Beazley archive. These are: no. 200457 (*LMC* Hipposos III 1; 525-475 BCE; with names), no. 302101 (Attic amphora from Vulci; 550-500 BCE; with names), no. 310401 (Attic calyx crater from Athens; 575-525 BCE; with names), no. 310418 (Attic crater from Thessaly; 575-525 BCE).

that Ajax's prowess appears to be deliberately enhanced, or stressed. The usual configuration (*i.e.* Ajax carrying Achilles on his shoulders) appears on Attic vases *c.* 570/60 (FIGURE 19 and FIGURE 31), but quickly becomes altered by the painters, as they start putting emphasis on the heavy weight of the corpse, thereby insisting on the difficulty of Ajax' deed.²¹⁵ But this is not all. On a few examples, painters also change the focus of the scene, as they represent Ajax in the middle of the battle over Achilles' body. He can be fighting alone against several Trojans (FIGURE 13), or protecting the corpse in the middle of a melee (FIGURE 21). One may detect the influence, or a reaction to the Homeric episode of the fight over Patroclus' body in these refigurations of the old motif of Ajax carrying Achilles on his shoulders. Incidentally, they happen to date from the same time as the introduction of the Homeric poems at the Great Panathenaea. Be that as it may, carrying a corpse alone or with the help of someone is clearly not the same thing (FIGURE 22).²¹⁶

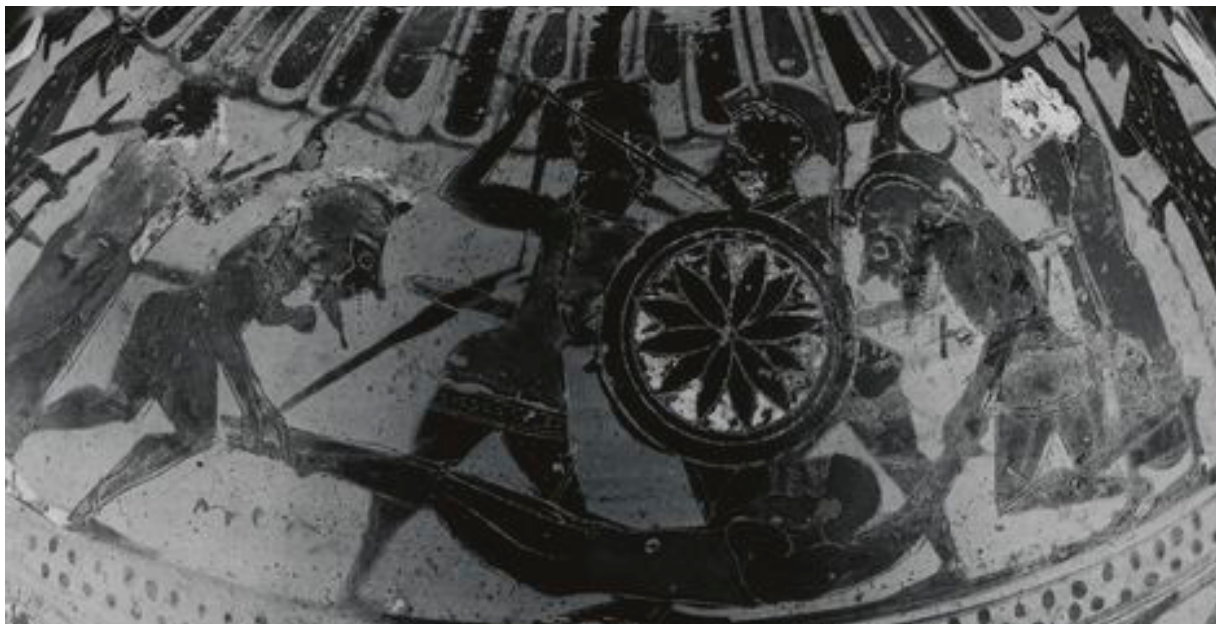


FIGURE 22

²¹⁵ *LMC Achilleus* 866-76, 879, 883, 885-8, 890. Most examples date from the last quarter of the sixth century. It is often assumed that this innovation was first introduced by Execias (*c.* 540), before being copied by other painters. This argument is made on the basis that Execias' execution (*LMC Achilleus*: 871, 876) is by far the best of the series, and that all these images are quite similar. See Kossatz-Deissmann 1981: 188-9 [= *LMC Achilleus*].

²¹⁶ This is also noted by Simon in *LMC suppl. Aias I*.

Ajax and Athena

Three *testimonia* on the *Ilias Parva* report that Athena had a hand in Ajax's misfortune, thereby suggesting that she bore a grudge against the hero.²¹⁷ Firstly, in Σ *Eq.* 1056, the Trojan girl, whose comment leads to Ajax's defeat against Odysseus in the contest for Achilles' arms, speaks Ἀθηνᾶς προνοία. Secondly, Apollodorus recounts that Ajax is made mad ὑπὸ Ἀθηνᾶς after his defeat (*Ep.* V 6). Finally, Proclus reports that Ajax lost against Odysseus κατὰ βούλησιν Ἀθηνᾶς.²¹⁸

In the *Odyssey*, Athena's role in the ὅπλων κρίσις is also hinted at. At λ 547, Odysseus cautiously states that παῖδες δὲ Τρώων δίκασαν καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη. He does not attribute any plotting on the part of Athena in the result of the contest, since she is simply presented as one of the judges, but he nevertheless assigns an active role to the goddess in the outcome of the judgement. Odysseus seems particularly careful in his choice of words, for he skilfully avoids laying responsibility upon anyone (especially himself) for what occurred.²¹⁹ Ajax's death is presented as a sad and regrettable event that just happened to come to pass.²²⁰ Accordingly, Odysseus' phrasing – that Athena was only one of the judges – should probably be understood as an euphemism, and thus as another hint at Athena's agency in the downfall of Ajax.

In this section, I would like to argue that Athena's hostility towards Ajax was also a traditional element of his myth, since the poet(s) of the *Iliad* appears to be consistent with it. As we shall see, the motif is not developed in the poem, but rather its implications are taken for granted. Moreover, I would like to contend that reading this mythological *datum* into the background of the poem allows us to elucidate some oddities in regard to Ajax. As a matter of fact, Ajax appears to have a different relationship to the gods than that of the other Iliadic heroes. Whitman claims that he 'is unique in having no direct dealing

²¹⁷ The story was probably told at some point in the *Aethiopis* as well, before the material covered by the poem was integrated into the Epic Cycle, and thus cut (Burgess 2001: 140-8; West 2003: 12). We know from Σ *Isthm.* 4.58b that Ajax's suicide was narrated in it, while according to Proclus' summary, the poem ended with Ajax's and Odysseus' dispute. This episode leads to the ὅπλων κρίσις, which was recounted at the start of the *Ilias Parva*. See Kelly 2015b: 321.

²¹⁸ Apollodorus' account presents a small discrepancy with the two other ones: here, it is by the action of Athena that Ajax loses his mind after he has already lost the competition, while she only intrigues for his defeat according to the other accounts. The difference is probably due to the influence of Sophocles' *Ajax* on his account (West 2013: 13)

²¹⁹ De Jong 2002: 292.

²²⁰ He frames the events in theological terms with the vague mention of Zeus' anger against all the Achaeans (Heubeck and Hoestra 1989: 110)

with any god.²²¹ Since we have already detected some sort of conflict between Ajax and Athena, we shall start our inquiry by first examining how Ajax interacts with the other gods in the *Iliad*. Let us first investigate Whitman's statement. Ajax's lack of any divine assistance is not as obvious as it may appear *prima facie*, for he has several interactions with Zeus throughout the poem,²²² while Poseidon instils some μένος κρατερόν in him and in the Lesser Ajax.²²³ These two instances, however, do not constitute cases of direct assistance from a god, but indirect ones.²²⁴ And it is indeed in this that the uniqueness of Ajax's case resides: most heroes (for example, Achilles, Diomedes, Odysseus, Menelaus, Hector, Aeneas or even Paris) are all directly assisted by a god at some point in the poem.

The complete absence of direct divine help given to Ajax is particularly odd since he is the character who stays for the longest time on the battlefield. Amongst the gods supporting the Achaeans, Athena is the only one to take part in the battle physically, and hence the divinity one would most expect to assist Ajax, but she does not interact with him even once. This is probably a consequence of the arguable hostility she bore to the hero in the larger tradition of the Trojan War. Some scholars have argued that Athena, being strongly associated with success, only helps those who would win anyway,²²⁵ and that consequently Ajax is not helped by the goddess, since he would not win without her.²²⁶

However, this interpretation is based on a misunderstanding. It is true that he is often unsuccessful, but he is also never defeated, which is not insignificant. Furthermore, it seems that his bad luck in fights, in particular against Hector, is mainly due to the fact that his success would seriously have compromised the realisation of Zeus' plan.²²⁷ The complete lack of interaction between Ajax and Athena probably has some influence on the matter, but I would then argue that Ajax's apparent difficulty with

²²¹ Whitman 1958:173. Some minor heroes of the *Iliad* such as Idomeneus do not benefit from divine assistance either, but this is less surprising, since they are far less prominent throughout the poem.

²²² As Duffy (2008: 83) demonstrates, Zeus' behaviour in regard to Ajax is not as inconsistent as it may seem. It is true that Zeus disfavours the hero several times, and even deprives him of victory (Λ 544; Μ 400-3; Π 101-6, 114-21; Ρ 626-7), but this is only due to the master plan he has in mind. Part of it consists in giving glory to Hector before his death and Ajax often happens to be an obstacle to its realisation.

²²³ Ν 59-61.

²²⁴ For this use of the word 'direct', see Hinckley 1986: 215. The two prayers he directs to Zeus are telling (Η 202-5, through an intercessor, and Ρ 645-7). He does not ask for special protection or power, but only to be able to fight without detrimental conditions.

²²⁵ Willcock 1978: 67-8; Schein 1984: 57. On the role of Athena in Diomedes' victories, see Willcock 1973: 3-4.

²²⁶ Hinckley (1986: 210) even links Ajax with defeat.

²²⁷ Ajax proves on several occasions that he would have been strong enough to defeat Hector, even without divine support (for instance, in Ξ 409-20), but he is not allowed to perform this deed himself, since it is Achilles' lot to kill Hector. For instance, at Π 103 it is said that he is being subdued by Ζηνὸς νόος, and at 121 his spear breaks because of Διὸς βούλη.

winning is only a *consequence* of it, rather than its cause. If we were talking about a character like Agamemnon who is portrayed as quite an inefficient fighter, the issue could be understood differently.²²⁸ The case of Ajax is special, for he manages to fight extremely well without direct divine support, even when fighting against heroes that benefit from it.²²⁹

One might be tempted to argue that Athena fails to support Ajax in the *Iliad* only because of circumstances, especially since Zeus, in Θ 5-27, forbids the gods who are supporting the Achaeans to interfere on the battlefield, and that Athena only becomes active again at P 544. However, it emerges from the two following passages that the goddess deliberately chooses not to help the hero. In H, as she is watching the *monomachia* between Hector and Ajax with Apollo (Il. 58-61),²³⁰ the god suddenly flies to the rescue of Hector who appears to be faltering against Ajax (l. 272), while Athena, by contrast, does nothing. In P, she decides to intervene in favour of the Achaeans during the fight over Patroclus' body, which is led by Ajax. Instead of seconding him, she surprisingly turns to Menelaus (Il. 553ff.) – even before he makes a prayer to her – although he is clearly less strong than Ajax.²³¹ Furthermore, she is not especially attached to him unlike, for instance, Diomedes or Odysseus. It thus appears that Athena deliberately chooses not to assist Ajax. In these conditions, one may reasonably infer that this is a sign of hostility towards the hero, and consequently that it is a traditional motif which looms in the background of the poem.

Is there any identifiable reason for Athena's apparent dislike of Ajax? The *Iliad* remains silent on the matter, but an explanation may be found nonetheless in Sophocles' *Ajax*.²³² It is true that the play constitutes a rather late source. However, it is worth examining the answer it gives to our question, since it is suggested in a scholion that Sophocles adapted a pre-existing tradition.²³³

In the play, Ajax is not so much punished by Athena for his attempt to kill Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Odysseus as because of the ill-will she harbours towards him.²³⁴ Sophocles places the

²²⁸ Whitman 1958: 162-3; Postlethwaite 1995.

²²⁹ This is noted by Libanius (*Progymnasmata* X 2.9-10).

²³⁰ Duffy 2008: 86.

²³¹ Duffy 2008: 89; *pace* Whitman 1958: 170-1.

²³² *Aj.* 748-83.

²³³ Σ *Aj.* 127a.

²³⁴ Stanford 1963: xx.

origin of Athena's hostility outside the limits of the play, since the messenger, who reports Calchas' words, explains that Ajax angered the goddess well before the episode of the ὅπλων κρίσις. What reason is given? His excessive confidence in his own strength which led him to reject the support of the goddess, and hence to disavow her.

The messenger mentions two occasions on which Ajax demonstrated his immoderate pride. The first one was when the hero exchanged some words with his father just before leaving for war:

... τέκνον, δορὶ
765
βούλου κρατεῖν μέν, σὺν θεῶ δ' αἰεὶ κρατεῖν.
ὁ δ' ὑψικόμπως κάφρόνως ἡμείψατο,
ἴπτερ, θεοῖς μὲν κὰν ὁ μὴδὲν ὦν ὁμοῦ
κράτος κατακτήσται· ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ δίχα
κείνων πέποιθα τοῦτ' ἐπισπάσειν κλέος.
τοσόνδ' ἐκόμπει μῦθον.

The second one took place at some point during the Trojan War, probably the beginning. Ajax blatantly offended the goddess by refusing her assistance on the battlefield with the following boast:

... εἶτα δεύτερον
770
δίας Ἀθήνας, ἥνικ' ὀτρύνουσά νιν
ἡῦδάτ' ἐπ' ἐχθροῖς χεῖρα φοινίαν τρέπειν,
τότ' ἀντιφωνεῖ δεινὸν ἄρρηκτόν τ' ἔπος·
ἄνασσα, τοῖς ἄλλοισιν Ἀργείων πέλας
ἵστω, καθ' ἡμᾶς δ' οὐποτ' ἐνρήξει μάχη.
775
τοιιοῖσδέ τοι λόγοισιν ἄστεργῇ θεᾷς
ἐκτήσατ' ὀργήν, οὐ κατ' ἄνθρωπον φρονῶν.

The phrasing of Ajax's words, at line 775, is striking, for the verb ἐνρήγνυμι, which he uses to explain to Athena why he does not need her support, is lexically linked to ἄρρηκτον. That is the adjective used to describe Ajax's impenetrable skin in *Isthmian* 6, a theme which also resurfaces in the *Iliad*, as argued above.²³⁵

Now, let us go back to the *Iliad*, and investigate further Athena's and Ajax's behaviour in the poem. Although it is never mentioned that the goddess dislikes any hero in particular (apart from the Trojan ones whom she generally hates), she is portrayed, in P 567-8, as being eager to receive prayers. As Menelaus wishes that she helped him, the poet(s) notes:

²³⁵ Part I: 36ff.

It is worth noting that Ajax never prays to the goddess, but exclusively to Zeus. Furthermore, his demands are always strikingly modest,²³⁶ and he never requires the presence of a god by his side.²³⁷ Interestingly, Ajax's second prayer comes shortly after Menelaus', thereby inviting comparison between the two, and thus putting emphasis on how they contrast.²³⁸ This has the effect of drawing attention to the fact that Ajax does not address Athena, but Zeus.

It would thus appear that the explanation given in the *Ajax* for the grudge Athena bears towards the hero finds some kind of echo in the *Iliad*. Ceramic evidence also points to a lack of interaction between Ajax and Athena. There are only two vases on which the goddess seems to be depicted



FIGURE 23

²³⁶ Ajax makes his first prayer before he engages in his duel against Hector. In H 191-9, he asks the Greeks to pray to Zeus on his behalf, a demand they do not fail to meet a few lines later, at Il. 202-5). The hero utters his second prayer in P 645-7, when he asks Zeus to dissipate the darkness in which he and his companions are shrouded.

²³⁷ 'Aias' prayer, unlike those of other heroes, asks the god not to grant the Greeks victory outright, but to make it possible for them to win or lose on their merits.' (Hinckley 1986: 214).

²³⁸ The two prayers are separated by about a hundred lines only, and respond to one another (Stanley 1993: 179). Menelaus' one is in P 561-64, while Ajax's one is in P 645-7.

supporting him.²³⁹ Furthermore, when she is portrayed on the series of vases that show Ajax and Achilles playing dice, she is typically represented favouring Achilles, and sometimes even impeding Ajax from seeing the game (FIGURE 23).²⁴⁰

If Ajax's fault traditionally resided in the excessive pride he took in his strength,²⁴¹ it seems reasonable to suppose that his overconfidence stemmed from the gift of invulnerability he received at birth. At any rate, the words he utters in H 196-9, before his duel against Hector, reveal an unusual confidence in his own abilities:

(…), ἐπεὶ οὐ τινα δείδιμεν ἔμπη·196
οὐ γάρ τις με βίη γε ἐκὼν ἀέκοντα δίηται
οὐδέ τι ἰδρεΐη, ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ἐμὲ νῆϊδά γ' οὕτως
ἔλπομαι ἐν Σαλαμῖνι γενέσθαι τε τραφέμεν τε.

Boasts are certainly no rare birds in the world of heroes, but they normally show up in the taunting season. Here, Ajax does not address Hector. Therefore, his brag cannot be destined to intimidate him. Ajax, oozing self-assertion, implicitly suggests that he does not need divine support to have the upper hand on his opponent (whoever that is), but his public declaration is intriguingly directed at his peers instead of his enemies; as though he were anxious that one might dispute that the victory he expects is due to his merit only. Moreover, he links the faith he has in his superiority to his Salaminian origin. Why would the fact that he was born and raised on the island be a proof of his skill? This may perhaps be a veiled allusion to the gift of invulnerability he received, since it was granted to him on Salamis, and that it would indeed constitute a good reason to be so confident in one's own invincibility.

Ajax's probable concern to appear as the sole author of his success echoes a real problem about the nature of prowess that is raised in the *Iliad*. On several occasions, underlining the divine support which

²³⁹ On the first one (*LIMC* Aias I 37 [c. 480]), Ajax and Hector are represented fighting. Both heroes have a god standing behind them: Athena is behind Ajax on the left, Apollo behind Hector on the right. However, on closer examination, it looks like Athena is, in reality, not assisting Ajax, but holding him back by grabbing on his helmet, thereby suggesting that she intends to prevent him from killing Hector whom the hero has just wounded. This interpretation is strengthened by the scene on the other side of the pots in which Aphrodite, depicted behind Menelaus (on the left), seems to try to prevent him from attacking Paris (on the right). On the second one (FIGURE 13), Ajax fights several Trojans alone, over Achilles' body. Athena stands behind, but there is quite a gap between her and Ajax; could this be a significant detail signalling some problems in her relationship with the hero? (*LIMC* Achilleus: 850 [c. 550-40]). Images of Ajax fighting are surprisingly scarce (Lissarrague 2007: 22).

²⁴⁰ Pace Woodford (1982: 173) who thinks that the position of Athena's shield in the composition is simply due to the fact that the painter misjudged the available space.

²⁴¹ This seems to be confirmed by the content of his two prayers (H 202-5; P 645-7). Unlike other heroes such as Diomedes, Odysseus, or Menelaus, he never asks for protection, nor that some kind of power may be bestowed on him. Rather, he shows on both occasions a preoccupation with neither party having a divine advantage on the battlefield.

someone receives turns out to be a strategy to minimise, and devalue this very person's feats; and this in spite of Nestor's reasonable advice, when he recalls how Peleus told Achilles that victory was not depending upon oneself, but was granted by Athena or Hera.²⁴² For instance, when Agamemnon quarrels with Achilles, in A 178, he attempts to diminish the hero's worth by declaring:²⁴³

εἰ μάλα καρτερός ἐσσι, θεός που σοὶ τό γ' ἔδωκεν. 178

When Hector reproaches Paris for the spectacle he made of himself in his duel against Menelaus, the latter provocatively replies that this only happened because of all the support his opponent was receiving from Athena; quite a daring comment coming from someone who has been watched over by Aphrodite during the whole fight, while the opponent in question was in reality truly facing him on his own.

Perhaps the most striking example is the case of Diomedes during his ἀριστεία. Athena heals his wounds, instils μένος in him, and even drives his chariot. The goddess also takes away the ἀγλὺς from his eyes; the mist that prevents mortals from recognising gods on the battlefield.²⁴⁴ The hero is thus enabled to wound Aphrodite herself. Shortly after, when Hector engages in battle with Ares on his side, Diomedes, who is still benefiting from the temporary powers Athena has granted him, is capable of recognising the god. Completely oblivious of his own special treatment, however, he belittles Hector for the divine support he receives, as soon as he sees through Ares:

ὦ φίλοι οἷον δὴ θαυμάζομεν Ἑκτορα δῖον
αἰχμητὴν τ' ἔμεναι καὶ θαρσαλέον πολεμιστήν·
τῷ δ' αἰεὶ πάρα εἰς γε θεῶν, ὃς λοιγὸν ἀμύνει·
καὶ νῦν οἱ πάρα κείνος Ἄρης βροτῷ ἀνδρὶ ἑοικώς.
ἀλλὰ πρὸς Τρῶας τετραμμένοι αἰὲν ὀπίσσω 605
εἵκετε, μηδὲ θεοῖς μενεαινέμεν ἱφὶ μάχεσθαι.²⁴⁵

In these conditions, Ajax's supposed anxiety about receiving direct divine assistance makes sense, and would thus provide him with a motive for refusing Athena's help. Interestingly enough, in the *Ajax*, this is precisely the reason that led him to rebuke the goddess in the first place, for he reportedly told his father that he would rather fight without the support of the gods because even a nobody would win a fight,

²⁴² I 254-8. These lines are echoed in the advice Telamon gave to Ajax before going to Troy (*Ajax*: 764-5).

²⁴³ He also does so, but to a lesser extent in A 290-1.

²⁴⁴ E 127-8.

²⁴⁵ E 601-6.

if a god made him strong.²⁴⁶ The problem raised in the preceding passages concerning the assessment of prowess is not further developed in the *Iliad*. Nevertheless, these Iliadic allusions suggest that it probably was an issue addressed by the epic tradition.

It is surely not a coincidence that a shrine dedicated to Athena Aiantis existed in Megara.²⁴⁷ Associating the name of a hero with that of the divinity with whom he was in conflict is rather common practice, the aim being to propitiate the offended god.²⁴⁸ 'Antagonism between hero and god in myth corresponds to the ritual requirements of symbiosis between hero and god in cult.'²⁴⁹ Accordingly, the motif of a conflict between Ajax and Athena must be old, and probably was central to the narrative of the hero's *gesta*.

Κρίσις, Anger, and Madness: the Suicide of Ajax

Semper Aias fortis, fortissimus tamen in furore

– Cicero, *Tusc.* III 23, 52

Although the story of Ajax's suicide has not survived in any extant epic poem,²⁵⁰ it is made clear by the large number of its representations in art throughout the archaic period that the episode was central to his myth.²⁵¹ As mentioned before, other versions of his death, not including self-murder, appear to have circulated, but they never seem to have become dominant, at least from the late eighth century

²⁴⁶ *Aj.*: 767-8.

²⁴⁷ Paus. I 42.4.

²⁴⁸ Pace Currie 2005: 138, n. 112. Cf. the cult to Poseidon Erechtheus in Athens, to Aphrodite Hippiolyteia (Σ on *Hipp.*: 29), or to Apollo Sarpedonius in Sicily (Diod. Sic. XXXII 10,2). On gods and heroes who antagonise in myth, while sharing a common cult, see Lyons 2014 [1997]: 71-7.

²⁴⁹ Nagy 1980: 120.

²⁵⁰ It is puzzling that the ὀπλων κρίσις is never mentioned or alluded to in the *Iliad*, especially given the abundant foreshadowing of future events in the poem (Rousseau 2001: 127-8). The disappointing results of Ajax at the funeral games for Patroclus in Ψ may possibly hint at his later defeat against Odysseus (Schein 1984: 23; Whitman 1958: 169-70). The difficulty in reading the text this way is that Ajax's and Odysseus' wrestling match ends in a draw, and not in Ajax's defeat like in the ὀπλων κρίσις. This might perhaps be explained by the *Iliad*'s commenting, and giving a new take, on the story.

²⁵¹ 'Representations of the suicide of Ajax are known from as early as the beginning of the seventh century, the earliest, a middle Protocorinthian aryballos in Berlin, being slightly later than our first known illustration of the carrying of Achilles' body. Other seventh century examples occur on a bronze matrix in Oxford, a gem in New York and an ivory comb in Athens. Several sixth century Corinthian vases show the scene, and on most of these the hero's name is inscribed. Other sixth century examples that predate Execias or are contemporary with him are shield bands from Olympia and a small terracotta "altar" in Copenhagen' (Moore 1980: 431). A late eighth century bronze figure from the British Museum may be added to this list. It represents a man, sitting, who is about to pierce his abdomen with a sword. This attribution, however, presents some difficulties. There is no existing parallel of Ajax represented in this position, and the man of the figurine has an erected phallus. I find the attribution nonetheless convincing, since we do not possess any other geometric statuette of Ajax, and thus, in reality, no strict parallel can be drawn anyway. Moreover, Ajax is the only known mythological figure associated with suicide in archaic art, and representations of his death incidentally start to emerge in this very period.

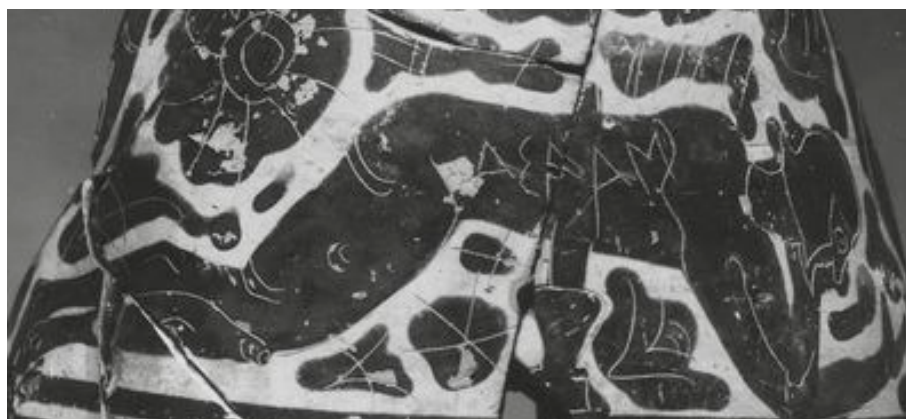


FIGURE 24

onwards.²⁵² Ajax is usually depicted impaled on his sword, naked and alone (FIGURE 10, 11 and 24), but sometimes he is still wearing his armour, and other characters (who apparently have just discovered the corpse) can also be added to the scene (FIGURE 25). His name is often inscribed next to his figure, thereby making the interpretation of the scene almost certain, even when the hero is not named, for no other known mythological figure is so strongly associated with suicide.

The circumstances that lead Ajax to commit suicide in the epic tradition are only known through rather late secondary sources, which are regrettably often flawed. It is not always clear which poem's version they refer to, and they are at times contradictory, thereby contributing to create a general sense of confusion.²⁵³ In this section, I compare the available accounts of Ajax's death in early Greek hexameter poetry in order to establish what aspects from the narrative appear to have been stable. This should in turn help to illuminate the material.

I have articulated the discussion around what appear to be three essential elements of the episode: the judgment of the arms, Ajax's anger, and his subsequent death. Each point starts with a series of questions whose aim is to highlight the problems encountered at the stage of the story. The formulation of these questions is in itself already a step forward (I hope) in understanding the material, and, hence, in his interpretation.

²⁵² Part I: 37-40.

²⁵³ Our secondary sources on this sequence of the story are Proclus' *Chrestomathia*, and Apollodorus' *Epitome*, in addition to a few scholia. Proclus stops his summary of the *Aethiopis* just after the episode of the *ὑπὸ λωπὸν κρίσις*, but the poem also narrated the death of Ajax from what we may infer from the content of *Σ Isthm.* 4.58b. We have no indication about the exact sequence of events. The *Ilias Parva* was supposed to start with the suicide of Ajax, according to Proclus, but it is made clear in *Σ Eq.* 1056, that it equally narrated the episode of the *ὑπὸ λωπὸν κρίσις* (Burgess 2001: 142). Apollodorus' summary mixes several sources which are difficult to disentangle (West 2003: 13). Finally, *Σ(HQV) λ 547* provides information about how the quarrel was judged, but the scholiast fails to name its source.



FIGURE 25

1) The Judgment of the Arms

- Did a debate between Ajax and Odysseus exist in early Greek hexameter poetry?
- Who were the judges?
- What role did Athena play in making the decision?

In the *Nekyia*, Odysseus explains that Thetis offered her deceased son's arms as a prize, and that the arbitrators of the competition, whose decision led Ajax to his death, were some *παῖδες Τρώων* as well as *Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη*.²⁵⁴ There is no hint that the matter was judged following a verbal sparring match between the two contenders to the prize. Rather, the identity of the judges suggests that there was none, for it would have been quite absurd to have Ajax and Odysseus try to win over a Trojan audience by boasting about how much harm they did to them.²⁵⁵ Accordingly, it seems reasonable to suppose that there was no debate in the poems in which the judges were Trojans.

Two versions of the way in which the dispute was settled by the Trojans appear to have circulated. In the first one – alluded to in the *Odyssey* – the arbitrators were young Trojan men, for the Homeric use of the word *παῖς* suggests that *παῖδες Τρώων* should refer to males.²⁵⁶ In the *Ilias Parva*, on the other hand, the decision was taken after overhearing two Trojan girls debating Ajax's and Odysseus' respective worth.²⁵⁷ Given that the version alluded to in the *Odyssey* differs from that of the *Ilias Parva*, it seems rather likely, in

²⁵⁴ λ 543-52.

²⁵⁵ The debate between Odysseus and Ajax is more likely to have appeared along the fifth-century version of the myth, in which the Greeks arbitrated the quarrel themselves. See Part III: 160.

²⁵⁶ This is also how the scholiast understands the expression in Σ(HQV) λ 547 as well as Eustathius (*Od.* I 434). Cf. Hinckley 1972: 50-1.

²⁵⁷ Σ *Eq.* 1056.

the absence of further evidence, that it was the one rehearsed in the tradition to which the *Aethiopsis* belongs.²⁵⁸

Why did the Greeks choose to entrust the judgement to their enemies? The decision appears to stem from a similar concern in both versions: the unrest that favouring one of the two contenders may have provoked in the army. According to the scholiast of Σ(HQV) λ 547 (which refers to the version alluded to in the *Odyssey*), Agamemnon handed over the task of arbitrating the quarrel to some Trojan prisoners, for fear that he might expose himself to the criticism of the losing party, whomever it turned out to be. The scholiast of Σ *Eq.* 1056 reports that in the *Ilias Parva* Nestor, probably for the same reasons, recommended that the Greeks overhear what the Trojans' opinion was on the matter.²⁵⁹ This scholiast indicates that the girl denigrating Ajax speaks Ἀθηνᾶς προνοία.²⁶⁰ This detail corroborates Proclus' indication that Odysseus won κατὰ βούλησιν Ἀθηνᾶς in this poem. Athena's role in the version of the *Aethiopsis* remains unknown, but Odysseus' account in the *Odyssey* indicates that she took an active part in the judgement.²⁶¹

According to Apollodorus,²⁶² Athena's only role consisted in making Ajax mad (ὑπὸ Ἀθηνᾶς μανείς), as he planned to take revenge on the Greeks. His account, however, is probably influenced by Sophocles' *Ajax*, for it disagrees with our other sources, as we shall see.²⁶³ Proclus does also allude to the killing of cattle in his summary of the *Ilias Parva*, but the story he recounts differs from Apollodorus' on two crucial points:

Ἡ τῶν ὀπλῶν κρίσις γίνεται καὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς κατὰ
βούλησιν Ἀθηνᾶς λαμβάνει, Αἴας δ' ἐμμανὴς γενόμενος
τὴν τε λείαν τῶν Ἀχαιῶν λυμαίνεται καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἀναιρεῖ.²⁶⁴

Ajax becomes mad by himself, after he loses against Odysseus (owing to Athena), and this leads him to slaughter the Greeks' cattle and to kill himself. No mention is made of his endeavour to murder the Atreidae as well as Odysseus, and none of his actions are averted by Athena.

²⁵⁸ Severyns 1928: 331.

²⁵⁹ Σ *Eq.* 1056.

²⁶⁰ See Bravo 2001: 66-9.

²⁶¹ λ 547. Cf. Eust. *Od.* I 433, 43-5.

²⁶² *Epit.* V 6.

²⁶³ Apollodorus is known for incorporating 'material from other sources such as tragedy' (West 2003: 13).

²⁶⁴ Proclus, summary of the *Ilias Parva*, ll. 208-10.

It thus seems that the episode of the ὄπλων κρίσις went along these lines in early Greek hexameter poetry: Agamemnon (on the instigation of Nestor in the *Ilias Parva*) thought that the quarrel between Ajax and Odysseus would be better arbitrated by some Trojans. However, Athena, determined to make Ajax lose, managed to interfere in the judgment, thereby provoking the hero's defeat. His anger and madness followed.

2) The anger and madness of Ajax

- Why did Ajax become mad?
- How did this happen?

In his summary of the *Ilias Parva*, quoted above, Proclus omits to explain why Ajax became mad. It is, however, certainly not because of Athena, since the goddess is already mentioned, a few words before, for her intervention in the judgement. Rather, the phrasing suggests that Ajax became mad as a consequence of his defeat. A reference was apparently also made to the episode in the *Iliou Persis*, even though the hero did not even feature in the poem:²⁶⁵

τοῦτο ἔοικε καὶ Ἀρκτίνος ἐν Ἰλίου πορθήσει νομίζειν ἐν οἷς φησιν·

αὐτὸς γὰρ σφιν ἔδωκε πατήρ <γέρας> Ἐννοσίγαιος
 ἀμφοτέροις· ἕτερον δ' ἐτέρου κυδίων' ἔθηκεν·
 τῷ μὲν κουφοτέρας χεῖρας πόρεν, ἔκ τε βέλεμνα
 σαρκὸς ἐλεῖν τμηξαί τε καὶ ἔλκεα πάντ' ἀκέσασθαι·
 τῷ δ' ἄρ' ἀκριβέα πάντα ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἔθηκεν
 ἄσκοπά τε γινῶναι καὶ ἀναλθέα ἰήσασθαι·
 ὅς ῥα καὶ Αἴαντος πρῶτος μάθε χλωμένοιο
 ὄμματά τ' ἀστράπτοντα βαρυνόμενόν τε νόημα.²⁶⁶

5

Two symptoms, that enabled Podalirios, the brother of Machaon, to detect the hero's insanity, are listed in the fragment: bright eyes and a distressed mind. Ajax's βαρυνόμενόν νόημα appears to have been the trigger to his madness. This seems to be corroborated by several accounts: Odysseus explains that Ajax was angered (κεχολωμένος) because of his victory,²⁶⁷ Apollodorus has him troubled by grief (ὑπὸ λύπης ταραττεται) for the same reason,²⁶⁸ and so does Pindar who presents the hero's suicide as a direct cause of

²⁶⁵ Kullmann (1960: 225, 359) argues that originally the *Aethiopis* and the *Iliou Persis* were part of the same poem, since both poems were attributed to Arctinus. This may be possible, but no further evidence supports the hypothesis. It is very likely, nonetheless, that each poem drawing on the 'matter of Troy' would have originally rehearsed the entire story (Burgess 2003: 143-8).

²⁶⁶ *Iliou Persis*, fr. 2 [West] from Σ(T) λ 515.

²⁶⁷ λ 543-4.

²⁶⁸ *Epit.* V 6. He is following the version given in Sophocles' *Ajax* here.

his anger (χολωθείς).²⁶⁹ Anger and madness were closely connected in antiquity.²⁷⁰ In his treatise on anger, Seneca explains that anger is the quickest way to insanity. He illustrates his point, then, by invoking the example of Ajax: ‘*Aiacem in mortem egit furor, in furorem ira.*’²⁷¹ Consequently, it seems clear that in early Greek hexameter accounts Ajax was first overwhelmed by anger after his defeat which then led to madness.

3) The suicide of Ajax

- Why does Ajax kill himself?
- Is he still mad when he does so?
- What about his burial?

All our accounts agree on the reasons that lead Ajax to commit suicide. The negative emotion that he felt when he lost (anger, or grief) drove him to madness, and he killed himself as a result. The movement from madness to suicide may be slightly unexpected, but appears to have been rather natural for the Greeks. At any rate, it seems so to Helen, in the play of the same name:

Τε. οἰκεῖον αὐτὸν ὤλεσ’ ἄλμ’ ἐπὶ ξίφος.
Ελ. μανέντ’; ἐπεὶ τίς σωφρονῶν τλαίη τὰδ’ ἄν;

Euripides, *Helen* 96-7

The version transmitted in the *Ilias Parva*, however, differs on one point.²⁷² In the poem, Ajax apparently killed the Greeks’ cattle (λαία), before ending his own life. Both actions were performed subsequently to his madness. Although this provides a precedent to the slaughter of the cattle in Sophocles’ *Ajax*, the similarity stops here. In the early epic tradition, Athena stops meddling with the events once she has obtained Ajax’s defeat, while, in the play, she only starts intervening at this point of the story. It follows that Ajax had a motive of his own for killing the cattle, and was not being misled by some illusions that the goddess cast.

By destroying the cattle, Ajax was perhaps aiming at depriving the Greeks of what he had earned them with his might. This would echo Achilles’ complaint to Agamemnon in A, 161-71, in which he expresses his frustration at the lack of gratitude for all the booty he is able to bring back and share, since he

²⁶⁹ *Nem.* 7: 35-6.

²⁷⁰ Harris 2001: 63-4, 344-5; Konstan 2013: 435ff.

²⁷¹ *De Ira* II 36, 4-5.

²⁷² Holt (1992: 319) thinks that the slaughter of the cattle was an innovation of the *Ilias Parva*. This is possible, although it was probably not triggered by Athena.

is so strong. Furthermore, Athena, in the *Iliad*, bears the epithet ἀγελείη.²⁷³ Accordingly, by preventing Ajax from receiving Achilles' arms, she punishes him in terms that correspond to her field of competence, that is to say to one of her τιμαί, for, in so doing, she deprives him of the prize of ἀριστεία.²⁷⁴ This is rather ironical, since it is supposedly his excessive zeal in the pursuit of this prize that leads him to reject the goddess's help. The word λεία that Proclus uses to refer to the cattle means in reality '«butin» sous toutes ses formes',²⁷⁵ and Athena's epithet is obviously composed of the term: ἀγελείη = ἄγουσα λείαν.²⁷⁶ Therefore, Ajax's decision to kill the cattle in the *Ilias Parva* is probably to be connected to his conflict with the goddess. His vengeance would have consisted in a complete withdrawal of all the advantages his presence at Troy brought to the army, so that they might feel his absence, and understand how much they owed him; this parallels the case of Achilles, except that his plan would have been pushed to the extreme, and thus final.

Finally, let us examine the question of Ajax's burial. Porphyry, as quoted by Eustathius, reports that, in the *Ilias Parva*, Ajax was buried after his death (instead of being cremated as epic heroes usually are) because of the anger of the king.²⁷⁷ This comment has led scholars to wonder what was the motif for Agamemnon's anger. Two answers have been suggested: Agamemnon was angry because Ajax tried to kill him (i), or because he committed suicide (ii). However, none of these answers are plausible, for both cremation and burial were common practice throughout the Dark Ages, and the archaic period.²⁷⁸ It would consequently be rather odd if Ajax's burial was originally conceived of as a punishment. Rather, it is more likely that Ajax was traditionally buried for another reason, which ceased to be understood at some point. In these conditions, the 'anger of the king' would simply be a failed attempt to explain this oddity.

²⁷³ Δ 128; E 765; Z 269, 279; O 213.

²⁷⁴ Awarding the prize of the ἀριστεία was a practice which occurred when spoils were distributed in the army (cf. Hdt. VII 227; VIII 11.2, 17, 124; IX 71, 74, 105. On the question, see Pritchett 1974: 276-90; Hamel 1998: 64-70.

²⁷⁵ Chantraine s.v. λεία. See also Beekes s.v. λεία.

²⁷⁶ Ἀγελείη: Ἡ Ἀθηνᾶ, ἡ ἄγουσα λείαν ἀπὸ τοῦ πολέμου, ὃ ἐστὶν [λαφυραγωγία· ἥτοι] ἡ λαφυραγωγὸς [Ἀθηνᾶ]. Ἡ ὅτι ἡγεῖται λαῶν (*Ergm. Magn.*). See also LFE s.v. ἀγελείη. The epithet, which is exclusive to Athena, is used five times in the *Iliad* (Δ 128; E 765; Z 269, 279; O 378) and thrice in the *Odyssey* (γ 378; ν 359; π 207). In K 460, she is called by a synonym, ληῖτις, while in Alcaeus fr. 262.9 *SLG* she is qualified by the adjective πολὺλαῖς (giver of much booty). Interestingly, the scholiast of Σ K 460 notes that she is ἡ παραιτία γιγνομένη τοῦ λείαν λαβεῖν. Athena's function as 'provider of booty' seems thus well established in archaic literature. Athena is never called ἀγελείη in a passage linked with Ajax, but this is to be expected, as they are never in the presence of one another.

²⁷⁷ Eust. *Il.* I 439, l. 34-5. Eustathius explains that Ajax was put in a σορός. This word can mean cinerary urn (as in Ψ 91), or coffin in classical Greek (Hdt. I 68, II 78; Ar. *Ach.* 691, *Lys.*: 600). Pausanias and Philostratus both report an anecdote about the huge size of Ajax's bones (Paus. I 35.5; Philostr. *Her.* XIII 7). Quintus of Smyrna has Ajax cremated, but the pyre is put out before the bones are reduced to ashes (Quint. Smyrn. V 653-6).

²⁷⁸ Holt 1992.

As mentioned earlier, it appears that in a lost tradition the Trojans killed Ajax by throwing earth (πηλός) at him. The parallel that can be drawn with the death of Caineus suggests that burying someone in earth or covering him in stone was a standard manner in myth of getting rid of an invulnerable enemy.²⁷⁹ Therefore, the detail about Ajax's burial may perhaps be the reminiscence of this alternative tradition of his death.

Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno: one or two Ajaxes?

Now that we have discussed the constitutive elements of Ajax's *gesta* in early Greek hexameter poetry, let us return to the question of the Lesser Ajax. As discussed above, it has been suggested that the two Ajaxes might originally have been one single character. Although the poet(s) of the *Iliad* is careful to distinguish between them, the Lesser Ajax only seems to appear together with his namesake on the battlefield,²⁸⁰ sometimes even making 'a jack-in-the-box intrusion,'²⁸¹ in particular after the use of the traditional formula Αἰάντε.²⁸²

Whether or not these two heroes stem from the same figure is perhaps not a crucial issue *per se* as such with regard to the reception of Telamonian Ajax. However, since their myth presents an intriguing array of parallels, it is, nonetheless, worth exploring this possibility, as it may shed more light on Telamonian Ajax. In this section, I shall examine how some of the constitutive elements as well as more specific details in the myth of the Lesser Ajax find an echo in the *gesta* of his homonym.

The Lesser Ajax is famous for the hatred Athena harbours towards him. In the *Iliad*, the goddess makes him tumble and fall in cow dung, as he competes in the footrace (which he otherwise would have won).²⁸³ In the *Odyssey*, Proteus mentions, in his account of the hero's death, that he is ἐχθόμενος Ἀθήνῃ.²⁸⁴ Yet, as Strabo notes, Homer does not specifically mention Ajax's outrage to Cassandra, and hence leaves

²⁷⁹ Bremmer 2015b: 277.

²⁸⁰ Even during Patroclus' funeral games, the two Ajaxes do not interact with one another. In fact, they never compete against each other.

²⁸¹ Page 1959: 273. As Nilsson (1933: 258) notes, characterisation of the Lesser Ajax is absent from the *Iliad*.

²⁸² N 66ff., 197ff.

²⁸³ Ψ 774-7.

²⁸⁴ δ 502.

the hostility of the goddess unexplained.²⁸⁵ Interestingly, he is saved from his shipwreck by Poseidon, but is nonetheless drowned in the end because of the arrogant speech he utters: φῆρ' ἀέκητι θεῶν φυγέειν μέγα λαῖτμα θαλάσσης. His ἀσέβεια is thus what provokes his death, which is arguably the case with Telamonian Ajax in early Greek hexameter poetry, as has been proposed earlier in this thesis.²⁸⁶

The famous episode of Cassandra's outrage may, at first, not appear to find any correspondence in Telamonian Ajax's *gesta*. However, the manner in which Alcaeus recounts the scene in fr. 262 *SLG* makes it reminiscent of the episode of Greater Ajax's madness, as the Lesser Ajax is portrayed as being seized by λύσσα:

Αἴας δὲ λῦσσαν ἦλθ' ὀλόαν ἔχων 16
 ἐς ναῦο]ν ἄγνας Πάλλαδος ἄ θεῶν
 θνάτοι]σι θεοσύλαιοι πάντων
 αἶνο]τάτα μακάρων πέφυκε·²⁸⁷

| 16 Αἴας δὲ Merkelbach | 17 ἐς ναῦο]ν Page and Kassel | 18 θνάτοι]σι Page | 19
 αἶνο]τάτα Page

The word λύσσα refers to a state of frenzy induced by martial rage,²⁸⁸ and also appears to be used in relation to Greater Ajax.²⁸⁹ Furthermore, at line 9, Alcaeus specifies that the Lesser Ajax offends Athena πολυλαΐς.²⁹⁰ This is significant because this epithet gives the impression of being a variant of the Homeric epithet ἀγελείη, which precisely refers to the Athena that, traditionally, the Greater Ajax had angered. Moreover, the goddess is called πολέμω δοτήρ at line 24, which is very much in the same vein.

In addition to this, the death of both heroes appears to involve stones or earth in one way or another. In the *Odyssey*, Poseidon provokes the Lesser Ajax's death by striking the Gyrae rocks,²⁹¹ while a

²⁸⁵ XIII 1, 40. Athena's wrath is mentioned at γ 135 (by Nestor), δ 502 (by Proteus as told by Menelaus), and ε 108-9 (by Hermes), but Oilean Ajax's crime remains untold in the Homeric poems (Anderson 1997: 78-80). The exact nature of Ajax's outrage is not clear at all, and seems to have varied. According to Mazzoldi (1997), in our extant literary sources from the archaic and classical period, the emphasis is put on Ajax's ἀσέβεια. Cassandra's rape is unequivocally alluded to for the first time only in Lycoph. *Alex.* 348ff. On the representations of the scene in archaic and classical art, see Anderson 1997: 199-202.

²⁸⁶ The Lesser Ajax's boast is quite similar in substance to what Telamon Ajax told his father before leaving Troy (*Aj.* 767-9).

²⁸⁷ Fr. 262: 16-9. Αἴας is a conjecture, but ὁ Ἀ[ό]κρος at l. 22 makes it very likely.

²⁸⁸ Λύσσαν ἔχων ὀλόην is found in *Il.* I 303, and thus perhaps is an epic formula.

²⁸⁹ Quint. Smyrn. V 404; Σ Lycoph. 456; Σ *Aj.* 706. Interestingly, Bremmer (2015b: 277-8) links the motif of invulnerability to ecstatic warriors like the Nordic *berserker* who went 'berserk', a fury of which the Greek equivalent precisely is λύσσα.

²⁹⁰ The usual cult name for this Trojan Athena is Ἰλιάς, which has been connected to the non-Homeric form of the Lesser Ajax's patronym: Ἰλεύς (Farnell 1921: 302). It is attested in Pindar (*Nem.* 9.110), and apparently came from the Hesiodic tradition (Hdn. Περὶ ὀρθογραφίας: 559; *Etymologicum Gudianum* s.v. Ἰλεύς; Eust. *Il.* 158-9.). This means that both Ajax would share a cult with Athena. The Lesser Ajax at Troy (Athena Ilias), and Telamonian Ajax at Megara (Athena Aiantis).

²⁹¹ δ 506-7. See also Lycoph. *Alex.* 390-5; Philostr. *Imag.* II 13.

tradition had the Trojans kill Greater Ajax by throwing earth at him.²⁹² Moreover, Apollonius reports that the Lesser Ajax was buried by Thetis (because no one else was there aside from her),²⁹³ and both Ajaxes went to the White Island according to Pausanias.²⁹⁴ Finally, the respective genealogies of both heroes appears to share common names. For instance, the first two Locrian maidens who were sent to Troy in order to propitiate Athena Ilias (for the rape of Cassandra by the Lesser Ajax) were named Periboia and Cleopatra.²⁹⁵ Periboia is the same name as that of Ajax's mother, while Cleopatra is the feminine form of Patroclus.²⁹⁶ Furthermore, the maidens were apparently chosen from the noblest families in Locris;²⁹⁷ that is to say from the Αἰάντριοι, according to a third century inscription discovered in western Locris that refers to these maidens.²⁹⁸ Another interesting connection between the two Ajaxes' genealogies is found in the person of Alcimache.²⁹⁹ Alcimache, who bears a name particularly fitting for an Aeacid, is indeed reported to be the daughter of Aeacus by a scholiast,³⁰⁰ although the latter makes her not the mother of the Lesser Ajax, but that of his stepbrother Medon.³⁰¹

The consequence of all this is that the surprisingly numerous points of contact that exist between the myths of both Ajaxes seem to suggest that the two heroes might have originated from the same character, as the homonymy of their name also indicated. This probably dates to a very early period (Mycenaean?), and perhaps may be explained by the fact that at some point the stories about this 'Ur-Ajax' evolved differently, as they were remembered by the members of two distinct communities which had become isolated from one another. The Ajax of each community would have then become irreconcilable with his namesake, and accordingly they became two distinct characters. Whatever may have led to the creation of two Ajaxes in the tradition of the Trojan War, this 'Ur-Ajax' theory, if correct, considerably

²⁹² See above: 39-40.

²⁹³ Σ(D) N 66.16-9.

²⁹⁴ Paus. III 19.13.

²⁹⁵ Σ Lyc. 1141 (referring to Timaeus); Apollod. *Epit.* VI 20. The custom is authenticated from many sources: for instance, Σ(D) N 66.20-3; Strab. XIII 1.40; Plut. *De sera* 12. The question of the Locrian maidens has received considerable attention from scholars, for a complete but brief overview of the matter, see Hornblower 2015: 409-13.

²⁹⁶ Patroclus is related to the Aeacidae in some traditions: his father, Menoetius, is either the son of Aegina by Actor (Σ(A) Σ 10-1a; Σ *Ol.* 10.107) or of Aeacus (Hes. fr. 212a MW).

²⁹⁷ Polyb. XII 5.

²⁹⁸ *IG* IX, 1² 3:706 (280 BCE).

²⁹⁹ Homer names Eriopis as the mother of the Lesser Ajax (N 697), but Eriopis and Alcimache may be the same person (*Naupactica* fr.1).

³⁰⁰ Σ(T) N 694b.

³⁰¹ Σ(T) O 333c, 336c. Furthermore, Alcimache does not descend from Aeacus when she is reported to be the Lesser Ajax's mother (Σ(T) O 333c).

strengthens my case regarding the pre-Iliadic *gesta* of Telamonian Ajax, as this means that we would then find echoes of the story of Athena's hostility as well as of the motif of invulnerability in the myth of Lesser Ajax.³⁰²

³⁰² The motif of invulnerability would perhaps be hinted at by the Lesser Ajax's *λύσσα* (see n290) combined with the importance of stones in his myth.

CONCLUSION

οὔτις ἄνευ θεῶν
ἀρετὰν λάβεν, οὐ πολὺς, οὐ βροτός.
θεὸς ὁ πάμμητις·

— Simonides, fr. 526

If the assumption that the *Iliad* draws on ‘oral epic traditions’ – of which poems like the *Aethiopsis*, the *Ilias Parva*, the *Catalogue of Women* and the *Megalai Ehoai* are direct or indirect witness – is correct,³⁰³ there are two further observations that should be made, based on the results derived from the preceding discussions.³⁰⁴ The first specifically pertains to the nature of the figure of Ajax, while the second one is a more general point concerning the *Iliad* and how its treatment of Ajax informs us on some of its strategies in the negotiation between traditional material and its own agenda, or aesthetics.

Several issues about particular aspects of the myth of Ajax have been raised by the comparison of our sources in early Greek hexameter poetry. In fact, it seems that nearly all elements of his story had to be argued in some manner or another; even his suicide, which is the core of his narrative, presented some obscure or odd elements. On the basis of this simple observation, two questions may be posed: was the thread of Ajax’s narrative traditionally forming a consistent and definite unit? And if it was the case, what factors led to its fragmentation?

In order to answer these questions, let us first review the problems we encountered; we had to discuss his supposed invulnerability, his role as a retriever of the corpse of fallen allies, his relationship to the gods, the ὅπλων κρίσις and his suicide. Now it happens that if the hypothesis about the early existence of the invulnerability motif is correct, most of the other odd points start making perfect sense: if traditionally Ajax could not be wounded, then this provides at least an interesting context to his refusal of

³⁰³ If a poem, let say us the *Aethiopsis*, was composed after the *Iliad*, but derives from an older epic, for instance **Memnonis*, then it would constitute an indirect witness of that earlier epic. On the other hand, if this poem was fixed or semi-fixed (in the sense that being an oral poem it was still subjected to multiformity, even though it could be identified as a ‘given poem’ by the audience) at a very early stage – that is before the *Iliad* – then it must be considered as a direct witness.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Burgess 2012: 168; 170.

Athena's help. Furthermore, it also gives a good reason for explaining why he is *par excellence* a *Leichenkämpfer*. Finally, it gives Athena a motive – Ajax's ὕβρις against her – for inducing his downfall. Furthermore, it may also account somehow for Ajax's very singular – for an epic hero in any case – death. If Ajax cannot die on the battlefield, suicide is actually a way to eliminate the character in the story. Hence, I would like to argue that once Ajax's invulnerability is restored in the background, his narrative simply makes more sense.

This thesis is unfortunately unverifiable, but arguably it brings a substantial gain: it allows one to shed new light on the figure of Ajax, as it brings together all the different stories about him into a coherent myth, narratively speaking. The fragmentation of his *gesta* reflects some kind of accident in the chain of its transmission. This was probably caused by the manner in which the figure of Ajax is treated in the *Iliad*, in conjunction with the authoritative status the poem achieved from the late sixth century onwards.

As discussed throughout Part I, the poet(s) of the *Iliad* made many innovations regarding the traditional material he inherited. It is difficult to evaluate how conservative other epic poems were, since we possess so little of them, but the fact that their content appears to correspond to the oldest epic scenes painted on vases suggests that they were faithful witness (at least regarding Ajax) of the tradition they inherited.³⁰⁵ This does not necessarily mean that their quality was inferior to that of the *Iliad*. Rather, it neatly shows the poems' different agendas.³⁰⁶

For instance, the *Iliad* tends to censor most aspects that pertain to the wonderful. Accordingly, the invulnerability motif would have constituted an easy target of this strategy.³⁰⁷ The emphasis on unity, which is a defining feature of the Homeric poems according to Aristotle, also seems to have greatly influenced what epic material to include or not in the poem.³⁰⁸ Since the *Iliad* focuses mainly on Achilles' character, some elements have been privileged over others in the process of highlighting the distinctive traits of his figure.

³⁰⁵ It seems that the Homeric poems are quite unique compared to other early Greek hexameter poems in the manner in which the traditional material that is received in them has been adapted and organised. Burgess (2005) calls them *metacyclic* epic. Cf. also Finkelberg 1998: 151-155; 2003: 79.

³⁰⁶ Needless to say that I am considering the poems at the time of their composition here, not of their fixation in written form.

³⁰⁷ Griffin 2001 [1977].

³⁰⁸ Ar. *Poet.* 1451a-b.

Perhaps for these reasons, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were perceived as different from the other epic poems, and the special status they acquired in the Western literary tradition through their centrality to Athenian public education and culture had a huge impact on the manner in which they were subsequently regarded by scholars. Being seen as the starting point of all literature, as the works of the insuperable poet Homer, everything that contradicted the Homeric poems, would be deemed as the work of later (and most of the time less competent) poets, the *νεώτεροι*, neglecting consequently completely the fact that these two poems were themselves already responding and negotiating with an old and well-established tradition.

Thus, the traditional early epic myth of the figure of Ajax has been the victim of the resounding success of the *Iliad*. In fact, once the content of the *Iliad* (with its aesthetics which are so sparing in supernatural motifs) became the norm, every allusion to the hero's invulnerability, for instance, would be labelled as inauthentic and derivative – that is post-Homeric.

PART II

AJAX IN AEGINA

INTRODUCTION

*Es nehmet aber
Und giebt Gedächtniß die See,
Und die Lieb' auch heftet fleißig die Augen,
Was bleibet aber, stiften die Dichter.*

Hölderlin, *Andenken*: 56-9

In the preceding part of this thesis, I have examined the figure of Ajax in Early Hexameter Poetry, beginning with the premise that Homeric poetry did not inaugurate a new tradition upon which all other Greek epics rest (as came to be widely believed at least from the fourth century BCE onwards), but instead received and adapted some pre-existing tradition(s). The analysis conducted has led to the establishment of some constitutive elements of Ajax's *gesta*, thereby allowing us to determine which characteristics distinguish him from other epic heroes. We shall now shift our focus onto the island of Aegina. This place is of great importance for this study because the Aeginetans believed that Aeacus was born on their island,¹ and thus that they, of all the Greeks, had primacy over his descendants, including Ajax.

I wish to consider here the manner in which Ajax has been received in an Aeginetan context, approximately from the establishment of the Athenian democracy until the subjugation of Aegina.² This period of time is naturally determined by the date of the extant cultural production originating from Aegina. By coincidence, these years happen to be particularly relevant, since they correspond to a moment of intense rivalry between Athens and Aegina; a moment that sees continuous effort on the part of each πόλις to assert or re-assert their primacy over Ajax.

The odes that Pindar and Bacchylides composed for Aeginetan patrons constitute our primary set of evidence regarding the reception of Ajax in Aegina, and will therefore be the main object of this analysis. In addition to literary sources, iconographical witnesses include the pediments of the Aphaea temple on which several figures, one of whom is most probably Ajax, are seen fighting. Apart from that,

¹ *E.g.* Hes. *Cat.* fr. 53; *Nem.* 7.82 ff.; *Nem.* 8.6 ff.; *Isthm.* 8.16 ff.; *Pae.* fr. 6; Bacchyl. *Ode* 9, 13.

² Little is known about the state of affairs between Athens and Aegina before this.

very little is left of the cultural artefacts made in Aegina at the time. Vase painting, for instance, cannot be used as evidence, as most of the pots from the archaic and classical periods that have been found on Aegina are of Attic origin, or cannot be distinguished from Attic works.³

Eleven poems by Pindar and two fragmentary odes by Bacchylides for Aeginetan victors are still extant.⁴ Since the Aeginetans claimed that their island was the motherland of all the Aeacidae – because they all descended from Aeacus who was born there from the union of Zeus and the nymph Aegina – it is no surprise to find this family of heroes featuring prominently in these poems.⁵ This has not escaped the notice of several scholars who have recently published on the subject, as there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of local traditions to the understanding of ἐπινίκια.⁶ The Aeginetans' strong connection to the Aeacidae has been, therefore, central to all the recent attempts at integrating the epichoric dimension to the study of these poems. Paradoxically, the strong emphasis put on the group formed by these heroes (rather than on each of them individually) seems to have concealed from view Ajax's striking preponderance over his relatives in the Aeginetan odes by Pindar and Bacchylides;⁷ and this in spite of the fact that Ajax appears to have been the choice figure to elect for a poem composed in honour of an Aeginetan victor, a fact which was recognised as early as 1897 by Sir Frederic Kenyon, who mentioned this notion in the preface to the *edition princeps* of Bacchylides' poems.⁸ In fact, Ajax's centrality is as unmistakable as it is unexpected, but it has nonetheless failed to be addressed fully. In Part II, I shall therefore remedy the neglect, given that the question of the hero's importance in Aegina is embedded with that of his reception.

The whole argument of Part II rests on the assumption that Ajax was imbued with a strong political significance throughout the first half of the fifth century. This can be inferred clearly from a concatenation of several historical facts. We know, for instance, that the recently established Athenian

³ Boardman 1954: 185-6.

⁴ To this corpus should be added the last triad of *Pae.* 6, which originally was a προσόδιον to Aeacus (Rutherford 2001: 306, 336-8), and the fragmentary *Istbm.* 9 for Meidas of Aegina (Wilamowitz 1922: 169, n. 2; D'Alessio 2012: 31-35).

⁵ About the antiquity of the tradition, see Part I: 29ff.

⁶ Burnett 2005; Currie 2005; Fearn 2003, 2007, 2010; Athanassaki and Bowie 2011.

⁷ As we shall see, this is corroborated by the generally accepted presence of Ajax on the West pediment of the temple of Aphaea (ca 490 BCE).

⁸ 'Bacchylides chose the more obvious subject (and one frequently used elsewhere by Pindar in his Aeginetan poems) of Ajax, the great legendary hero of Aegina' (Kenyon 1897: xxxvi); 'the exploits of Ajax, which, as Pindar's Aeginetan odes show, was (*sic*) the almost inevitable topic of odes in honour of his countrymen' (Kenyon 1897: 113).

democracy named one of its newly created *φυλαί* after Ajax, even though the hero was not truly from Attica.⁹ In a context of overt Atheno-Aeginetan rivalry, this is not innocuous, as we shall see, and the fact that the emblematic victory at Salamis, in 480 BCE, took place at the hero's birthplace, made any claim for primacy over him all the more significant and politically charged.¹⁰ Great attention will thus be given to the historical context and, in particular, to the development of Aegina's position in the Panhellenic community. This will establish the necessary background in order to understand what is at stake in the representation of Ajax. This is essential to account for the particularities and variations of his treatment in works conceived for an Aeginetan audience.¹¹ In so doing, other sets of evidence such as historical reconstructions ranging from Herodotus to Plutarch, or descriptions of monuments by Pausanias will be brought into consideration. Through these, we shall be in a position to grasp what formed the main articulations of the Aeginetan's horizon of expectations with which Pindar, and Bacchylides inevitably had to engage in their poems.

Before getting to the heart of the matter, it must first be noted that the premise on which the following analysis rests differs from that of other studies on one crucial point. It is built on the assumption that the tradition in which Ajax and Telamon are members of the Aeacidae pre-dates the *Iliad* as we know it, and that the Aeginetan origin of Aeacus is also pre-*Iliadic*.¹² The main implication of this position consists in considering that the two versions were traditional and already had a Panhellenic status by the late seventh/early sixth century.¹³ The opposite view, presently adopted by many scholars, dates the

⁹ Ajax was considered a stranger in Athens, even after he was made one of the *πόλις* ten eponyms. Herodotus notes that he is an *ἀστυγείτων* and a *σύμμαχος* to the Athenians (V 66.2). Furthermore, it is possible that Ajax may have become one of the ten eponyms only after the construction of the Marathonian base in Delphi, contrary to what is generally thought. See Part III: 164ff.

¹⁰ On the link between hero cult and the importance of Ajax in Athens, see Kowalzig 2006; Scodel 2006.

¹¹ I do not wish to imply that all *ἐπινίκια* should be read politically. I think the case of Ajax is unique in that there is an inherent political significance attached to him during the first half of the fifth century in Aegina and Athens, and that, accordingly, the decision to represent him in this context is politically charged in itself. Furthermore, even when I detect a clear political agenda in a given ode, it seems obvious that it only constitutes one aspect of the poem's meaning; poets like Pindar and Bacchylides excel at addressing different kinds of audiences in their poem.

¹² In Part I: 29ff, I have contended that Peleus' and Telamon's kinship was well-established in the larger tradition of the Trojan War, and thus one that the poet of the *Iliad* was necessarily aware of.

¹³ Aeacus is presented as the son of the nymph Aegina who gave birth to him on the island in Hes. *Cat.* fr. 205. The *Catalogue* is dated c. 580–520 (MW: 205). In *Theog.* 1003–7, the two Aeacidae who got married with a Nereid are mentioned: Aeacus, Psamathae and their son, Phocus, as well as Peleus, Thetis, and Achilles. Aegina, Telamon and Ajax are not named, which is sometimes taken to reflect their supposedly late addition to the Aeacidae family. I do not think this is true; rather the omission can be explained by the especial focus on unions between gods and mortals at the end of the *Theogony* (West 1963: 431–2).

insertion of the Aeacidae into the Aeginetan mythological landscape rather late; that is after the composition of the *Iliad*.¹⁴ It follows then that Telamon and Ajax have to be integrated even later.¹⁵

This has strong implications for the manner in which one conceives of the Aeginetans' relationship to their epic heritage, as well as to the intrinsic significance of the Aeacidae in the poems of Pindar and Bacchylides. If the tradition of the Aeginetan Aeacidae enters the Panhellenic tradition only after the Homeric poems are constituted, then, the presence of these heroes in the Aeginetan ἐπινίκια is, to some extent, to be interpreted in relation to the promotion of epichoric traditions, and thus to be understood from this angle.¹⁶

My reading, on the contrary, is based on the understanding that epic monopolises the social memory shared by the Panhellenic community, thereby positioning through the stories of the characters that constitute it (and each time in an idiosyncratic manner coloured by epichorism) an individual, a family, or a πόλις within the broader macrocosm of the Greek world. Aeacus is the figure through which Aegina formulates its place in this world;¹⁷ the hero constitutes the core of Aeginetan identity as a Greek πόλις, alongside his descendants, by articulating its relationship to other Greek πόλεις. From what we can tell, no Aeginetan claims direct lineage from the Aeacidae, unlike kings of Molossia or the Philaidae in Athens. This is fundamental, and should be kept in mind when reading the corpus of Aeginetan odes, for it follows from this that the Aeginetans are connected with this family of heroes in virtue of their shared

¹⁴ The view stems from the problem posed by the fact that the Aeacidae are localised in Thessaly in the *Iliad*, and that Aegina is only mentioned once in the Homeric poems (in Diomedes' entry of the Catalogue of Ships: B 562). Thus, to suppose a late integration of the Thessalian Aeacid line (Aeacus-Peleus-Achilles) into the Aeginetan mythological landscape allows us to reconcile their Thessalian roots in the Homeric poems with their univocal identification as Aeginetan heroes in the fifth century. Competing theories have been surmised to explain the co-opting of the Aeacidae: (i) the Aeginetans took Aeacus from Homeric genealogy and anchored him on their island by inventing a nymph Aegina which was made possible by the fact that Aeacus' wife is not named in the *Iliad* (Zunker 1988: 230) (ii) same scenario, except that the Aeginetans did not invent a nymph Aegina, but exploited the fact that a nymph Aegina already existed on the island (West 1985: 162-4; Fowler 1998: 12-14) (iii) two independent Aeacus existed; to unify the two cognates a 'mythological contract' was made between the Thessalians and Aeginetans, thereby making their independent genealogies into a codependency (Nagy 2010: 59-60) (iv) an Aeacus both existed in Thessaly and on Aegina; the Aeginetans exploited the fact that the Thessalian Aeacus was not well characterised to link his descendants with their own Aeacus (Polinskaya 2013: 427). The main problem with these theories resides in the fact that the appropriation of the Aeacidae by the Aeginetans necessarily has to happen after the Homeric poems became influential (since Aegina is not linked to them in the *Iliad*), and that Telamon and Ajax, then, have to be inserted even later (since they are not directly linked to the Aeacidae in the *Iliad*). This seems to me very unlikely, for the tradition was already well-rooted in the sixth century.

¹⁵ For instance, Fearn 2007: 102-5; Hedreen 2010: 352, 367-8.

¹⁶ This leads Fearn, amongst others, to postulate that the production of choral lyric is linked to attempts by rival local aristocratic families to control cults on Aegina (Fearn 2010). The view is not sustained by available evidence. Pindar's and Bacchylides' poems, on the contrary, appear to reflect of a 'communitarian' agency rather than agonistic competitiveness between the members of the Aeginetan elite (Morrison 2010; Polinskaya 2013: 175-6).

¹⁷ Cardin (2010: 165-6), basing her argument on the hypothesis that book IV of the *Catalogue of Women* contained the story of the daughter of Asopos (West 1985: 100-3), defends the idea that both Aegina and Salamis traditionally were the daughters of this river. Pace Hirschberger (2004: 388-90).

origin. This means that the Aeacidae operate in an Aeginetan context on two levels: within Aeginetan society, they are the models to emulate, while, outside of this society, they serve to promote Aeginetan prowess, and thus Aegina's place in the Panhellenic community.

Consequently, it is my contention that the Aeginetan Ajax should be understood above all as a member of this family of heroes who represent, inside the community of the πόλις, the ideal citizens, at the same time as they mirror, through their interaction with other epic characters, Aegina's own relationship with the outside. Therefore, there is much to gain in comparing Ajax's portrayal in Aegina to that of his traditional epic, as the differences that can be detected shed light on the manner in which the Aeginetans relate – or are perceived to relate by foreign poets – to the rest of the Greeks, and especially to their main rivals, the Athenians.

The discussion of Part II shall first take a small digression into Aeginetan history in order to make more salient the specificities of Aegina amongst other Greek πόλεις, thus setting the scene of Ajax's reception in Aegina. Then, we will discuss Ajax's portrayal in Pindar's and Bacchylides' poems, as well as his representation on the pediments of the temple of Aphaea in relation to three distinct phases (broadly speaking) of Aeginetan history in the fifth century.

Some Elements of Aeginetan History

Aegina is situated in the centre of the Saronic Gulf, which is an ideal position for trade and exchanges of all sorts. It is located at the crossroads of several seaways: from Aegina, one has access to the Peloponnese, to the Western part of the Mediterranean through the Isthmus of Corinth, to Attica and the territories adjacent to it, and to the East (FIGURE 26). The existence of a sanctuary to Zeus Hellanios on the top of Mount Oros (in the centre of the island) is highly indicative of the Aegina's centrality, sitting as it does prominently in the middle of the Saronic Gulf.¹⁸

Aegina, like Megara and Athens, is geographically close to Salamis. However, its position is different from that of its two rivals, because its access to the Aegean Sea cannot be blocked from Salamis,

¹⁸ The sanctuary dates at least from the archaic period. The location seems to have been used for religious purposes from the Bronze Age onwards. 'Oros is the only place from which one can see all the coastal areas of the Saronic Gulf at the same time: from Poros (SW), to Epidayuros (W), Isthmus (NW), Megara (N), Salamis (N), Attica (NE), Piraeus (NE), and all the way down to Sounium (E). Conversely, the peak of Oros is visible from most coastal areas of the Saronic Gulf' (Polinskaya 2013: 323-31; 387-8). On Oros, cf. Kowalzig 2007: 203-7.



FIGURE 26

as this island is located substantially further into the Saronic Gulf. This was a major advantage for Aegina, and may explain why the Aeginetans, as far as it is possible to know, never sought to claim Salamis for themselves. Unlike the Athenians, and the Megarians, they must have seen little strategic benefit in controlling it. This is important, as it can be inferred from this that Aegina's connection to Telamon and Ajax was probably not related to a claim over Salamis, and therefore to territorial expansion. Consequently, the manner in which the Aeginetans articulate their personal relationship with Ajax and Telamon ought to be seen within a different paradigm to that of Athens, and Megara.

In the Bronze Age, Aegina and its main settlement Kolonna appear to have held a unique position in continental Greece.¹⁹ Traces of Minoan goods and technology from the early middle Bronze Age onwards, as well as the remainder of a large palace (between 230 and 680 m²), a steady influx of

¹⁹ See Figure 1.

imported ceramic pottery, and the presence of luxurious objects, both from abroad and crafted locally,²⁰ all suggest that Aegina was ahead of the other settlements on mainland Greece, as it benefited from regular exchanges with other civilisations of the Aegean. In fact, the city 'probably played an important role in acting as a mediator of goods and ideas - Minoan, Cycladic and Aeginetan - for the mainlanders at the dawn of Mycenaean civilisation.'²¹

Kolonna, although clearly anchored in Mycenaean civilisation, was never organised in the same fashion as the administrative palaces on mainland Greece. The site shows continuous occupation from the late Neolithic to the late Bronze Age,²² which is exceptional in Greece. The site itself appears to have been deserted for a short time at the end of the Bronze Age, but was soon used again for 'public feasting' by the Aeginetan population, as the discovery of numerous sympotic vases from the tenth to the ninth century suggests.²³ Trade was the main source of wealth from the early Bronze Age on, and the inhabitants of Aegina successfully adapted to the several changes in maritime trading networks that occurred from 3000 BCE to 1000 BCE.²⁴ Its independence from the other Mycenaean centres might possibly explain why it remained functional even after their collapse on mainland Greece. While so many palaces were burnt or occupied by force during the decline of Mycenaean civilisation, there is no trace of invasion on Aegina. Its inhabitants nonetheless suffered from the consequences of this unrest, as a decrease in population and activity is witnessed nearly everywhere in the Aegean around 1200 BCE.²⁵ Mycenaean culture remained productive on Aegina, and continued approximatively until the ninth century. It follows that its Dorian

²⁰ Gauß 2006: 165. On the 'Aeginetan Treasure,' cf. Higgins 1957, 1979; Fitton, Meeks and Williams 2009.

²¹ Niemeier 1995: 77; Gauß 2012.

²² Gauß 2010: 636.

²³ Jarosch-Reinholdt 2009; Polinskaya 2013: 245, n. 323, 432, n. 62.

²⁴ Klebinder-Gauß and Gauß 2015.

²⁵ Wiener 2007: 20.

adstratum originates in reality from Dorian settlers that mingled with the post-Mycenaean population, and not from conquest or migration of a Dorian population.²⁶

Salamis is likely to have been colonised by the Aeginetans in the Bronze Age.²⁷ In any case, it is certain that the palace on Aegina was built at an earlier date than the one on Salamis, while both of them are organised differently than the ones found on mainland Greece. Several objects discovered in the recent excavations on Salamis came from the East (Salaminian Cyprus and Egypt for instance), which suggests that its population was active in trading just like the Aeginetans.²⁸ An early connection between the πόλις of Aegina and Salamis would also make sense geographically, as Aegina is situated much closer to the old town of Salamis than is Athens.²⁹ The results of the excavations conducted on Aegina indicate that the πόλις was a major actor in the Greek world from the early archaic period onwards,³⁰ and that, consequently, ancient sources err when they present it as a dependant of Epidaurus or Argos in the seventh or sixth century. As Polinskaya demonstrates in her monograph on Aegina, Aeacus was most likely worshipped on the island from very early times – at any rate before the composition of the *Iliad*. In my view, this means that Aegina's association with the Aeacidae is old, well-established, and organic.

The upshot of this is that the fifth-century Aeginetans had inherited a complex set of identities that they could choose to activate or reactivate according to their circumstances. It follows, therefore, that what may best define them, rather than one ethnicity or the other, is the history of their long

²⁶ According to Figueira (1981: *LACP s.v.* Aegina), who bases his analysis on Hdt. V 83.1-2, Aegina 'had sub-political status under foreign hegemony' from the middle of the eighth century to the late seventh century. It was first under the hegemony of Argos, and then under that of Epidaurus, from which it gained independence after a violent secession. This view has recently been challenged by the results of excavations conducted on the island. Peloponnesian influence is only evidenced for a short time in the middle of the eighth century through the import of Argive pots, while Attic pots are found consistently from the tenth century onwards. Furthermore, the Aeginetan and Attic alphabets are very similar, as they only differ by two letters: γ and λ. Jeffery (1990: 67) describes the script of Attica 'as a cross between those of her two neighbours Aegina and Eretria'. Therefore, '[i]t appears very difficult to establish their [the Aeginetans'] original ethnic or dialectal background. The elements of material culture and language present a mix of Peloponnesian and Attic, or East Greek, influence' (Polinskaya 2013: 402).

²⁷ Pausanias (I 35.2) notes that an Aeginetan population following Telamon settled (ἐποικίσται) on Salamis. See *LGP s.v.* Salamis.

²⁸ Tartaron 2013: 236-9.

²⁹ Gauß and Smetana 2010. See Paus. I 35.

³⁰ Aegina was part of an amphictyony regrouping seven cities (Hermione, Epidaurus, Aegina, Athens, Prasiai, Nauplia, and Minyan Orchomenus) around the temple of Poseidon at Calauria (Strabo 8.374). Polinskaya (2013: 318) supposes that perhaps 'the amphictyony was primarily a political rather than a religious association, formed as a counter-weight to the Isthmian cult of Poseidon, and hence in opposition to Corinth and her control of the Isthmus'. Recent excavations have now shown that a god was worshipped at least from the eighth century on at Calauria, though the cult might have started even earlier (Hägg 2003; Wells 2003; Wells *et al.* 2004: 73). Polinskaya (2013: 418, 463) suggests that Aegina might have been one of the founding members of the amphictyony. On amphictyonies as *pre-πόλις* political structure, see Forrest 2002.

independence. Aegina was a small πόλις turned to the outside world, and thriving through trade. Given their rich Mycenaean past and the remarkable continuity attested on the island, the Aeginetans were not *nouveaux riches*, and their claim over the Aeacidae was probably genuine and well-founded, in spite of the island's conspicuous absence from the Homeric poems.³¹ In fact, they expressed their place within the Greek community through these heroes, and it is, therefore, doubtful that they would have had no figure to do so (or none that we can trace) before their appropriation of the Aeacidae.³² This refutes the traditional view – only based on literary sources that post-date Aegina's subjugation – that conceives of Aegina as a Doric πόλις which became powerful for a brief period of time in the early fifth century. This is crucial for the overall argument of Part II, since the idea that the Aeginetans grafted themselves onto the epic tradition, by forcefully co-opting the Aeacidae at a later stage, follows on from this misconception. Furthermore, on a purely speculative note, the close connection between Aegina and Salamis in the Bronze Age might perhaps be mirrored by the kinship of Aeacus, Telamon, and Ajax, suggesting thus that the mythical heroes of both islands might have been connected before the Thessalian branch ever existed.³³

To conclude, there is a last point that this short survey of Aeginetan history makes apparent: the members of the Aeginetan elite were very different from land-owning aristocrats such as the ones found in Attica, for instance.³⁴ Because of Aegina's lack of primary resources, its population had to turn to trade since its earliest history.³⁵ However, contrary to farming, trading is not an activity that can easily be delegated. How could someone without direct interest in the enterprise be trusted to come back? Therefore, it seems only legitimate to assume that the members of the Aeginetan elite themselves were in charge of trade.³⁶ Charaxos, the supposed brother that Sappho mentions in her newly-found poem,³⁷ provides a good parallel to support this hypothesis. This means the relationships between the different

³¹ Part III: 147ff. (in particular, p. 150n39).

³² *Pace* de Ste Croix 2004.

³³ The Mycenaean palaces on each island are like facing one another, which is a sign of connection in the Bronze Age (Houby-Nielsen 2009: 191).

³⁴ Hansen 2006: 5-17; Stoneman 2013: 30-3; Klebinder-Gauß and Gauß 2015; *pace* De Ste. Croix 2004: 41-2; 371-411.

³⁵ The topography of the island might also explain why the Aeginetans do not appear to have competed in equestrian events in spite of their wealth. On Aeginetan coins, see Kroll 1984; Sheedy 2012: 105-9.

³⁶ Kistler 2014: 9-11.

³⁷ Obbink 2014.

actors composing Aeginetan society necessarily responded to a different dynamic than those of a πόλις like Athens, which counted with powerful land-owning aristocracy throughout its history. In this regard, it should be kept in mind that Aegina stands apart from other Greek πόλεις with its uniquely stable political regime. There is not a single mention of a type of government other than εὐνομία: neither king (apart from the mythical figure of Aeacus) nor tyrant are recorded.³⁸

³⁸ The only mention of a conflict within Aeginetan society is that of Nicodromus' aborted attempt to establish a pro-Athenian government in the early fifth century (Hdt. VI 88-92).

THE FIGURE OF AJAX

IN POEMS FOR AEGINETAN PATRONS

We shall now proceed to the discussion of Ajax's reception in Aegina by analysing the particularities of his treatment in works conceived for an Aeginetan audience. As mentioned in the introduction, his figure was charged with strong political connotations throughout the first half of the fifth century in an Atheno-Aeginetan context at the least. However, even though his political dimension appears to be constant throughout this window of time, the Aeginetans' perception of the hero, and thus the significance they attributed to him, evolved (as is to be expected) and was shaped by circumstances. For this reason, the following analysis is organised chronologically in order to take the developments of Aeginetan society into account.

However, most of the odes Pindar and Bacchylides wrote in honour of Aeginetan athletes cannot be securely dated. Nine out of the eleven Aeginetan ἐπινίκια celebrate a victory at the Nemean or the Isthmian games, for which no complete list of victors appears to have been available to scholiasts, unlike those from the Olympian and Pythian games (to a certain extent).³⁹ Nevertheless, it is usually accepted that the historical context of the odes is pertinent to their overall meaning. Accordingly, scholars endeavour to date them by underlining the elements in the poems themselves that might be linked to a particular historical event.⁴⁰ The task is obviously arduous, and often determined by one's own interpretation of the poems, thereby resulting in level of consensus which is variable from one poem to another.

³⁹ Christesen 2007.

⁴⁰ Hubbard (1992: 77-9) provides good arguments in favour of 'historicising' readings of Pindar: 'historical allusions do not necessarily conflict with the epinician program, and may add one more dimension to the many forms of thematic parallelism which Pindar's choral lyric features' (p. 78).

Since it is necessary to take into account – at least to some degree – the date of composition of the poems for the purpose of the following discussion, we shall resort to an approximate chronology, and establish only in broad terms the manner in which the poems relate to one another diachronically. In order to achieve this, each poem will be situated on a timeline whose reference points are significant events of Aeginetan history from the first half of the fifth century. This should provide a framework that casts sufficient light on the circumstances that shaped Ajax's reception in Aegina, without rendering the validity of the analysis as dependent on accurate dating. The following three events have been selected to be the signposts that frame the broad chronology I will employ, as these best outline the different phases of Atheno-Aeginetan relations:

- i) The Persian Wars; Aegina is at the height of its naval power,⁴¹ and is feared by Athens, its main rival. The battle of Salamis is of particular importance, since the island is Ajax's homeland, and is thus directly connected to the hero. Moreover, there are strong disagreements among the Greeks regarding the prize of ἀριστεία awarded after the battle, as both Aeginetans and Athenians consider that they were the determining force behind the victory. This is noteworthy because Herodotus only mentions such a quarrel after the battle of Salamis has taken place. For instance, the awarding of ἀριστεία, and the distribution of the booty that follows after Plataea both take place smoothly in his account.⁴²
- ii) The *Pentecontaetia*; a period dominated by the formation of the Delian league in 478, which marks a turning point in the relationship between the Aeginetans and the Athenians. Athens starts receiving a regular tribute from the numerous members of the league so as to have the means to defend them. With the help of the Delian league, Cimon leads several successful campaigns abroad against Persian-occupied territories such as Eion, Scyrus, Byzantium, or the Thracian Chersonese, which are all rich in resources.⁴³ The war brings wealth and materials such as timber

⁴¹ The Eusebian Thalassocracy-list states that Aegina ruled the sea from 490 to 480. Such lists, however, should be used with some reservation, as they reflect the anachronistic agenda of their author. Although it is probably correct that Aegina dominated trade in the Aegean during this decade, it should not be inferred from this that the strength of the Aeginetan navy was necessarily new. Aegina's special prominence during this decade might simply be a consequence of the Ionic revolts that considerably weakened rival Greek πόλεις in the East. In any case, it should be apparent from the discussion in the preceding section that Aegina had been a strong maritime power since early times. Cf. Diod. Sic. XI 78.1-4 on Aeginetan self-confidence (and sheer size of their fleet) at the time of their final clash with Athens.

⁴² Hdt. IX 71-4, 80-1.

⁴³ This is where Cimon's father, Miltiades, used to be a tyrant.

to Athens, enabling the Athenians to increase the size of the navy, thereby establishing theirs as the most powerful fleet of the Greek world. This success is also made possible by the fact that the Athenian citizen body had dramatically increased with democracy: there were enough Athenian men to equip all these ships. Thus, after the Second Persian War, the more time passes, the more the power differential between Athens and Aegina widens, until Athens becomes the new and indisputable *θαλασσοκρατία*.⁴⁴ Aegina's geo-political situation is deeply affected by this change.

- iii) The conquest of Aegina by Athens in 457.⁴⁵ Cimon, who is a *πρόξενος* for the Athenians in Sparta and a defender of peace with the Hellenic league, is ostracised in 461. While he is away from Athens, a reform aimed at diminishing the power of the Areopagus, which he had attempted to oppose, is passed in the *ἐκκλησία*. This is a turning point in Athenian foreign policy. Pericles is henceforth able to promote a more aggressive policy, since no one is able to oppose him any longer.⁴⁶ An alliance is signed with the Argives (Sparta's enemy) and the Thessalians. War breaks out in 460-459. The Aeginetans lose seventy ships in a sea encounter against the Athenians, who then besiege them. In spite of the three hundred men sent to their rescue by the Lacedaemonians, they are forced to surrender to Athens in 457.⁴⁷

On this basis, one can broadly delineate the following periods:

- i. The Persian Wars (490-early 470s):
 - a. The decade following Marathon (480s)
 - b. Salamis and its immediate aftermath (480-early 470s)
- ii. The early years of the *Pentecontaetia* (early 470s-457)⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Interestingly, these years coincide with the start of what many scholars perceive as a new phase in Pindar's life. After the Second Persian Wars, the Greek world is profoundly changed, as a new balance of power emerges which dramatically affects the dynamics of interaction between the different actors of the Greek world. In addition to this, Pindar appears to compose his first poems for the Sicilian kings following their Olympic victories at the games of 476 BCE – he writes three or four poems for them that same year – and is invited to their court. This is usually considered to constitute an important turning point in his literary career, as it marks the shift between what could be called 'early' and 'late' Pindar' (Fogelmark 1972: 20-1; Finley 1968).

⁴⁵ Aegina is attacked in 458 BCE (just after the construction of Athens' long walls) and surrenders after a siege in 457 BCE. Aegina is apparently independent, and not a member of the Peloponnesian league (Figueira 1981a; 1993: 9-34). For an extensive discussion on the chronology of the *Pentecontaetia*, see *ATL* 158-83. A useful and detailed timeline can be found at pp. 175-9.

⁴⁶ This reform led by Ephialtes was aimed at increasing the power of the *δῆμος* by undermining the authority of the Areopagus (*Ath. Pol.* XXVI 1; *Plut. Per.* IX 4; *Cim.* XV 1). Cimon had fallen into disgrace after the Spartans dismissed him and his army which had come to assist them against the helots (*Cim.* XVI 4-7; *Paus.* I 29.8).

⁴⁷ *Thuc.* I 105.

⁴⁸ This period of time is delimited by the wake of Athens' rise to power until the outbreak of the First Peloponnesian War.

iii. Aegina's capitulation and the deportation of its population (457-431)

Finally, before proceeding to the analysis, I wish to specify how the question of performance is going to be treated. In terms of context and of the poems' audience(s), my assumptions are in line with the general scholarly consensus. I agree with the supposition that the circumstances of each of the Aeginetan odes are unique, as they are formed by a particular combination (and in some cases also by a particular mixture) of parameters regarding the performance, such as its place (directly at the games, at the victor's home, etc.), its nature (civic, cultic, personal), its reach (public or semi-public, for instance) and the type of performer(s) (solo-singer, a chorus, or a *κῶμος*). For our purpose, however, we only need to keep in mind their Panhellenic scope,⁴⁹ and, accordingly, the fact that Aegina's position within the Greek world is articulated through them, thereby imbuing the poems with political resonance.⁵⁰ The odes obviously also have a private dimension (*i.e.* a concern for the victor and his family and for their place in Aegina and in Greece), but this co-exists with the public and more political layer.⁵¹ I shall focus my analysis solely on the public aspect of the odes, since it is my contention that the Aeacidae – and thus Ajax – symbolically represent all the Aeginetans in virtue of the fact that they all share a common origin.

⁴⁹ By Panhellenic I mean that the ode was meant to be heard by a non-Aeginetan audience as well. Agócs (2009: 75) captures well the tension between the epichoric and the Panhellenic dimensions of the poems: 'the aristocratic *γένος* used the language of kinship and common ancestry to formulate familial bonds that reached across state borders. This resulted in forms of identity which were neither completely local nor in any sense Panhellenic'. See also Polinskaya 2010.

⁵⁰ On the different audiences of Pindaric odes, see Morisson 2012.

⁵¹ Kurke 1993.

AJAX IN AEGINA AT THE TIME OF THE PERSIAN WARS

(490-EARLY 470S)

In this section, I wish to analyse the reception of Ajax in Aegina at the time of the Persian Wars. Pindar composed many of his odes for Aeginetan victors during this period,⁵² and appears to have spent a lot of time on Aegina during this period, since he may have been a Theban πρόξενος.⁵³ In the poems we shall examine here, Pindar never fails to sing of the Aeacidae, and Ajax features predominantly among them.⁵⁴ The discussion is divided into two sub-sections. The first includes the odes that were composed in the decade following the First Persian War, while the second comprises those dating from the Second Persian War and its immediate aftermath. The organisation of the material reflects the fact that on the one hand, the time of the Persian Wars is regarded as a prosperous phase for Aegina – contrary to the periods covered by the subsequent sections, but that, on the other hand, it is worth making a distinction between the poems composed before and after the battle of Salamis, as Ajax takes on a new layer of meaning following this event. In this section, we shall also discuss the significance that Aphaea's pediments take in relation to their historical context and to the odes.

⁵² It is generally agreed – at least by most scholars interested in the dating of the odes – that *Nem.* 5, *Isthm.* 5, 6, and 8 were composed before 476, since the battle of Salamis is mentioned as a recent event in *Isthm.* 5.48-50 (Privitera: 198), and that we know that *Nem.* 5 and *Isthm.* 6, (commissioned by the same patron) were written before this poem. *Isthm.* 8.5-11 is usually understood to allude to the conduct of Thebes during the Second Persian Wars (Farnell 1930: 285; Finley 1955: 29, 143; Bowra 1964: 113-114; Köhnken 1975: 25; Carey 1981: 184; Privitera 1982: 228; Lefkowitz 1991: 45; Hubbard 2001: 396; Burnett 2005: 107ff). This is also supported on grounds of stylistic trend (Fogelmark 1972). The only ode in this group to strongly divide scholarship in terms of dating is *Nem.* 7. Pace Hornblower (2004: 223-4) who is sceptical regarding the dating of the group of odes dedicated to the sons of Lampon (*Nem.* 5, *Isthm.* 5 and 6).

⁵³ This may be suggested at *Nem.* 7.64-9 (Most 1985: 185). For a summary of the discussion on these lines, see Hornblower 2004: 177-80.

⁵⁴ The odes that mention Ajax are, in relative chronology, *Isthm.* 6, *Isthm.* 5, *Nem.* 7, *Nem.* 4, and *Nem.* 8. I take *Nem.* 5, *Nem.* 7, *Isthm.* 6, *Isthm.* 5, *Isthm.* 8 to be composed before the late 470s, *Nem.* 3, 4, 6 and *Ol.* 8 between the late 470s and 457 (the date of Aegina's subjugation), and, finally, I place *Pyth.* 8 and *Nem.* 8 after 457 (or slightly before). Arguments concerning the date of each poem are made individually, throughout the discussion.

Ajax in Aegina in the Decade Following Marathon

The first poems considered here regroup all the odes dedicated to the sons of Lampon except for the last, *Isthmian* 5, which unambiguously mentions the battle of Salamis.⁵⁵ Pindar's *Nemean* 5 and Bacchylides' *Ode* 13 – which was composed for the same occasion – are the earliest odes, and can confidently be dated before the battle of Salamis. The victory there is believed to date from the 480s, at a time when Athens' and Aegina's relationship was already tense.⁵⁶ We know from Herodotus that the two πόλεις were engaged in a long conflict which started (at the latest) from the establishment of Athenian democracy, and ended with the Aeginetans' deportation in 431. This period of hostility has been punctuated by several episodes of more or less direct confrontation, culminating in what he calls an ἀκήρυκτος πόλεμος. Unfortunately, Herodotus' account is confusing, thus making the exact chronology of the conflict hard to establish.⁵⁷ It is nonetheless certain that two major events irreversibly strained the relationship between Athens and Aegina in the decade that preceded Salamis. Firstly, the Athenians accused the Aeginetans of medism in 491, which forced the latter, under the pressure of the Spartans, to hand over some of their most prominent citizens as hostage; the Athenians' refusal to return the hostages after the First Persian War resulted in the deterioration of the situation. Secondly, the Aeginetan Nicodromus attempted to replace the regime on Aegina with a pro-Athenian democracy, an endeavour reportedly supported by the Athenians (Herodotus recounts that they had agreed to send a fleet to back his coup) which ended in

⁵⁵ Pace Hornblower (2004: 223-4) who contests the validity of the view. According to him, the fact that Pindar introduces his allusion to Salamis with νῦν does not constitute a very solid argument to date *Isthm.* 5 to 480 or 478.

⁵⁶ The Athenian trainer Menander is mentioned in both odes (*Nem.* 5.48-9; *Ode* 13.190-8) in spite of the unsympathetic reaction – the poets say – this might trigger in the audience. For this reason, scholars used to argue that the mention of Menander is unthinkable in a context of hostility between Athens and Aegina and thus that *Ode* 13 and *Nem.* 5 must date from before 490 (cf. Mommsen 1845: 47; Gaspar 1900: 63-4; Farnell 1932: 274, amongst others). However, the very fact that both poets feel that they have to justify their mention of Menander points to an already-existing climate of hostility between the two πόλεις. For a good summary of the different views on the date of *Nem.* 5 and *Ode* 13, see Fearn 2007: 342-350, where he comments on the positions held by Carey (1989), Pfeiffer (1995), and Machler (2004).

⁵⁷ Herodotus remains vague concerning the date of many of the episodes he rehearses about Athens' and Aegina's conflict. His account is further complicated by the fact that the information he gives are scattered throughout the *Histories* (V 79–90; VI 49–50, 61.1, 64–65.1, 73, 85–94). Moreover, they are digressions embedded within the frame of the main narrative, for he appears to be interested in Aeginetan history insofar as it sheds light on Athens' past. In V 81, he mentions the Aeginetans' ἐχθρῆς παλαιῆς towards the Athenians, which started with the episode of the appropriation of Damia and Auxesia (82-9), while he places the outbreak of the ἀκήρυκτος πόλεμος (81) between Athens and Aegina at the time of the war between Thebes and Athens (ca 500). Andrewes (1936/1937) is probably right to argue that the sequence of events does not start before 506 BCE. Following on his argument, Podlecki (1976) identifies three periods in the conflict (500-490; 490-480; 480 and later). See also Myres 1943; Helmbold 1952; Jeffery 1962; Figureira 1985, 1988; Irwin 2010b: 445-52.

failure.⁵⁸ Based on the interpretation of the lines cataloguing other victories won by a Psalychiad, the consensus is to place *Nemean* 5 and *Ode* 13 in the period between 489 and 481.⁵⁹ *Isthmian* 5, the last poem for Lampon's sons, mentions Salamis as a most recent event and, thus, can be dated to 480 or 478 BCE.

Before I begin to examine the way Ajax is represented in these poems, some considerations should be made regarding the parallel that was drawn between the two expeditions against Troy, and the Persian Wars. The relatively recent discovery of elegiac verses by Simonides composed shortly after the Persian Wars is our earliest testimony documenting the juxtaposition of the mythical expeditions against the Trojans and the historical events of the Greeks' victory over the Persians.⁶⁰ However, I would like to suggest that this association probably started shortly after the First Persian War, since the man of Marathon, Miltiades the Younger, belonged to a *γένος* and/or an *οἰκία*, which claimed ancestry from the Aeginetan Acacus through Ajax and his son Philaios.⁶¹ This is manifest in the *Histories*:

(...) Μιλτιάδης ὁ Κυψέλου, ἐὼν οἰκίης τεθριπποτρόφου, τὰ μὲν ἀνέκαθεν ἀπ' Αἰακοῦ τε καὶ Αἰγίνης γεγονώς, τὰ δὲ νεώτερα Ἀθηναῖος, Φιλαίου τοῦ Αἰαντος παιδὸς γενομένου πρώτου τῆς οἰκίης ταύτης Ἀθηναίου.⁶²

Therefore, Athens, whose democratic regime was still perceived overall as a threatening anomaly by other πόλεις, could earn more recognition on a Panhellenic level by asserting Miltiades' Aeacid lineage (while inserting it at the same time into Athens' mythological landscape in order to erase its Aeginetan roots). In this manner, they could claim a more prominent place in the epic heritage than the Athenian Menestheus permitted them to. Moreover, the portrayal of Marathon as a re-enactment of the Greeks' paradigmatic

⁵⁸ Herodotus (VI 88-9) explains that this happened after the Athenians' refusal to give back the Aeginetan hostages (and thus after 490), and that the Aeginetans killed seven hundred of their own people in reprisal. Figucira compellingly conjectures that Pericles' father, Xanthippus, may have been in command of the Athenian contingent, and that the expedition's failure would then have caused his ostracism (Figucira 1984). On ostracism, see Strauss 2013.

⁵⁹ The precise date of the poems is correlated to that of *Isthm.* 6 and *Isthm.* 5. Furthermore, the age of Lampon's sons within the poems constitute further evidence about the chronology. Pytheas is the eldest and is still a boy at the time of his victory, celebrated in *Nem.* 5 and *Ode* 13 (*Nem.* 5.6: σὺ πω γένυσσι φαίνων τερείνας ματέρ' οἰνάνθας ὁπώραν). The youngest, Phylachidas, is said to be a boy in *Isthm.* 6, but he is not referred to as such in *Isthm.* 5, and his older brother appears to be dead – maybe at Salamis. This is, at any rate, the way I understand ll. 56-63. As Silk (1998) shows, οἱ in l. 62 can only refer to Pytheas. Consequently, one may infer that if Pindar invites his younger brother – who is the victor celebrated in the ode – to send a song, with a crown (or his crown) and a μήτρα to him, it is to pay homage to Pytheas, who is now dead. Regardless of the interpretation of *Isthm.* 5.56-63, it is possible to deduce a gap of at least four years between the first and the last victories of the sons of Lampon (Fearn 2007: 342-50). See also Pfeijffer 1995.

⁶⁰ See Bagnall 2009: 293. On the analogy between the Trojan Wars and the Persian Wars, cf. Hall 1989:102; Hornblower 1996: 40; Boedeker 2001:121-6; Grethlein 2010. For a list of all the Persian War epigrams by Simonides, see Kowerski 2005: 151-60.

⁶¹ The term Philaid only appears once in ancient sources to designate Epicureus' *γένος* (Diog. Laert. X 1). In our passage Herodotus talks about the *οἰκία* of Miltiades, but it is generally accepted that the Philaidae, to which Miltiades belonged, were also a *γένος*. On what the terms *οἰκία* and *γένος* entail, see Cassin *et al.* 2014: 758.

⁶² Hdt. VI 35. Miltiades, son of Cypselus, is the uncle of Miltiades (the Younger).

victory over the βαρβαροι validated the Athenians claim over the Aeacidae, since it depicted them as their true heirs. Thus it follows that Ajax was an ideal figure to appropriate, for he was an Aeacid, he was well-rooted in Salamis, and Miltiades' family could claim direct descent from him.⁶³

The reason why I consider it likely that this process pre-dates the Second Persian Wars lies in the apparent behaviour of the Aeginetans at the time: they replaced the existing pediments from the temple of Aphaea with new ones representing the Aeacidae fighting at Troy.⁶⁴ These new groups, however, were probably sculpted at a different time. The noticeably different features each group demonstrates in terms of style suggest that they were crafted at an interval of approximately ten years. On the one hand, the West pediment (Ajax and Teucer fighting the Trojans) shows characteristics typical of the late severe style, such as the archaic smile, rounded hair or a slightly unnatural posture in spite of a quite realistic representation of the subject's anatomy (FIGURE 27). This points to a date around 490 BCE;⁶⁵ by contrast, the figures from the East pediment (Telamon and Heracles fighting the Trojans), display, in the classical style, a naturalistic body that reacts, as one would expect, to its circumstances, which suggests a date closer to 480 BCE (FIGURE 28).⁶⁶



FIGURE 27

Detail from a fallen warrior on the East pediment



FIGURE 28

Detail from a fallen warrior on the West pediment

⁶³ Part III: 170ff.

⁶⁴ The most recent studies are in Watson 2010; Hedreen 2010; Polinskaya 2013: 177-96. Although the pediments were first thought to date from the late sixth century (Ohly 1976, 2001; Simon 2003: 22), further excavations have led scholars to revise the traditional dating. The pots which have been found there indicate that the new temple most likely dates from the Persian Wars (Gill 1988; Hedreen 2011: 365-6).

⁶⁵ There is, however, no real consensus on the matter. My view, which is similar to that of Watson (2010), stems from Ohly's interpretation, although I date the pediments slightly later in order to account for the new findings. Hedreen (2010) contests the existence of four pediments, and does not believe that the striking differences in style between the supposedly new West and new East pediments necessarily imply that they were not sculpted at the same time.

⁶⁶ The faces of the figures still bear traces of the archaic smile (FIGURE 27).

The resolution to replace brand new and fully functioning pediments is notably odd. Since the old sculptures from the West pediment – the first group to be replaced – had not yet been completely finished, we can infer that the decision was not the result of careful planning, but rather the immediate reaction to present circumstances. It seems hard to believe that this choice could be incidental. Rather it must have been a political decision in the context of an overt rivalry and hostility with Athens; in fact, the imposing presence of Athena at the centre of a composition that represents Ajax and Teucer fighting at Troy – maybe even a direct and unambiguous reference for the Greeks to the battle of the ships, according to Simon⁶⁷ – cannot be trivial; especially since the goddess, traditionally, never helps Ajax.⁶⁸ This choice defies expectation and, to this extent, is significant. It indicates some anxiety on the part of the Aeginetans concerning Athens' new claim over Ajax.

Bacchylides' *Ode* 13

Bacchylides' *Ode* 13 contains a retelling of a famous scene from the *Iliad*: the battle of the ships in O which, alongside the rescue of Patroclus' body, is Ajax's greatest moment in the poem.⁶⁹ This choice of topic is not at all trivial, because this is the only extant lyric poem from the archaic and classical period that recounts an episode from the Trojan War already that was already covered by Homeric poetry.⁷⁰ It is certainly very common for lyric poets to use epic material in their compositions, but they seem to select stories that are peripheral to the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* when drawing upon the tradition of the Trojan War. For instance, the story of Cassandra's rape in Alcaeus' fr. 262 *SLG*, the wedding of Hector and Andromache in Sappho's fr. 44 Voigt, or the demand for Helen's return in Bacchylides' *Dithyramb* 1 are all episodes that fill the gaps between by the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in the greater narrative of the Trojan War.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Simon 2003: 23-5.

⁶⁸ Part I: 54ff.

⁶⁹ It is obviously impossible to be sure that such a scene did not feature in other epic poems such as the *Aethiopis*. However, by the time Bacchylides composes his ode, the *Iliad* appears to have reached Panhellenic status, and thus to have become authoritative. Consequently, I think that the myth in *Ode* 13 is meant to invite to draw a comparison with the *Iliad*.

⁷⁰ It might be objected that Bacchylides, at *Dithyramb* 27.36 (φατί νιν [δινά]ντα φοινίξεν Σκά[μανδρον]), and Pindar, at *Nem.* 2.14 (ἐν Τρωίᾳ μὲν Ἑκτωρ Αἰάντος ἄκουσεν), also allude to precise scenes in the *Iliad*: Achilles' slaughter of many Trojans in the waters of Scamander in Φ and Ajax's encounter with Hector in book H. However, these passages are too short to be considered retellings of scenes from the *Iliad*. On the Homeric allusion at *Nem.* 2.14, see Sotiriou 2000.

⁷¹ Even Stesichorus, who is known for his recasting of epic material into lyric, seems to avoid retellings of scenes from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; at least from what we can tell. On Stesichorus' use of Homer, see Kelly 2015a.

I see two possible explanations for this (one or the other should be preferred on a case-by-case basis): (i) the poet does not know the Homeric poems, or (ii) the poets purposefully avoids direct comparison with Homer.⁷² In the case of Simonides, and Bacchylides, it seems rather obvious that the second explanation should apply. However, this does not necessarily mean that they do not engage with the Homeric tradition. On the contrary, they clearly do so, but mostly by adapting and transposing themes, motifs, figures of speech, or vocabulary that are typical of this tradition, rather than by recounting the same episodes.⁷³

Consequently, Bacchylides' decision to retell a major scene from the *Iliad* in his ode appears to be significant in and of itself, and should thus be kept in mind when analysing the poem. The larger tradition of the Trojan War comprised many stories about the Aeacidae's feats on the battlefield. Therefore, even if Bacchylides were committed to portray Ajax's prowess, nothing was compelling him to choose the battle of the ships in particular.⁷⁴

His account of the battle of the ships does not factually depart from its Homeric model. Even the events leading up to it (Achilles' decision to stop fighting) and following it (his return to the battlefield) are faithfully rehearsed. Furthermore, the vocabulary employed in the passage meets the expectation of a Homeric recasting, at least in terms of meaning. For instance, Achilles is *ταχύς* and has *μᾶνις*, while Ajax is *σακεσφόρος* and *ὑπέρθυμος*.⁷⁵ Bacchylides, however, distances himself from the *Iliad* on one crucial aspect: he carefully and repeatedly stresses Ajax's and Achilles' kinship, even though the two heroes are never explicitly presented as cousins in the Homeric poems.

The myth is introduced by a detour through Aeacid genealogy. Bacchylides first mentions that the *παρθένοι* on Aegina sing of Aeacus, which allows him to stress that his sons are Peleus and Telamon:

⁷² Earlier poets, such as Alcman or Sappho, seem to be engaging with the larger tradition of the Trojan War, rather than specifically with the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* (Fowler 1987: 3–52; Kelly 2015a: 22–34).

⁷³ On lyric interplay with Homer, cf. Garner 1990. On Homeric resonance in Bacchylides, cf. Fearn 2012.

⁷⁴ For instance, in Quint. Smyrn. I 494–572 (probably based on earlier sources) Ajax and Achilles fight the Amazons together. The episode is never depicted on archaic and classical pots (except perhaps on LIMC Aias I 56, which dates from the early fourth century). Touchefeu (1981: 321–2; 331) notes that the scene was very popular on wall painting in Rome. There is an example of the scene on a wall in Pompeii (Aias I 51).

⁷⁵ Achilles is never called *ταχύς* in the *Iliad*, but the adjective obviously hints at the epithetal formulae *πόδας ὠκύς* and *ποδάρκης*. Interestingly, *ταχύς* is often used to describe the rapidity of the other Ajax. *Σακεσφόρος* appears to have been coined by Bacchylides. The word is rare: it is used once by Euripides, and otherwise appears in a few lexica and scholia. However, it clearly echoes Homer's *φέρων σάκος*, one of the epithet that qualifies Ajax in the *Iliad* (H 219; Λ 485, P 128, etc.). *ὑπέρθυμος* is typically Homeric. It describes Achilles, Diomedes, Antilochus, or the Trojans, in the *Iliad*. As for Ajax, he is sometimes called *μεγαθύμος* (Δ 479; P 303), which is similar to *ὑπέρθυμος*. Furthermore, *μεγαθύμος* also applies to Achilles, Diomedes and Antilochus, amongst others.

παρθένοι μέλπουσι τ[εὸν λέχο]ς,⁷⁶ ὦ
 δέσποινα παγξε[ίνου χθονός,
 Ἐν]δαΐδα τε ῥοδό[παχυν
 ἅ τῶ[ν ἰσ]ό[θε]ον ἔτι[κτε Πηλέα
 καὶ Τελαμ[ῶ]να [κο]ρυ[στὰν
 Αἰακῶι μ<ε>ιχθεῖς' ἐν εὐ[νῶι

Ode 13.94-97

Thus, the prelude to the myth already insists on the genealogy of the Aeacidae, even before the narration starts. The reference to Peleus and Telamon leads to the mention of their sons, Achilles and Ajax; and once again their family ties are stressed through the use of the word *ύιας* at line 100:

τῶν υἱ[ε]ας ἀ<δ>εισιμάχ[ας
 ταχύν τ' Ἀχιλλέα
 εὐειδέος τ' Ἐριβοίας
 παῖδ' ὑπέρθυμον βοά[σω
 Αἶαντα σακεσφόρον ἦ[ρω

Ode 13.100-4

Achilles and Ajax are introduced as a pair, paralleling the fraternal duo formed by Peleus and Telamon, and later at l. 166 both of them are called *Αἰακίδαι*. The parallelism between the two heroes, emphasised in the poem, is also reminiscent of the *Iliad*, for they nonetheless bear striking similitudes in the poem, in spite of the silence on their traditional kinship.⁷⁸ For instance, they have their tent at one of the two ends of the Greek camp, both of them are distinguished by their gigantic height, they alone have the upper hand against Hector, and when Achilles hears that Patroclus has been killed, he states that only Ajax's shield could be suitable for him to use, now that his own weapons are lost.⁷⁹ It thus seems that Bacchylides' strategy consists of calling to mind the Homeric poems for his audience, while insisting on Ajax's Aeacid lineage, thereby reclaiming the Ajax of the *Iliad* as an Aeginetan Aeacid.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ The two best conjectures that have been suggested in place of the lacuna at l. 94 are τ[εὸν τέχο]ς (Housman) and τ[εὸν λέχο]ς (Barrett). *Λέχος* seems more likely, as the maidens are celebrating the entire Aeacid family (*ie.* Aegina and Zeus, Endais and Aeacus, Peleus, Telamon, Achilles, Ajax, and Teucer) and not exclusively the son of Aegina and Zeus (Barrett 2007: 254-5).

⁷⁷ The text I quote for Ode 13 is from Barrett 2007: 233-9.

⁷⁸ Part III: 29ff.

⁷⁹ Σ 193-5. On the parallelism between Achilles and Ajax, see Hinckley 1972; Lissarrague 2007:21.

⁸⁰ Most 2012.

From the early fifth century onwards, Athens multiplies its conspicuous attempts to appropriate Ajax.⁸¹ In these conditions, Bacchylides' motive for insisting on the family ties that Ajax and Achilles share is obvious. By doing so within the frame of a faithful retelling of two particularly striking episodes in the *Iliad*, he does not only put emphasis on the fact that the roots of all the Aeacidae are on Aegina, but also goes as far as to assert Ajax's and Telamon's traditional lineage within the sphere of the Homeric poems.⁸² Bacchylides, as a Panhellenic poet, is thus not only enabled to diffuse myths that are centred around Aegina,⁸³ but is also in a position to subtly re-establish Ajax's traditional ancestry in the *Iliad*.⁸⁴ In fact, it is probable that without Bacchylides' and Pindar's odes, the Atheno-centric genealogy of Ajax and Telamon, as first reported by Pherecydes in the fifth century would have prevailed.

Finally, it must be noted that Bacchylides' narrative bears a striking resemblance to the situation at Marathon described in ancient sources.⁸⁵ According to Herodotus, the Persians coming to Greece with ships landed at Marathon and the battle consequently took place close to the seashore. When the Persians' front broke in a stampede back to the ships, the Athenians ran after them, causing the fight to move nearer the ships.⁸⁶ In his account, Bacchylides conflates several episodes from the *Iliad*. The battle of the ships serves as the main thread of his narrative, but he inserts allusions to Achilles and to the consequences of his absence on the battlefield. He then concludes his account with a scene that recalls Achilles' fight at the banks of the river Scamander (Φ 1-304):

⁸¹ Athens repeated attempts to integrate the Aeacidae – and Ajax in particular – to its mythological landscape appear to have only been made from the establishment of democracy onwards (perhaps even later, just after Marathon). When the Athenians are in conflict with the Megarians over the possession of Salamis at the beginning of the sixth century, they do not claim the island on the basis that Ajax belongs to Athens (explaining, as they will do later on, that his children gave them the island in exchange for Athenian citizenship). The entry in the Catalogue of Ships only serves to ascertain the fact that Ajax is an ally. See Part III: 147ff.

⁸² On the absence of Aegina in the *Iliad*, see Part III: 147ff. (in particular, p. 150n39). It is argued that any direct reference or allusion to Ajax's kinship with Achilles or to his belonging to the Aeacidae might have purposefully disappeared from *Iliad* during the stage of its Athenian reception.

⁸³ His room for manoeuvre is obviously limited by the way his patrons and his Panhellenic audience received his mythological accounts, though, conversely, it is also increased by his recognition as a poet and, consequently, by the authority he gains from it.

⁸⁴ Fearn (2007:140-1) notes the enhanced role of Ajax in Bacchylides' and Pindar's odes. This is the result of the re-establishment of Ajax's lineage, and may possibly also reflect his prominence in other epics from the Cycle.

⁸⁵ In particular from Hdt. VI 113-4.

⁸⁶ For instance, Aeschylus' brother, Cynegirus, had his hand cut off, as he was preventing a Persian ship from escaping, by holding onto its prow (Hdt. VI 114).

μ]έλλον ἄρα πρότε[ρο]ν δι-
 ν]ᾶντα φοινίξει[ν Σκ]άμανδρ[ον
 θ]νά<ι>σκοντες ὑπ' [Αἶα]κίδαις
 ἐρειψ[ι]τύ[ργοις]

Ode 13.164-7

The adjective δινῆεις is a formulaic epithet of the river in the *Iliad*,⁸⁷ while the mention of the Scamander's waters turning red with the blood of those killed by the Aeacidae (*i.e.* both Achilles and Ajax) is a straightforward reference to the motif of the river's anger at Achilles in Φ: the hero is in such a rage that he keeps killing countless Trojans, thereby soiling the streams of the river god. Bacchylides, however, departs from his Homeric model by inserting Ajax in the episode.

In these conditions, the situation that is described is quite similar to that of Marathon.⁸⁸ The parallelism is supported by Bacchylides' insistence on the setting of the battle of the ships: at line 105, Ajax stands ἐπὶ πρύμναι; at 149 the Trojans arrive ἐπὶ θῖνα θαλάσσης to fight the Greeks; at 150 they fight ναυσὶ δ' εὐπρύμνοις παραί; at 161 a further mention is made of the ships; finally, at 165, the tainted waters of the Scamander are alluded to. Interestingly, φοινίσσω is employed in one of Bacis' oracles, which Herodotus understands as designating the sea that was going to be reddened by the blood of the Persians killed at Psyttalea.⁸⁹

χαλκὸς γὰρ χαλκῷ συμμίζεται, αἵματι δ' Ἄρης
 πόντον φοινίζει. τότε' ἐλεύθερον Ἑλλάδος ἡμᾶρ
 εὐρύοπα Κρονίδης ἐπάγει καὶ πότνια Νίκη.⁹⁰

Bacis' oracles were a collection of old oracles employed by χρησμολόγοι and reinterpreted to fit contemporary context which were attributed to the mythical seer.⁹¹ This means that this given prediction could equally have been applied to Marathon before. Furthermore, it is significant that Herodotus assigns it to Psyttalea and not to sea battle at Salamis itself, since here again the Athenians, led by Aristides, would

⁸⁷ The adjective appears twelve times and almost always used to qualify the Scamander (or the Xanthus, which is another name for the river). The only exception is Υ 292, where it is used to designate Hermes. Furthermore, in Φ, it is used no less than thrice (at 2, 125 and 332). See Richardson 1993: 53-4 and *LfgreE s.v.* δινῆεις.

⁸⁸ However, the role between Greeks and the βάρβαροι are inverted. It is unclear how to interpret this reversal. I doubt that it is destined to undermine the Athenians' worth, but it might be an attempt to counter their aspiration to be perceived by all the Greeks as the heir of the Aeacidae, since they have won against the Persians.

⁸⁹ Hdt. VIII 76-7.

⁹⁰ Hdt. VIII 77.2

⁹¹ This would make the usage of these oracles similar to Nostradamus' prophecies. See Baumgartner 1998: 48-60; Lang 2006: 261-73.

have fought Xerxes' army on the shore (with its ships nearby), in a configuration reminiscent of that at Marathon once the Persians started fleeing.

In his commentary on Bacchylides' victory odes, McDevitt notes that a remarkable quality of the poem is its emphasis on Achilles' greatness through his conspicuous absence.⁹² One may wonder if this characteristic absence of Achilles might mirror that of the Aeginetans at Marathon. For who else was close but not fighting – perhaps even in anger for having been accused of medism – while the Athenians were battling by the ships?⁹³ Moreover, the man who distinguished himself most at Marathon, Miltiades claimed to descend from Ajax,⁹⁴ and his family had Aeginetan roots according to Herodotus.⁹⁵ It seems rather likely that Bacchylides would have been aware of the parallelism between Marathon, still fresh in the mind of the Greeks, and his own account of the battle of the ships. Therefore, regardless of one's interpretation, the political dimension of the ode is hard to deny, a fact that strengthens the point made above regarding the emphasis on Ajax's lineage.

Isthmian 6

Isthmian 6, the second poem dedicated to one of Lampon's sons, was probably also composed before Salamis. The consensus is that the victory took place between 484 and 480. Since the Isthmian games took place in spring, 480 is still a plausible date, for the battle of Salamis took place in September of the same year. Given that Pindar wishes an Olympic victory to Phylacidas in the poem,⁹⁶ 484 and 480 are slightly more appealing dates than 482, because the Olympic games would only have been organised in the summer of these years.⁹⁷ In any case, the poem was still composed at a time when Aegina was at the peak of its wealth and power.

⁹² McDevitt 2009: 201.

⁹³ The allusion does not necessarily need to refer to all the Aeginetans. There probably were several prominent Atheno-Aeginetan families. De Sanctis (1930) convincingly defends the idea that Aegina's medism at the time of Marathon should probably be considered as apocryphal.

⁹⁴ Σ Nem. 2.19. See Part III: 171-2, and above pp. 92-3.

⁹⁵ Hdt. VI 35.

⁹⁶ *Isthm.* 6.1-9.

⁹⁷ See Fearn 2007: 342-50 for a synthesis of the different reconstructions. However, I doubt that a wish for an Olympic victory necessarily needs to be year-specific.

Isthmian 6 also gives a predominant place to Ajax through a story that involves his father, Telamon.⁹⁸ It narrates the circumstances of his birth and also presents Heracles as a kind of spiritual father to the hero.⁹⁹ The parallel between Lampon-Phylacidas and Telamon-Ajax has long been noted.¹⁰⁰ It is generally understood as a device that allows Pindar to praise Lampon subtly in his capacity of father, since he is not himself an athlete. Moreover, the friendship between the Theban hero Heracles and the Aeginetan Telamon ingeniously mirrors that of Thebes and Aegina, as well as that of Pindar and Lampon, whether it is real or fictitious. The highlights of Telamon's career as a hero and follower of Heracles are briefly enumerated at the onset of the account: among them, the first expedition against Troy is explicitly mentioned, though there is no reference in the poem to the second expedition against Troy, in which Ajax is destined to take part.¹⁰¹ In the decade preceding the Second Persian War, it is not the first but the second expedition against Troy that emerges as the mythical parallel to Marathon, as indicated by Miltiades' claim over Ajax and the replacement by the Aeginetans of Aphaea's West pediment with a group of statues featuring the hero. Consequently, *Isthmian* 6 does not seem to engage directly with the First Persian War, even though it still reminds the audience in passing that Telamon fought the Trojans, which might be interpreted as a way to confound the past (and perhaps still present) accusation of medism against Aegina.¹⁰² Instead, the poem highlights how widespread the κλέος of the Aeacidae (and therefore that of the Aeginetans) is:

⁹⁸ Indergaard 2010: 307-8.

⁹⁹ Indergaard 2010: 318. Furthermore, Heracles and Ajax, in addition to being heroes of the ἀπλόος type have several characteristic features in common. They are both invulnerable (directly or indirectly) thanks to the Nemean lion skin, they both become mad at some point in their story, and they both contemplate suicide (Heracles does so after killing his family in Eur. *HF*).

¹⁰⁰ Bury 1892: 83 (*Isthm.* 6 = *Isthm.* 5 in his edition); Hubbard 1985: 78-80; Kurke 1991: 68; Burnett 2005: 82; Currie 2012: 295.

¹⁰¹ Heracles announces that Ajax will be a great warrior but there is not a single allusion to Troy in lines 52-6.

¹⁰² The Aeginetans were still resentful about such accusations at the time of the battle of Salamis, as the Aeginetan Polycritus is reported to have insulted Themistocles and mocked him about the so-called medism of the Aeginetans in the middle of the battle, just after having rammed a Persian ship (Hdt. VIII 92.2)

μυρίαι δ' ἔργων καλῶν τέ-
 τμανθ' ἐκατόμπεδοι ἐν σχερῶ κέλευθοι
 καὶ πέραν Νεῖλοιο παγὰν καὶ δι' Ὑπερβορέους·
 οὐδ' ἔστιν οὕτω βάρβαρος
 οὔτε παλίγλωσσος πόλις,
 ἅτις οὐ Πηλῆος αἰεὶ κλέος ἤ-
 ρως, εὐδαίμονος γαμβροῦ θεῶν,
 οὐδ' ἅτις Αἴαντος Τελαμωνιάδα
 καὶ πατρός·

25

Isthm. 6.22-7

This is suggested by the mention of the Nile, which they are able to travel beyond, since they were the only Greeks from the mainland to have an ἐμπόριον in Egypt.¹⁰³ The affirmation that the Aeacidae have established very wide and continuous roads through their ἔργα καλὰ thus take on a double meaning. On the one hand, it means that these heroes' exploits are so great that they have reached the whole world through their celebration in poetry,¹⁰⁴ while at the same time Pindar indirectly praises the range of Aeginetan mobility, which is the source of their prosperity as well as what enables poems to travel.¹⁰⁵

Pindar, then, asserts that every πόλις (and by metonymy its citizens), no matter how βάρβαρος or παλίγλωσσος they are, has heard of the Aeacidae. The first term of the proposition is easy to understand; βάρβαρος refers to a non-Hellenic population, while παλίγλωσσος alludes to a Hellenic one.¹⁰⁶ There is, however, more to παλίγλωσσος, since it means 'slandering'.¹⁰⁷ How could slander prevent someone from hearing of the Aeacidae? Probably, by pretending not to have ever heard of them, or given the emphasis put on Ajax's genealogy in the passage (Il. 25-7), by lying about their Aeginetan origin. This may hint at the

¹⁰³ The ἐμπόριον at Naucratis of which the existence is evidenced at least from 620/610 BCE by archaeological record (Thomas and Villing 2013). As Dr Prodi suggested to me, it could also be simply understood as 'a polar expression which purposefully employs two effectively mythical places for the sake of emphasis, rather than describing or even hinting at somebody's actual reach in the present of historical reality.' (private communication 6th of April 2015). In both cases, the emphasis is on the impressive size of the territory covered.

¹⁰⁴ 'The path of song' is a well-established metaphor, which appears to have Indo-European roots (Ford 1999: 74, n. 4.), but here the words the roads (κέλευθοι) through which the Aeginetans' ἔργα καλὰ are said to travel is made particularly concrete by the words that qualify it. Μυρίαι ἐκατόμπεδοι ἐν σχερῶ seems particularly appropriate to describe seaways.

¹⁰⁵ This is supported by the discovery at Gravisca (Etruria) of an anchor dedicated to Aeginetan Apollo by someone called Sostratus, as well as the discovery in Naucratis of a Chian bowl also dedicated by a certain Sostratus to Aphrodite (Boardman 1980: 122, fig. 139; Cornell 1995: 109-11; Forsythe 2005: 43). Both inscriptions are thought to be from the sixth century. Incidentally, Herodotus mentions a famous Aeginetan merchant, also called Sostratus (IV 152). This is probably the same Sostratus, or at least someone related to him (Williams 1983: 155-6). The Aeginetans thus appear to have developed an exceptionally wide network in the early fifth century, which reached from Etruria to Egypt at the very least (Polinskaya 2013: 200, 374, 403, and 418). This is also corroborated by the use in Greek of the word Αἰγινήτικα to refer to traded goods, and of Αἰγινοπώλας for παντοπώλας (Σ *Ol.* 8.29b). Pace De Ste-Croix 2004.

¹⁰⁶ Bury 1892: 109-10.

¹⁰⁷ Παλίγλωσσος is a rare word only employed by Pindar apart from two attestations in works by grammarians from c. the second century AD. In *Nemean* 1.58-9, it is used to describe the report that warned Amphitryon that his young sons, who had been attacked by two snakes, were in danger. The report proved wrong (παλίγλωσσος) as Amphitryon discovers that Heracles, though a baby, has strangled the snakes. On the meaning of the expression, cf. Σ *Nem.* 1.88. See Privitera 1982: 206-7.

Athenians' attempts to co-opt Ajax and Aeacus. Furthermore, Achilles, who is the Aeacid *par excellence* in the *Iliad*, is not even mentioned, and Telamon appears only as a patronymic for Ajax. Salamis is not named either. Interestingly, at the start of the poem, Pindar says that he is sailing to Aegina, and consequently when we are told that Heracles arrives at his friend's place, we are under the impression that the scene is also set on Aegina (instead of Salamis).

The focus on Ajax's genealogy shows a concern similar to that expressed in *Ode* 13, and which is given material expression in Aphaca's new West pediment: to make sure that Ajax is considered by everyone as an Aeginetan hero, in spite of the recent Athenian attempts to appropriate him. This eagerness to promote Ajax mirrors the tensions between the two cities, as well as showcasing their desires to be at the forefront of Greek πόλεις by appropriating a part of the epic heritage. In the case of Aegina, which had a mixed identity (both Achaeans and Dorians as we have seen) it is also a question of stressing this Achaean identity, and by the same token their independence.¹⁰⁸ In fact, it must be noted that Pindar seems to stress the Aeginetans' connection to the Dorians – by calling Aegina 'Dorian' – only in later poems, when Aegina was seriously threatened by Athens and sought protection from the Peloponnesian league.¹⁰⁹ The Spartans were not keen on waging war on the Athenians, but they were resolved to protect Dorian πόλεις from them.

In the decade between Marathon and Salamis, Athens and Aegina were not engaged in an all-out war against one another. A few attacks from one side or the other took place – such as the Athenian expedition in support of Nicodromus' coup or the Aeginetans' raid on Phaleron – but no real battle ever

¹⁰⁸ In mythological terms, the Aeginetans originally were Achaeans like the Aeacidae and the Myrmidons. The Dorian component of Aeginetan identity comes from its Dorian settlers that probably came to Aegina some time during the Dark Ages. Several ancient sources mention this (Hdt. VIII 46.1; *FHG* IV 511; Σ *Pyth.* 8.113c; Strabo VIII 6.16; Paus. II 24-5). However, 'the narrative traditions of the settlement of Aegina from abroad are all variants of the myth of the Return of the Herakleidae. The latter was widely used by many Peloponnesian communities to articulate their ethnic belonging as Dorians. (...) [T]hey should be seen as discursive strategies used for the construction of group identities in a way that was politically and ideologically expedient at a given moment in history' (Polynskaya 2013: 400). It is probable that new settlers (maybe Dorian ones) integrated into Aegina's Achaean population (Salamis, for instance, appears to have provided a shelter for many refugees at the end of the Mycenaean period), but this is different from Dorian invasion or colonisation.

¹⁰⁹ It is the case for *Ol.* 8 and *Pyth.* 8, which both can be securely dated. *Ol.* 8 was composed in 460, only a few years before Aegina's defeat against Athens, and *Pyth.* 8 in 446. Moreover, other poems such as *Nem.* 5, *Ode* 13, *Isthm.* 6, *Isthm.* 5, and *Isthm.* 8 (which all are to be dated at the latest to 476) never allude to Dorian Aegina. *Nem.* 3, *Nem.* 6, *Isthm.* 9 and the 'third triad' of *Pae.* 6 – which Rutherford (1997) has shown to be in reality a προσόδιον to Aeacus – are the other poems linking Aegina to the Dorians. *Nem.* 3 and *Nem.* 6 are usually considered to be later poems. Therefore, I wonder if allusions to Dorian Aegina could perhaps constitute one in a series of criteria to date Pindar's poems, by supporting the later date of a poem within the relative chronology of the Pindaric corpus. *Pae.* 6 (or its supposed 'third triad' at any rate) is usually thought to be an early poem, but this view is based on no factual evidence whatsoever. It must be noted that all the dates given by the scholia are those of the victories, not of the poems themselves, so strictly speaking they constitute *termini post quos*, not exact dates. However, the usual assumption is that the ode followed relatively shortly after the event, and it makes sense to think that this is the case unless there is good internal evidence for the contrary (for instance, if the ode does not refer very strictly to a single victory).

took place. Hostilities between the two rival πόλεις appear to have taken the form of a cold war, with the cultural and religious spheres becoming the true battlefields of the conflict. Under these circumstances, the figure of Ajax logically became the main locus of the strife.

This did not so much trigger an alteration of his myth, since his Aeginetan portrayal conforms to the values his epic models incarnate. However, the political significance with which he was suddenly imbued nonetheless caused a shift of focus in his narrative. In Aeginetan cultural production, consequently, Ajax is always represented in the most positive way,¹¹⁰ and he is given great prominence among the Aeacidae who are equally represented at their best. Because of Pindar's and Bacchylides' Panhellenic fame, this representation of Ajax becomes widespread and thus begins to erode the nuances or problematic aspects of his character in epic poetry. This process had, in some ways, already started with the canonisation of the Homeric poems to the detriment of other epic poems, but the Aeginetan configuration of Ajax appears to have been a determinant step in the fixation and diffusion of a simplified version of his story.

Ajax in Aegina at the Time of Salamis and Its Aftermath

Isthmian 5

In *Isthmian* 5.47-50, composed shortly after Salamis, Pindar unequivocally refers to the sea battle. In doing so, he praises the valour of the Aeginetan sailors and depicts them as the instigators of the Greeks' victory:

καὶ νῦν ἐν Ἄρει μαρτυρήσαι
κεν πόλις Αἴαντος ὀρθωθεῖσα ναύταις
ἐν πολυφθόρῳ Σαλαμῖς Διὸς ὄμβρῳ
ἀναριθμῶν ἀνδρῶν χαλαζᾷεντι φόνῳ.

Isthm. 5.47-50

Even though the fame the Aeginetans received for their prowess at Salamis is also echoed in Herodotus' account of the battle and corroborated by the ἀριστεία he attributes to them, later sources are skeptical regarding the decisive role credited to the Aeginetans in the victory.¹¹¹ Diodorus Siculus, for example,

¹¹⁰ This holds for all the Aeacidae: apart from *Nem.* 5, in which Phocus' murder is alluded to, no Aeacid is ever portrayed in a negative way.

¹¹¹ Herodotus (VIII 93) reports that the Aeginetans distinguished themselves the most in the battle, then the Athenians, and that it is also an Aeginetan – alongside two Athenians – who received the prize of individual ἀριστεία. Furthermore, it is also implied that the Aeginetans were officially acknowledged for their deeds, since Herodotus recounts that Apollo demanded a special dedication from them for the victory prize they were awarded after the battle (VIII 122).

reports that the Aeginetans did not deserve to be awarded the prize for ἀριστεία, but only received it at the instigation of the Spartans, who desired to undermine Athenian agency in the successful outcome of the sea battle.¹¹² Similarly, Plutarch also contests the Aeginetans' valour, in *De Malignitate Herodoti*. He even goes a step further in his critique by accusing Herodotus of lying overtly and out of sheer malice towards the Athenians when he reports that the Aeginetans won the ἀριστεία.¹¹³ These accounts, however, can be easily rebutted given the contradicting explanations they present.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, they are thought to derive from Ephorus' *Histories* – a text known for its treatment of historical material to moralising ends, rather than from an unknown alternative fifth-century source.¹¹⁵ Yet, they have at least the merit of indicating the existence of a controversy surrounding the award of the ἀριστεία at Salamis, which will be crucial to our argument, as we shall see.

Upon closer examination, even Herodotus' account is not as straightforward as it seems. The Aeginetan material he chooses to rehearse is at times contradictory, and, as a result, generates an ambivalent portrayal. For instance, his attribution of the ἀριστεία to the Aeginetans conflicts with the over-arching argument of his *Histories*, which consist of showing how Athens rose to power and emerged as Sparta's antagonist after the Persian Wars.¹¹⁶ In fact, even though he states that the Aeginetans fought best in the previously-mentioned passages, his narrative strongly emphasises Athens' agency in the victory.¹¹⁷ The Athenians are placed on par with the Aeginetans in some of the paragraphs recounting the

¹¹² XI 27.2.

¹¹³ Plut. *De Malignitate Herodoti*: 871C-D.

¹¹⁴ Strabo (IX 9.10) and Pausanias (II 24) seem to be aware of the importance of the role played by the Aeginetans at Salamis.

¹¹⁵ Diodorus Siculus (XI 37.6) directly draws his information from Ephorus of Cyme (*cf.* Andrewes 1985, for instance), while Plutarch relies on several fourth-century Attidographers, most of whom ultimately derive from Ephorus, when they disagree with Herodotus. Ephorus who was a student of Isocrates, wrote his *Histories* in order to provide a source of moral exempla (Hudák 2009). He based his account of the Persian Wars on Herodotus' *Histories*, but shaped it and distorted some facts for his own purposes. Ctesias of Cnidus (late fifth century BCE) offers perhaps alongside epigraphical evidence the most valuable counterpoint to Herodotus' account. He probably had access to independent sources since he was writing at the Persian court (Buckley 2010: 148).

¹¹⁶ To some extent, part of Herodotus' agenda is to show how Athens and Sparta emerged as the two main powers in Greece after the Persian Wars. Because of this, he portrays Athens as a 'super-power' in the making throughout his account. Consequently, this idea that the two cities form two opposite blocks in Greece pervades his *Histories* to the detriment of a city like Aegina, which had been subdued by the time he wrote. Moreover, Herodotus was apparently mostly writing for an Athenian audience which was not keen to remember the Aeginetans' greatness, as the underrepresentation of the island in Thucydides suggest (Irwin 2010: 454).

¹¹⁷ It must be noted that many sources that are chronologically close to these events mention the battle of Artemision rather than that of Salamis as the great Athenian victory of the Second Persian War (Pind. fr. 77; Sim. *Naumachia* PMG 534). Furthermore, it was Boreas who was believed to have destroyed no fewer than 400 Persian ships (Hdt. VII 190). The god had been invoked by the Athenians *κατὰ τὸ κῆδος*, in his quality of γάμβρος of Erechtheus, since he was married to the king's daughter Oreithyia (Hdt. VII 189). The association between Athens and the Artemision is also attested by the presence of scenes depicting Boreas and Oreithyia on pots dating from shortly after 480 (Agard 1966), and by the fact that the Athenians founded a sanctuary for Boreas in order to thank him for his help (Parker 1996: 156). See Finkelberg 2014. It must be noted, however, that the victory at Salamis is already attributed to the Athenians in *Ol.* 1 which dates from 470 BCE.

battle.¹¹⁸ In addition to this, the numbers he rehearses when he lists the contingent of the Greeks' ships are problematic.¹¹⁹ He assigns 180 ships to the Athenians, but only 30 to the Aeginetans, which is negligible in comparison.¹²⁰ Furthermore, it is difficult to reconcile such a small number with the famous story that explains that Themistocles convinced the Athenians in the *ἐκκλησίᾳ* to expand their fleet with the silver discovered in Laurion by brandishing the threat posed by the Aeginetan naval power.¹²¹ Finally, the last two anecdotes Herodotus mentions about Aegina clearly stem from anti-Aeginetan propaganda which is a further sign that not everything that is reported about Aegina should be taken at face value.¹²² As Irwin persuasively argues, the historian's ambivalent treatment of the Aeginetan material does not reflect his own antipathy towards Athens' rival, but rather the dominant, Atheno-centric, discourse of the period, as well as the fact that the first audience of the *Histories* was predominantly Athenian.¹²³ Were it not for Herodotus, our knowledge of Aeginetan history would be even more scarce and biased.

The slight discrepancies found in Herodotus' account of the battle of Salamis and its aftermath therefore suggest that he mixes at least two different sources. One is clearly the product of Athenian willingness to undermine Aegina's role in the Second Persian War and testifies to Athens' successful

¹¹⁸ This is the case in VIII 83-4, 90-1, 93, 96.

¹¹⁹ On the number of Aeginetan ships and what can be inferred about size of the population on Aegina in 480 BCE, cf. Hansen 2006: 5-12.

¹²⁰ Hdt. VIII 42-46. We know for a fact that the Aeginetans were very wealthy. After being subdued, they were forced to pay a tribute of 30 talents (one talent = 6000 drachmas) to the Athenians. This number offers a good indication of the scale of Aegina's wealth, for it is the heaviest tribute recorded among the members of the Delian league, equaled only by that of the Thasians, whose island was mine-rich and much bigger than Aegina (*ATL*: 240-1; Figuera 1981b: 38-9, 122-5). It is, in reality, indisputable that the figure concerning the contingents of the Greek ships transmitted by Herodotus are problematic. It does not correspond to those reported by Aeschylus in the *Persae* (although the playwright, who fought in the battle, understandably fails to mention any Aeginetan ship), nor to that given by Ctesias of Cnidus in his *Persica*. Furthermore, it is telling that Ctesias only attributes 110 ships to the Athenians, compared to a total of 700 in the *Persae*. These obviously appear to be inflated numbers, but are still significant in terms of their proportion. In Ctesias' account, Athenian heroes such as Themistocles and Aristides were not denied their glory, but Athens herself was not portrayed as the leaders of the Greek fight for freedom, as they appear in Herodotus' (Nichols 2008: 33).

¹²¹ See also Thuc. I 14.3. Later sources, however, suggest that Themistocles intended to use these ships to fight the Persians from the start (Plut. *Them.* IV 1-2; Just. II 12.12; Ael. Arist. III 237 Behr). Plutarch and Aelius Aristides nonetheless recount that Themistocles insisted on the threat the Aeginetans' naval superiority posed to Athens to convince the Athenians passing his bill.

¹²² Some anecdotes reported by Herodotus in IX – just after Plataea – reveal the kind of slander that circulated about a rival *πόλις*. For instance, it is recounted that the tomb the Aeginetans built in honour of their dead at Plataea was empty, and had only been erected ten years after the battle in order to pretend that they also fought the battle (IX 85). This contradicts Herodotus' own account of the battle of Plataea in which the Aeginetans are univocally part of the Greek contingent. Furthermore, their name appears on the Serpent-Column (ML 27; *ATL* 95-105), and was also inscribed on the statue of Zeus at Olympia (Paus. V 23).

¹²³ In VIII 94, Herodotus mentions that the Athenians claimed that the Corinthians had tried to flee at Salamis, but then adds that the Corinthians deny it, and that all the other Greeks are on their side. Plutarch defends the Corinthians against what he considers to be Herodotus' bias in *De Maliginitate Herodoti* 39. Furthermore, Plutarch mentions that the Corinthians received the third place of *ἀριστεία*, which might explain why the Athenians were trying to diminish their role in the same way they appear to have done to the Aeginetans. It is striking that Plutarch should think the first and the second places were awarded to the Athenians and to the Lacedaemonians respectively, while Herodotus (VIII 93) unambiguously states that the Aeginetans were first, while the Athenians came second.

attempt to appropriate, little by little, the victory of Salamis, especially following the subjugation of Aegina. However, the appropriation was not complete at the time Herodotus was writing, since he was still able to resort to a second source and thus to mention the Aeginetans' ἀριστεία. This issue is of particular relevance because of the symbolic capital of the Aeacidae in connection with the Persian Wars.¹²⁴ As we can infer from Herodotus' account of the Greeks' preparation before Salamis, this connection was meaningful for all the Greeks, even though the Aeginetan roots of the Aeacidae were acknowledged by the Panhellenic community:¹²⁵

ἔδοξε δέ σφι εὖξασθαι τοῖσι θεοῖσι καὶ ἐπικαλέσασθαι τοὺς Αἰακίδας
 συμμάχους, ὥς δέ σφι ἔδοξε, καὶ ἐποίησεν ταῦτα. εὖξάμενοι γὰρ πᾶσι τοῖσι
 θεοῖσι αὐτόθεν μὲν ἐκ Σαλαμῖνος Αἴαντά τε καὶ Τελαμῶνα ἐπεκαλέοντο, ἐπὶ
 δὲ Αἰακὸν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους Αἰακίδας νέα ἀπέστελλον ἐς Αἶγιναν.¹²⁶

However, Ajax is significant not only in this context, in virtue of his Aeacid lineage, but also because of his Salaminian origin. If the archetypal victors of the Persians are seen in all the members of the Aeacidae, Ajax alone becomes the hero of Salamis.¹²⁷ This additional symbolic value, which is specific to him, is made evident by an anecdote reported by Herodotus. He explains that the Greeks dedicated three Phoenician triremes after the Artemision and Salamis: one at Sounion, another at the Isthmus – both probably in honour of Poseidon – and a last one at Salamis for Ajax (VIII 121.1). It follows from all of this that asserting primacy over Ajax is not only a statement regarding one individual's, one family's, or one πόλις' relation to the epic heritage, but also a manner of consolidating and remembering the prominence of one's role at the battle of Salamis, and thus, more generally, during the Persian Wars

With this in mind, it appears that the words chosen in *Isthmian* 5 to link the Aeacid Ajax with the victory at Salamis are telling. Pindar calls the island πόλις Αἴαντος in l. 48, which contrasts with Simonides' own formulation – Αἴαντος νᾶσος – in his epigram in honour of the Corinthians who fell during the battle.

¹²⁴ It must be noted that the nature of this connection is different from that of other heroes and gods who appear during a battle or are summoned beforehand, for they are not just occasional (and often miraculous) helpers: in mythological times, they defeated the βάρβαροι by themselves and are thus also models to emulate.

¹²⁵ The fact that Ajax and Telamon are summoned by the Greeks on Salamis could perhaps be seen as a sign of Aegina's and Athens' contested primacy over them, but it can also be explained by the location of the battle. In any case, it is clear from Herodotus' formulation at the start of the passage – ἐπικαλέσασθαι τοὺς Αἰακίδας συμμάχους – that when the Greeks invoke (ἐπεκαλέοντο) Ajax and Telamon, it is in their quality of Aeacidae.

¹²⁶ Hdt. VIII 64.2

¹²⁷ Telamon is also summoned from Salamis, but somehow after the battle a trireme is dedicated to Ajax alone, according to Herodotus (VIII 121).

The difference is small but meaningful, for the use of the word πόλις here creates distance between Salamis and Athens. As a matter of fact, Salamis is part of Attica in the fifth century, and Attica has become a unified territory in which there is only one πόλις: Athens. Therefore, Pindar's formulation has the effect of removing Salamis from Athenian influence.

Apart from the lines mentioned above, there are no more references to Ajax in *Isthmian* 5. The central figure of the poem is, in fact, Achilles, just as in *Isthmian* 8 (generally dated to 478), which also unambiguously refers to the contemporary events of the Second Persian War (lines 9-12). There is a very good reason that explains Achilles' prominence in both poems: they mention a deceased family member – Pytheas in *Isthmian* 5, and Nicocles in *Isthmian* 8 –¹²⁸ who probably died during the war. This seems, at any rate, to be a reasonable assumption to make, given the proximity of the war with the time of the poem's composition. Since Achilles is the only Acacid who died during the battle, but also possessed a prowess which entitled him to be mourned in songs by goddesses, he constitutes an ideal figure to mention in order to pay homage to a family member who perished in battle, while also providing comfort to his relatives. The Muses lamented his death in songs, which is an honour mirrored by Pindar in his praise of these deceased family members:

ἔδοξ' ἦρα καὶ ἀθανάτοις,
 ἐσλόν γε φῶτα καὶ φθίμε- 60
 νον ὕμνοις θεᾶν διδόμεν. *Isthm.* 8.59-60

The parallel drawn between the Acacidæ and the Aeginetans in relation to the Persian Wars is pervasive in the Aeginetan cultural discourse of the first half of the fifth century, and constituted the perfect display to promote and spread the memory of the Aeginetans' deeds during the war in the Panhellenic community. The Aeginetans' identification with the Acacidæ is fully exploited by Pindar, who even equates the κλέος they acquire through his poems in exchange for their deeds with that of these mythical warrior heroes:

καὶ γὰρ ἡρώων ἀγαθοὶ πολεμισταί
 λόγον ἐκέρδαναν· κλέονται δ' ἐν τε φορμίγ-
 γεσσιν ἐν αὐλῶν τε παμφώνοις ὁμοκλαῖς
 μυρίον χρόνον· *Isthm.* 5.26-8

¹²⁸ *Isthm.* 5.59-63; *Isthm.* 8.62-6.

As a matter of fact, Pindar states that among heroes, warriors earn or obtain the material of their song (λόγος) in war, as implied by the specific term of πολεμισταί. The word πολεμισταί obviously refers to the Aeacidae, who all are the epitome of a warrior, but also alludes to the Aeginetans, since they have recently earned their own λόγος thanks to their prowess at Salamis. Consequently, a parallel is drawn between the Aeacidae who are remembered in poetry because of their worth, and the Aeginetans, their true heirs, who will equally be immortalised in songs for their exploits.

Moreover, *Isthmian* 5 insists on the two expeditions against Troy concomitantly, thus linking them with the First and the Second Persian Wars.¹²⁹ Furthermore, it is no surprise to find the first expedition against Troy by Heracles and Telamon represented on the second pediment of Aphaea's temple, which appears to have been built shortly after Salamis. In so doing, the Aeginetans are metaphorically cast as the real saviours of Greece, which is usually how the Athenians depicted themselves.¹³⁰

τοὶ καὶ σὺν μάχαις
 δις πόλιν Τρώων πρᾶθον, ἐσπόμενοι
 Ἡρακλῆϊ πρότερον,
 καὶ σὺν Ἀτρεΐδαις.

Isthm. 5.35-8

In addition to this, the comparison is strengthened by the precision regarding the role of the Aeacidae in the expedition: they are not the leaders, since they first followed Heracles, and then the Atreidae, but are the instruments of victory, just like the Aeginetans who did not assume leadership of the Greek alliance while being, nonetheless, instrumental in securing victory at Salamis.¹³¹ There is, however, a further implication to this parallel. Insisting on the two expeditions against Troy, instead of one, does not only absolve the Aeginetans from accusations of medism (even at the time of Marathon), it also spread the idea that they had somehow participated in the victory at Marathon.¹³²

¹²⁹ Simonides also links the two (Gretlein 2010: 54-5). The parallel between these mythical and these historic events has already become a common idea in the second part of the fifth century, as shown through Herodotus' or Thucydides works for instance.

¹³⁰ Hdt. VII 139; Xen. *Hell.* II 18, for instance.

¹³¹ The *variatio* in ll. 37-8, from simple dative to dative with σὺν is probably significant here, as it seems to imply that Telamon was subordinate to Heracles, while Ajax and Achilles went to Troy with Agamemnon as equals and not as his followers.

¹³² This *tour de force* may have been facilitated by Miltiades' Aeginetan roots (Hdt. VI 35).

Nemean 7

σὺ δὲ θεῖον Ὅμηρον αἰεὶ δέ μοι,
 κλέος ἀνέρων,
 κλέος ἀμετέρων πόνων
 δι' ὃν οὐ θάνατον,
 δι' ὃν ἔστι μοι
 Πάτροκλος, δι' ὃν ἀθανάτοισι ἴσος
 Αἴας ἐμός,
 δι' ὃν ἁ δορίληπτος ἀειδομένα σοφοῖς
 κλέος ἦρατο κοῦ πέσσε Τροία.

– Philostratus, *Heroicus* LV 3

Nemean 7, which is the first of the three poems narrating Ajax's death, is a notoriously difficult poem, and, in addition, one which provides no obvious clue that permits us to date it.¹³³ Nonetheless, I wish to suggest a new date for the poem which, to some extent, stems from the symbolic value I read into the treatment of the myth of Ajax. As we shall see, I will argue that the story of Ajax's suicide is to be understood in this context as a mythical paradigm illustrating an award of the ἀριστεία that goes wrong.

Let us first examine in details the structure of the myth as found in *Nemean 7*, and compare it with that of *Nemean 8* (also composed for an Aeginetan victor) and *Isthmian 4* (composed for Melissos of Thebes) in which Pindar also recounts the story. This will allow us to assess how Pindar chooses to formulate the myth in each of its occurrences, by contrasting what he tells or omits, and thus will cast light on the reasons why he might emphasise certain aspects of it rather than others. It is rather uncommon to find the same myth rehearsed in similar ways in the extant Pindaric corpus, and, consequently, this case provides a unique opportunity to witness how the poet shaped his myth.¹³⁴

The main elements of the story differ only minimally from one poem to the other. In each, the myth is told in a manner that follows the same narrative pattern.¹³⁵ In essence, each time he is represented as a victim (of men's blindness, envy, or of τύχη) who commits suicide in reaction to the unfair treatment

¹³³ It is indicated that Sogenes won the first place at the pentathlon κατὰ τὴν τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτην Νεμεάδα, while the particular trial was established κατὰ τὴν τρισκαίδεκάτην Νεμεάδα (Σ inscr. *Nem.* 7). This means that Sogenes' victory would date from 547 BCE, that is long before Pindar's birth, since the first Nemean Games are usually thought to date from 573 (Miller 2004: 105–11). The D scholia transmit a different date (in Greek numerals this time): it has κδ' (24) in stead of ιδ' (14). See Drachmann 3: 116. Emendations have been proposed to rectify the date on the basis that the transmission of Greek numerals is easily corrupted (Gaspar 1900, 39–42; Wilamowitz 1908, 344–5). However, this solution does not work with the date given in the *inscriptio*, since it is written in full letters. Scholars are divided on how to date the poem. On the one hand, there are those who defend an 'early' date (oscillating around 485 BCE: e.g. Gaspar 1900: 36 (493 BCE), Wilamowitz 1922 (485 BCE, although he means 487 BCE, as Turyn (1952: 160) notes), and, on the other, those who argue in favour of a 'later' date (oscillating around 467 BCE: e.g. Farnell 1932 II: 289; Puech 1952: 93–4). See Finley 1951; Most 1985: 133–4.

¹³⁴ The myth of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis features three times (*Nem.* 4, 5 and *Isthm.* 8), but in different versions, as does the story of Neoptolemus' death (*Pae.* 6 and *Nem.* 7). This stands contrary to the accounts of Ajax's death, which are consistent with one another.

¹³⁵ Calabrese del Feo 1984.

he receives. Nonetheless, some slight variations and omissions can be observed, as highlighted in the following table:¹³⁶

	<i>Nemean 7</i>	<i>Isthmian 4</i>	<i>Nemean 8</i>
Suicide of Ajax	He plants his sword into his heart. 26-7: ἔπαξε διὰ φρενῶν λευρὸν ξίφος	He 'cuts' his murderous ἀλκή with his sword. 35,6: ἀλκάν, φοίνιον τὰν ὀψία ἐν νυκτὶ ταμῶν περὶ ᾧ φασγάνῳ	He throws himself on his sword 25-6: κείνος καὶ Τελαμῶνος δάψεν υἱόν, φασγάνῳ ἀμφικυλίσαις
Reason	He is angry because of the arms. 25: ὅπλων χολωθεῖς	-	He has been deprived of the arms. 27: χρυσέων δ' Αἴας στέρηθεις ὅπλων
Culprits	-	All the Greeks 37-8: μομφὰν ἔχει παιδῆσιν Ἑλλάνων ὅσοι Τρώανδ' ἔβαν	The Danacans who secretly vote 26-7: κρυφαῖσι γὰρ ἐν ψάφοις Ὀδυσσῇ Δαναοὶ θεράπευσαν
Cause	The blindness of men.	Τύχη	Envy
Compensation	Poetry which is a mirror for noble deeds	Poetry which can re-establish someone's reputation.	-
Victor	Sogenes of Aegina	Melissos of Thebes	Deinias of Aegina

The most significant difference is the cause Pindar evokes for the unfair treatment, but, as we shall see, the omission of certain details is also meaningful, as are subtle variations in the formulation of who is to blame for Ajax's suicide and how it can be compensated.

First it must be noted that Achilles' arms are only mentioned in *Nemean 7* and *Nemean 8*. Their omission from *Isthmian 4* has one major consequence: Ajax's suicide is not linked directly to the ὅπλων κρίσις in the poem, and thus allows a broader reading of the myth whose significance is defined instead by the fact that all the Greeks should be blamed for what happened to the hero. This is not trivial, for *Isthmian 4* was not composed for an Aeginetan, but for a Theban patron. Thebes, contrary to Aegina, was not involved in the awarding of the ἀριστεῖα by the Greek alliance after Salamis or after any other battle, since it sided with the Persians. In fact, as mentioned briefly before, the story of the ὅπλων κρίσις was highly relevant for the Aeginetans, as we hear from Herodotus that even though they fought best at Salamis,¹³⁷

¹³⁶ The cells filled in blue note small variations, while the cells in red highlight more substantive differences.

¹³⁷ Hdt. VIII 93.

they did not receive the award of the ἀριστεία for their feat. It is clear from the account in the *Histories* that the award did not run smoothly:

μετὰ δὲ τὴν διαίρεσιν τῆς λήϊς ἐπλυνον οἱ Ἕλληνες ἐς τὸν Ἰσθμὸν ἀριστεία δώσοντες τῷ ἀξιοτάτῳ γενομένῳ Ἑλλήνων ἀνὰ τὸν πόλεμον τοῦτον. ὥς δὲ ἀπικόμενοι οἱ στρατηγοὶ διενέμον τὰς ψήφους ἐπὶ τοῦ Ποσειδέωνος τῷ βωμῷ, τὸν πρῶτον καὶ τὸν δεύτερον κρίνοντες ἐκ πάντων, ἐνθαῦτα πᾶς τις αὐτῶν ἐωυτῷ ἐτίθετο τὴν ψήφον, αὐτὸς ἕκαστος δοκέων ἄριστος γενέσθαι, δεύτερα δὲ οἱ πολλοὶ συνέξέπιπτον Θεμιστοκλέα κρίνοντες. οἱ μὲν δὴ ἐμουνούντο, Θεμιστοκλῆς δὲ δευτερείοισι ὑπερεβάλλετο πολλόν. Οὐ βουλομένων δὲ ταῦτα κρίνειν τῶν Ἑλλήνων φθόνῳ, ἀλλ' ἀποπλυνόντων ἑκάστων ἐς τὴν ἐωυτῶν ἀκρίτων, ὅμως Θεμιστοκλῆς ἐβώσθη τε καὶ ἐδοξώθη εἶναι ἀνὴρ πολλὸν Ἑλλήνων σοφώτατος ἀνὰ πᾶσαν τὴν Ἑλλάδα. ὅτι δὲ νικῶν οὐκ ἐτίμηθη πρὸς τῶν ἐν Σαλαμῖνι ναυμαχησάντων, αὐτίκα μετὰ ταῦτα ἐς Λακεδαιμόνα ἀπύκετο θέλων τιμηθῆναι· καὶ μιν Λακεδαιμόνιοι καλῶς μὲν ὑπεδέξαντο, μεγάλως δὲ ἐτίμησαν. ἀριστεία μὲν νυν ἔδοσαν Εὐρυβιάδῃ ἐλαίης στέφανον, σοφίης δὲ καὶ δεξιότητος Θεμιστοκλεΐ, καὶ τούτῳ στέφανον ἐλαίης.¹³⁸

The Aeginetans are not specifically named here, but since we have been told before that they had fought best, we can infer that they must have felt displeased and wronged when the Greeks decided to leave before settling the matter (ταῦτα κρίνειν). Moreover, Herodotus makes clear that the Greeks were only motivated by envy (φθόνος) when they decided not to award the first prize. This may also explain why the Aeginetans are reported to have delayed making a dedication to Apollo for their ἀριστεία:¹³⁹ on the assumption that they had been deprived of their due prize, they would have been quite understandably reluctant to make such an offering. The story of the ὅπλων κρίσις appears to fit this context perfectly, as it revolves around the question of offering a prize for one's ἀριστεία.¹⁴⁰ It is probably not a mere coincidence. After these events (480/479 BCE), the Aeginetans are likely to have drawn a parallel between the mythical

¹³⁸ Hdt. VIII 123-4.

¹³⁹ Hdt. VIII 123.

¹⁴⁰ Interestingly, the denomination ὅπλων κρίσις seems to be rather late. The earliest attestations are found in scholastic writings (for instance, in Σ *Aj.* 189, or Σ *Ach.* 883). It is impossible to tell whether or not Aeschylus himself named his play 'Ὀπλων Κρίσις. For what it is worth, Mette (1959:), who bases his hypothesis on a conjectural reading of Pap. Ox. 2256 fr. 50, argues that two titles co-existed. In the *Nekyia*, for instance, which is the earliest extant allusion to the episode, the word designating the arms is not ὅπλα but τεύχεα (λ 546).

account of Ajax not receiving his due prize and what happened to them; needless to say, Pindar would then have been aware of it.¹⁴¹

In fact, both myths recounted in *Nemean* 7 engage with the question of an unfair distribution of γέρας, and consequently of τιμαί.¹⁴² Ajax does not receive the prize he deserves, and Neoptolemus feels wronged by the allocation of the meat from a sacrifice. In each case, the injustice triggers a feeling of anger that has deadly consequences. Ajax kills himself out of anger, and Neoptolemus starts a fight – presumably out of anger as well – in which he is then killed. Interestingly, the Trojan War is also mentioned in each account, which further encourages the reader to draw a parallel with Salamis. Ajax is said to have been brought to Troy on ships (Salamis was a sea battle), while Neoptolemus comes to Delphi with Τρωϊάθεν ἀκροθίνια. Moreover, this very action finds a striking parallel in Herodotus, as he says that the Greeks sent τὰ ἀκροθίνια to Delphi after Salamis:

πέμψαντες δὲ ἀκροθίνια οἱ Ἕλληνες ἐς Δελφοὺς ἐπειρώτων τὸν θεὸν κοινῇ εἰ
λελάβηκε πλήρη καὶ ἀρεστὰ τὰ ἀκροθίνια. ὁ δὲ παρ' Ἑλλήνων μὲν τῶν ἄλλων
ἔφησε ἔχειν, παρὰ Αἰγινητέων δὲ οὐ, ἀλλὰ ἀπαίτεε αὐτοὺς τὰ ἀριστηία τῆς ἐν
Σαλαμῖνι ναυμαχίης.¹⁴³

Pindar's decision to use the word ἀκροθίνια strikes one as being particularly significant,¹⁴⁴ as it refers to the custom of dedicating the tithe of the spoils to the gods, which did occur after Salamis.¹⁴⁵ As a matter of fact, Herodotus uses it only six times in his work and no fewer than four of these are used in the context of

¹⁴¹ The Aeginetans' disappointment following on the award of the ἀριστεία after Salamis may perhaps also be echoed in *Isthmian* 5. Pindar keeps repeating that men cannot have it all (l. 14: μὴ μάτευε Ζεὺς γενέσθαι; ll. 68-9: Ζεὺς τὰ τε καὶ τὰ νέμει, Ζεὺς ὁ πάντων κύριος), and that Lampon and his sons should be happy with what they have (l. 14-5). Moreover, some passages of the poem echo an award of the ἀριστεία through their phrasing and the vocabulary used. In line 11, ἀλκά is designated as a quality which is judged (κρίνεται δ' ἀλκά διὰ δαίμονας ἀνδρῶν), and, in line 53-4, the Aeginetans' deeds are referred to as τιμαί, which suggests that their τιμαί is their real reward which they finally receive thanks to the ode (ἐν δ' ἐρατεινῷ μέλιτι καὶ τοιαῖδε τιμαὶ καλλίνικον χάρι' ἀγαπάζονται).

¹⁴² According to Nagy, the Aeacidae are heroes connected to δαίς, and thus to 'fair allotment' (Nagy 1980: 127). The word designates a meal but its constitutive particularity is that it is one during which each participant receives his due (μοῖρα). Δαίς stems from the same root as the one in the verbal theme δαίωμαι 'to distribute'. Most interestingly, this theme is also connected to what warriors do *par excellence*: δαΐς. 'L'orientation prise par le thème δαΐω depuis Hom. dans la poésie: il s'agit de transpercer, de massacrer, etc.' (Chantraine *s.v.* δαίωμαι). If Nagy's interpretation is correct, it appears then that 'distribution' and 'war' are the defining attributes of the Aeacidae, and that consequently the episode of the ὅπλων κρίσις is to be understood in terms of the disruption of what pertains to the theme of δαίωμαι.

¹⁴³ Hdt. VIII 122.

¹⁴⁴ The ἀκροθίνια are 'la fine fleur, le premier choix, le « dessus du panier ». L'emploi de ce mot est bien attesté dans les textes littéraires et épigraphiques. Il peut désigner un objet réellement prélevé sur le butin. Mais il peut aussi qualifier une offrande quelconque substituée aux véritables prémices' (Amandry 1998: 83).

¹⁴⁵ It must be noted however that the expression is often used in archaic dedicative formulae (Lazzarini 1976).

the distribution of spoils after Salamis (from VIII 121 to 122).¹⁴⁶ In fact, in *Paean* 6, which offers another variation on the myth of Neoptolemus' death,¹⁴⁷ no mention is made about spoils coming from Troy that Neoptolemus takes to Delphi.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, this detail is in itself rather odd: Neoptolemus has been king of Molossia for several years before he goes to Delphi (and Pindar gives us an account of his long peregrinations), and, in the usual version of the myth, he travels there in order to inquire about his νόστος. Moreover, no Greek epic hero has any reason whatsoever to make a dedication to Delphian Apollo with spoils from Troy. Thanking the god for the victory at Troy does not make sense. Pindar also specifies that Neoptolemus and his men reached Ephyra (εἰς Ἐφύραν ἵκοντο) before Molossia. The detail may seem gratuitous, but makes a lot of sense in the context of the award of ἀριστεία that took place after Salamis: Ephyra is the old name of Corinth,¹⁴⁹ and it so happens that the Greek allies gathered at the Isthmus (and thus in Corinth) to distribute the spoils after Salamis.¹⁵⁰ It thus follows that the allusion to the ἀκροθίνια is probably specifically designed to draw a parallel with contemporary events.

The theme of unfair distribution runs consistently through the first half of the poem.¹⁵¹ Note, however, that the tone is rather comforting.¹⁵² In each case, the dramatic repercussion of the unfair distribution on its victim (*i.e.* death) is minimised, and only has an effect in the short term. The injustice of it ultimately causes Neoptolemus' death, but this was bound to happen so that he would reside forever (τὸ λοιπόν) beside Apollo and be honoured in celebrations and sacrifices. Similarly, Ajax dies as a consequence of an unfair judgement, but in the end he is still awarded his share of τιμή:¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ Incidentally, the word is absent from the account of the aftermath of Plataea, although we are told about the award of the ἀριστεία, the distribution of the spoils, and the dedication of a part of it to the Delphian Apollo in Hdt. IX 71-2, 81.

¹⁴⁷ On the issue of distribution in the poem, see Kurke 2005.

¹⁴⁸ In *Pae.* 6, Neoptolemus is killed by Apollo in retribution for killing Priam. A scholiast reports that the version of Neoptolemus' myth, as found in *Nem.* 7, supposedly corrects that of *Pae.* 6, which is not very flattering for the hero and thus displeased the Aeginetans (Σ *Nem.* 7: 150a). The anecdote has received great attention from scholars, and is often used as an argument for the date of the poem (if the anecdote were true, then *Nem.* 7 has to follow *Pae.* 6). The story is probably an invention from the scholiast based on a reading of the last lines of *Nem.* 7. Therefore, other reasons than this one probably underlie the mention as well as the particular treatment of Neoptolemus' myth in the poem. '[K]nowledge of the Sixth Paean enriches but does not determine the interpretation of the Seventh Nemean' (Most 1985: 210).

¹⁴⁹ Eumelos, fr. 15; Simonides, fr. 10 *IEG*.

¹⁵⁰ Hdt. VIII 123.

¹⁵¹ On the importance of the distribution of spoils and award of the ἀριστεία, see Miller 2004: 29-62.

¹⁵² From l. 11 to l. 58.

¹⁵³ I disagree here with Carey's (1981) and Most's (1985) interpretations. I do not think that Ajax is used as a negative example in the poem, as a kind of anti-Neoptolemus. Their insistence on the irrelevance of riches diminishes the worth of the arms, and it is implied nowhere that Ajax is deprived from his κλέος. I agree with Köhnken (1971: 61-8) on this point, for he shows that both myths in *Nem.* 7 respond to the sequence 'Taten, Tod, Nachruhm'.

κῦμ' Αἶδα, πέσε δ' ἀδόκητον
 ἐν καὶ δοκέοντα· τιμὰ δὲ γίνεται
 ὧν θεὸς ἄβρὸν αὖξει λόγον τεθνακότων
 βοαθῶν [...]

Nem. 7.30-3

This τιμή is in fact presented by Pindar as a superior reward to the arms themselves, for the arms symbolically represent the material expression of the acknowledgement – and therefore of the reputation – granted by men's judgement.¹⁵⁴ This constitutes an ephemeral reward, since one may only possess the prize for the duration of one's life. 'Real' τιμή, on the other hand, is not awarded by men, but by gods after one's death. It implies that it consists in being remembered forever in songs,¹⁵⁵ which precisely mirrors what is said in lines 14-7.

Therefore, Achilles' arms or the actual prize¹⁵⁶ the Aeginetans should have received for their ἀριστεία do not matter in reality, for what is ultimately important is to be immortalised in songs.¹⁵⁷ Pindar states this unambiguously at the end of Neoptolemus' *exemplum*:

¹⁵⁴ I take ἀδόκητον καὶ δοκέοντα to mean 'men without and with repute.' The concept inherent to δόξα is that it is the opinion of the majority.

¹⁵⁵ In VIII 123-4, Herodotus insists on the σοφία of Themistocles. He is said to be the cleverest man in Greece (πολλὸν Ἑλλήνων σοφώτατος ἀνὰ πᾶσαν τὴν Ἑλλάδα), by virtue of which he is unanimously voted second best for the award of the ἀριστεία after Salamis. After the failure to attribute the first prize, Themistocles decides to go to Sparta to receive the honours granted by his prize. He is well received there, and his σοφία is again highlighted by Herodotus, who explains that the Lacedaemonians only crown him for his σοφία and δεξιότης. In *Nem.* 7, σοφία is also what allows Odysseus to win Achilles' arms. The *exemplum* of Odysseus, which incidentally occurs shortly before the story of Ajax in the poem, appears to mirror the figure of Themistocles and, through him, Athens. As a matter of fact, people cannot distinguish the truth (ἀλήθεια) anymore because of Odysseus' σοφία, just as Themistocles' σοφία might have concealed, beneath seducing words, Aegina's prowess at Salamis. A few lines before, however, Pindar writes that Odysseus' λόγος has been inflated because of the appeal of Homer's poetry. This is considered by some commentators to present a small discrepancy, since Pindar insists throughout his ode on the connection between truth and poetry, stating that only poetry offers permanent (and well deserved) τιμή. However, a hero's λόγος is not directly connected to his κλέος, and consequently neither to his τιμή, as the poet makes clear in *Nem.* 7.36-7. In fact, the appeal to Homer's poetry operates at a completely different level than the capacity of Pindar's poetry to grant κλέος. Nevertheless, the phrasing used in the case of Odysseus deserves further attention. (On the question, see Carey 1981: 144-7; Currie 2005: 313-15, for instance). Homer's words – supposedly the *Odyssey*, given the context – have not contributed to increasing the hero's worth, but rather the extent of what he has suffered. Incidentally, this parallels one important aspect of the rhetoric deployed in the Athenians' self-representation of their part during the Persian Wars, for they depicted themselves both as those who suffered most (since the Persians ravaged their city), and as those who saved Greece.

¹⁵⁶ *I.e.* a material prize, a κέρδος. Lines 19-20 clearly allude to the little importance one should give to κέρδος. Lines 61-4 are also explicit on the subject: the salary (μισθός) Thearion receives, which normally implies a material reward, is true fame (ἐτήτυμον κλέος).

¹⁵⁷ This is what κλέος consists of.

οὐ ψεύδις ὁ μάρτυς ἔργμασιν ἐπιστατεῖ,
 Αἴγινα, τεῶν Διὸς τ' ἐκ-
 γόνων. θρασὺ μοι τόδ' εἰπεῖν
 φαενναῖς ἀρεταῖς ὁδὸν κυρίαν λόγων
 οἴκοθεν.¹⁵⁸

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Nem 7.49-52

The direct address to Aegina,¹⁵⁹ and the fact that the subject seamlessly moves from the specific case of Neoptolemus in the preceding lines to that of all of Aegina's descendants (τεῶν ἐκγόνων), again allows one to draw a parallel between the Acacidae and the Aeginetans. In fact, both stories in *Nemean* 7 appear to be used as mythological *exempla* mirroring the situation of the Aeginetans. The story of the ὀπλων κρίσις engages with the award of the ἀριστεῖα itself, while the myth about Neoptolemus (in particular the fact that he brings the ἀκροθίνια from Troy to Delphi) mirrors the greater prize Delphian Apollo asked from the Aeginetans for their ἀριστεῖα;¹⁶⁰ a prize of which they had, in reality, been deprived, as may be inferred from Herodotus' account. All of this consequently indicates that the account of Ajax's death has been shaped in relation to these events. Moreover, it provides a framework to account for the subtle differences we find in the three accounts of his death. As we shall see, each of them is aptly moulded to respond to a particular set of preoccupations in relation to contemporary events, which means that the small variations we brought out become highly significant when they are interpreted with each ode's specific context in mind.

Before proceeding to the analysis of the next poem, I would like to discuss the date of *Nemean* 7, as the compelling parallel that can be drawn between the two myths of the poem and the issue relating to the award of the ἀριστεῖα after Salamis brings new arguments as to the question. If one accepts this reading, it necessarily follows that the poem was composed shortly after the Second Persian War (*i.e.* in 479 or shortly after). This date is in fact further supported by other elements of the poem that I would like to bring forward.

¹⁵⁸ Here, I follow a different punctuation than what is printed by Race (78), although he nonetheless notes the alternative. I understand τεῶν Διὸς τ' ἐκγόνων as the complement of ἔργμασιν

¹⁵⁹ Aegina is also specifically named just before the mention of the Aeginetans' prowess at Salamis in *Isthm.* 5.43-5.

¹⁶⁰ Hdt. VIII 122.

First of all, it seems reasonable to infer that the poem was composed before Aegina's decline, for it is made clear throughout that Thearion and his son Sogenes are very prosperous.¹⁶¹ Moreover, contrary to *Olympian* 8 and *Pythian* 8, which were composed for victories in 460 and in 446 respectively, there is no allusion or inference that something bad happened or may happen to Aegina, as Pindar's wish that the πόλις should see brighter days and prosper again (*Ol.* 8.84-8), or be saved by the Acacidae (*Pyth.* 8. 97-100) indicates. A date preceding the late 470s would thus appear to be preferable.

A further argument may be drawn from the incorrect date given for the poem in the *inscriptio* of the scholia. Sogenes is said to have won at the pentathlon in the fourteenth Nemead.¹⁶² If Eusebius is correct in placing the first Nemead in the third year of the fifty-third Olympiad, the two victories would then respectively date from 542 and 540. This is certainly impossible, but the mistake is hard to explain through textual corruption, as the number τρισκαίδεκάτην is written in full letters.¹⁶³ In these conditions, some logical reason instead of a palaeographical one must be the cause of the error. If a misreading of the original dates or their alteration through textual transmission are to be excluded (unless we posit, like Hermann, a stage in the transmission in which the date was written in numbers), then the most likely scenario is that the victory of Sogenes from Aegina in the 14th Nemead was mentioned in the list of Nemean victors contained in the *Nemeanikai*, except that this Sogenes was not the one praised in *Nemean* 7. This other Sogenes would thus be the victor's grandfather. In terms of date, this solution works quite well: if we assume that one generation should count for 30 years, as Heraclitus says, it means that our poem should have been composed some sixty years after 540, which is to say around 480.¹⁶⁴

Since Pindar makes no mention of a specific victory in *Nemean* 7,¹⁶⁵ it is tempting to speculate that in reality the name of the young Sogenes never appeared in the Nemean victors' list, contrary to that of his grandfather, which later caused the scholiast's confusion between the two. In any case, the lack of

¹⁶¹ For instance, Thearion, is said to be prosperous at ll. 58-9. Furthermore, that can be implied from the good fortune Pindar hopes to see remain with them until the end in ll. 98-101, when Pindar wishes a settled life to Thearion and Sogenes (which is a sensible wish if the date is 479).

¹⁶² See above: 109n133. The D scholia transmit the twenty-fourth Nemead rather than the fourteenth.

¹⁶³ Since the date given by the scholiast is before Pindar's birth, it is undoubtedly a mistake which must have an explanation. Hermann speculated that the date might have been written in numbers in the oldest manuscripts and thus conjectured that a textual corruption happened before it was converted to letters. Therefore, he suggested to read νδ' (54) instead of ιδ' (14) for the date of the victory, and νγ' (53) instead of ιγ' (13), for the date of the introduction of the πένταθλον into the program of the Nemean Games (Gaspar 1900: 39).

¹⁶⁴ Both Sogenes would have won at around the same age since both would have competed in the παῖς category.

¹⁶⁵ There is a reference to Nemea not to a specific victory.

reference in the poem to athletic endeavour is puzzling. All we hear is that Sogenes distinguishes himself among pentathletes through his excellence (l. 7).¹⁶⁶ Moreover, if the start of the poem seems to be typical of an *epinicion*,¹⁶⁷ the lines following Sogenes' praise are particularly appropriate to a martial context:

τὰι μεγάλαι γὰρ ἄλκαί
 σκότον πολὺν ὕμνων ἔχοντι δεόμεναι·
 ἔργοις δὲ καλοῖς ἔσοπτρον ἴσαμεν ἐνὶ σὺν τρόπῳ,
 εἰ Μναμοσύνας ἕκατι λιπαράμπυκος 15
 εὐρηται ἄποινα μόχθων
 κλυταῖς ἐπέων ἁοιδαῖς.¹⁶⁸ Nem 7.12-6

The *μεγάλαι ἄλκαί* and the *ἔργα καλά* point in this direction, especially since this passage serves as an introduction to the *exemplum* of Ajax. The word *μόχθοι* seems to require interpretation as the toils that one suffers on the battlefield, rather than those from training and competing which are self-imposed.¹⁶⁹ A similar absence of concern for the expected athletic victory can be noted in two other poems from our corpus: *Isthmian* 5 (480) and *Isthmian* 8 (478). It may not be a mere coincidence that the poems fail to provide any identifiable features of a specific victory, and even neglect to talk about athletic games that would date during the war. This could be a sign that during the war the games might not have taken place, or that they were seriously disrupted, since the Persians did not observe the usual truce.¹⁷⁰ If this is right, it follows that *Isthmian* 5, *Nemean* 7 (if my date is correct), and *Isthmian* 8 might simply not refer to a recent athletic victory. At any rate, the possibility that the Aeginetans would not have had the chance to compete

¹⁶⁶ Moreover, in lines 58-60, it is Thearion who is praised for his fine deeds. Sogenes is mentioned again in lines 70-6.

¹⁶⁷ Lines 5-6 (*ἀναπνέομεν δ' οὐχ ἅπαντες ἐπὶ ἴσα· εἴργει δὲ πότμῳ ζυγένη' ἕτερον ἕτερα*) are surprising though. What are the different restraints men are exposed to, do they have to do with the fact that Sogenes is praised thanks to Ilithyia?

¹⁶⁸ The use of the word *ἄποινα* in this a context is also striking. For instance, in the first part of the *Iliad*, the term designates what Achilles should receive in compensation for the unfairness of his treatment by Agamemnon (Elmer 2013: 84-5). Moreover, it is precisely in terms of distribution of loot that Achilles has been wronged.

¹⁶⁹ All of these words are obviously found throughout Pindar's odes in the context of athletic competitions. However, one should not forget that they are not used literally, but as images borrowed from an epic or a war context. Thus, in this passage of *Nem.* 7, the high concentration of expressions drawn from a martial vocabulary in only a few lines suggests that these expressions should probably be taken literally here.

¹⁷⁰ Obviously, the games might have still taken place (so that the gods would be honoured as expected), but the attendance must have been reduced. Herodotus (VII 206 and VIII 24-6) says that most of the Greeks attended the Olympic games during the battle of the Thermopylae (and consequently also during that of the Artemision). This is hard to believe given the urgency of the situation. The story may perhaps reflect an excuse given by the Spartans for not sending more men. In any case, this is the only existing anecdote testifying that the Olympic games continued to be held during the Second Persian War, and nothing is recorded about the Isthmian and Nemean games. As for the Pythian games, they did not take place in those years, but before and shortly after the war (in 482 and 478).

during the war should be kept in mind.¹⁷¹ All of this makes a date of *c.* 479 for *Nemean* 7 probable. Moreover, this date has the advantage of leaving a convenient gap of time between each of the poems in which the story of Ajax's suicide is rehearsed.¹⁷²

Isthmian 4

The next poem we shall discuss is *Isthmian* 4, dedicated to Melissos of Thebes. Although the ode does not belong to the corpus of Aeginetan poems, it should nonetheless be examined, for it features one of the three accounts of Ajax's death, and can therefore contribute, by means of contrast, to the overall argument of Part II.

Isthmian 4 is usually believed to have been composed shortly after Plataea. The poet mentions four of Melissos' relatives who lost their life on a single day because of the 'harsh snow of war' (τραχέια νιφάς πολέμοιο l. 17), some lines before the retelling of Ajax's suicide. Since it is well-known that the Thebans fought alongside the Persians at Plataea, it has been conjectured that the four Cleonymidae died during this battle.¹⁷³ However, a recent paper has shown that they probably did not die on the battlefield,

¹⁷¹ The poem suggests that the poetic persona of Pindar writes while he stays at Thearion's place on Aegina as a *πρόξενος* (l. 66), but he is oddly defensive (ll. 49-51, ll. 57-61). This may also support the date of 479, since his anxiety could then be explained by the fact that it is not a very good time to be a Theban amongst other Greeks: Boeotia has been invaded by the Persians and Thebes is on their side. It is possible that Pindar could not easily go back to Thebes at the time (or that he did not want to medise and took, therefore, refuge on Aegina during the war?). In these conditions, some people could have been suspicious of him. This would explain, for instance, why the poem (and the *κλέος ἐτήτυμον* it bestows on Thearion) is presented as the due reward for good men (*ποτίφορος δ' ἀγαθοῖσι μισθὸς οὗτος* l. 64), instead of the *μοχθῶν ἄποινα* we usually find in athletic contexts. Therefore it seems that it is Thearion's possible welcoming of Pindar, even though he was a Theban, that creates the occasion of the poem, rather than athletic prowess and a particular victory at the games. Furthermore, this passage comes straight after the line in which Pindar emphatically says that he is a guest (*ξείνός εἰμι* l. 61). *Ξένια* is stressed throughout the second part of the poem (l. 61, 66, 86), which follows the two myths. Moreover, Pindar sounds particularly personal and defensive in some passages of the ode which are unusually long (ll. 61-9, 102-106). The fact that he attempts to justify himself suggests a context in which his situation might be precarious, thereby making the date of *c.* 479 an appealing possibility.

¹⁷² Consequently, it could be inferred from this interpretation that Pindar resided in Aegina during the war, and wrote poems for his hosts despite the interruption of the games. This might explain the stronger focus of some odes on the contemporary political context than that of more typical *ἐπινίκια*. Race notes that 'what is remarkable is that such a long, complex, and beautiful poem [*i.e.* *Nem.* 7] should have been written for a boy athlete' (70); this is odd indeed, though it may potentially be less so if we consider that the poem is not a 'proper' epinician ode (*i.e.* an ode written *ἐπὶ νίκῃς*), but only uses the conventions of the *genre* in order to thank Thearion and to pay tribute to the Euxenidaes' hospitality. This would also explain why Thearion is celebrated as much as his son Sogenes in the poem. Furthermore, the designation *ἐπινίκιον* is late, and can be misleading, given that not all the odes categorised as *ἐπινίκια* are athletic (for instance, *Nem.* 11, *Pyth.* 2, *Bacch.* fr. 20c.). These are normally considered to be *ἐγκώμια*. This is how Athenaeus (XIII 33 [=573F]) refers to *Ol.* 13. See Hornblower 2004: 18; Currie 2005: 344-5; Budelmann 2012: 176-80. Interestingly, Currie (2005: 316-7) sees elements that are typical of an encomium precisely in *Nemean* 7 (ll. 64-74).

¹⁷³ *Isthm.* 4.15ff. See Willcock 1995: 75. Privitera (1982: 175) expresses uncertainty about the identification of the battle with Plataea, but nonetheless states that the view is almost *opinio communis*.

but rather in the aftermath of Thebes' defeat.¹⁷⁴ The Thebans, besieged by the Greek alliance at the end of the war, were forced to surrender their foremost citizens, who had embraced the Persians' cause; they did so, and were put to death without a trial.¹⁷⁵ The argument is compelling, and I adopt it in the interpretation that follows. As we shall see, it also has the advantage of making the myth of Ajax's death more pertinent to the poem as well as of accounting for its specific retelling.

The main theme developed in *Isthmian* 4 revolves around the conception of 'victory as compensation for losses in other spheres of life';¹⁷⁶ Accordingly, it aims at re-establishing the former prestige of the Cleonymidae, which probably greatly suffered from the consequences of their alliance with the Persians, since it resulted in their defeat at Plataea, and the premature death of four adult males in the family.¹⁷⁷ Consequently, the myth of Ajax's suicide is manifestly designed to exemplify how rehabilitation can be achieved through poetry. Its retelling, in *Isthmian* 4, focuses on two points: (i) Ajax's death and the responsibility that all the Greeks bear for it (ii) the recovery of Ajax's reputation through poetry.

Let us examine the first part of the myth:

(...)	ἴστε μάν	35b
Αἴαντος ἀλκὰν φοίνισιν, τὰν ὀψία		
ἐν νυκτὶ ταμῶν περὶ ᾧ φασγάνῳ μομφὰν ἔχει		36b
παίδεσσιν Ἑλλάνων ὅσοι Τροίανδ' ἔβαν.		<i>Isthm.</i> 4.35b-7

Pindar remains curiously evasive concerning the circumstances that led Ajax to commit suicide, and no mention is made of the arms, of the trial, nor of Odysseus. By contrast, particular emphasis is put on the suicide itself, as we are even told when it happened. Moreover, the fact that the Greeks are exclusively blamed for what happened is rather unexpected. Traditionally it is Athena, Odysseus, or the Atreidae who are held responsible.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, to refer to the Greeks, Pindar uses a formulation that is slightly off-mark in so far as it appears to be more specific than it needs to. As a matter of fact, Ἕλληγες is used

¹⁷⁴ See Bocksberger 2009: 98-102. The argument is based, amongst other things, on the fact that the four Cleonymidae died, despite finding favour with bronze Ares (l. 15). By contrast, at *Isthm.* 7.25, Strepsiades, who died in battle, is described as someone 'whom bronze Ares made acquainted with his destiny' (χάλκασπις ᾧ πότμον μὲν Ἀρης ἐμείξεν).

¹⁷⁵ Hdt. IX 86-8.

¹⁷⁶ Boeke 2007: 165. This is a Pindaric topos: cf. *Isthm.* 1.32-40; *Pyth.* 5.5-11; *Ol.* 12; *Isthm.* 7.

¹⁷⁷ Jeffrey 2000: 190; pace Privitera (1982: 176) who thinks that the new victory only compensates the Cleonymidae's past defeats at the games.

¹⁷⁸ The Δαναοί are mentioned in *Nem.* 8.6, but Pindar does not hold them responsible (or at least not directly) for Ajax's death. Rather, he criticises their ungratefulness.

anachronistically in the context of the Trojan War, since in the Homeric poems, it is the name of a Thessalian tribe which only appears once in the Catalogue of Ships. Only from the fifth century onwards does the word refer to the Greeks as a group (opposed to the *βάρβαροι*). This use is probably to be linked with the Second Persian War, as may be inferred from the *Persae* and the *Histories*.¹⁷⁹ But this is not all, these Ἕλληνες are also qualified in a manner that seems rather unnecessary: Pindar blames all the Greeks that went to Troy (ὅσοι Τρώανδ' ἔβαν). But on what other Greeks than those who were at Troy could he put the responsibility for what happened to Ajax?

The particular choice of words in the sentence becomes significant, however, if one interprets Ajax's death as a metaphor designed to address the events that happened to the Cleonymidae in the aftermath of Plataea. 'All the Greeks who came to Troy' would thus be a manner to refer to the Greek alliance. Hence, the choice of the word Ἕλληνες (it was the usual word designating the Greek alliance in the fifth century) and of the expression ὅσοι Τρώανδ' ἔβαν (those who are to blame are the Greeks who went to Troy; that is the Greeks who fought against the Persians) would serve to make the analogy conspicuous. Furthermore, the expression Ἑλλάνων παῖδες echoes that used by Odysseus in the *Νεκυία* (παῖδες Τρώων) to refer to the judges that awarded him Achilles' arms.¹⁸⁰ Alluding to the *Odyssey* seems to be a way for Pindar to discreetly remind his audience that those who are to blame were supposed to be judges. Not the judges of a prize, but those whose responsibility was to give a fair trial to the Thebans, instead of allowing them to be killed in defiance of the common laws of the Greeks.

There may also be a parallelism between Ajax's suicide, and the manner in which the Thebans were executed. Thebans who had been surrendered to the Greek alliance may have been given the option of dying by their own hand, which would make Ajax's story all the more pertinent. Suicide under compulsion would then be a means to avoid pollution. Moreover, in *Isthmian* 4, Pindar puts emphasis on Ajax's ἀλκή, as his suicide is recounted in metaphorical terms (he cuts his ἀλκή). This not only facilitates the analogy (each of the four Thebans would then have cut his ἀλκή like Ajax), but this noun may also

¹⁷⁹ Aesch. *Pers.* 402. Ἕλληνες is used throughout the *Histories* of which the subject is precisely the confrontation between the Greeks and the Persians that culminates with the Persian Wars. Thucydides (I 3) notes that the term Hellenes is not used by Homer and that it designates the Greeks (by contrast to the rest of the world) when they engage in a collective action as a distinct group. The Second Persian War provides the ideal set of circumstances in which they would be called so.

¹⁸⁰ λ 543-64.

specifically refer to the fact that they were not put to flight,¹⁸¹ since it precisely consists in a type of strength that prevents a hero from withdrawing from the battlefield, even at the cost of his life.¹⁸² Furthermore, this interpretation would also explain the omission of the trial and of the arms, for it becomes less pertinent in a poem addressed to a non-Aeginetan audience.¹⁸³ Finally, the image of the earth blossoming with red roses after winter may also connect the four Cleonymidae to Ajax:

νῦν δ' αὖ μετὰ χειμέριον ποικίλα μηνῶν ζόφον
χθῶν ὥτε φοινικέοισιν ἄνθησεν ῥόδοις
δαιμόνων βουλαῖς. 18
Isthm. 4.18-9

The roses are probably red because they sprung from their blood which had been spilled on the earth, thereby mirroring the hyacinth that sprouted from Ajax's blood.¹⁸⁴

The second part of the myth focuses on how Homer exalted the hero's ἀρετή, which is meant to exemplify how Pindar in turn can restore the τιμή of the Cleonymidae, by enabling the ἀρετή its members displayed at Plataea to be remembered.¹⁸⁵ In this manner, Pindar casts himself in the role of a new Homer.¹⁸⁶

ἀλλ' Ὅμηρός τοι τετίμα-
κεν δι' ἀνθρώπων, ὃς αὐτοῦ
πᾶσαν ὀρθώσας ἀρετὰν κατὰ ράβδον ἔφρασεν
θεσπεσίων ἐπέων λιοιτοῖς ἀθύρειν. 37
Isthm. 4.37-9

The variation on the cause of Ajax's downfall, therefore, gains its full significance. The blindness of men, which is the reason evoked in *Nemean* 7 to explain Ajax's fall, is not mentioned in *Isthmian* 4, but it is now τύχη (which keeps shifting in one's lifetime) that is the root of the hero's demise:

¹⁸¹ Hdt. IX 68.

¹⁸² "There is no alkê, when there is flight, and the opposite of flight, as represented by alkê, can mean standing firm, or continuing to fight, but in any case not caving in to the enemy" (Collins 1998: 68).

¹⁸³ It is most relevant in the context of the award of the ἀριστεία after Salamis.

¹⁸⁴ Fr. 45. Interestingly, the expression νιφὰς πολέμοιο has only one known parallel in P 243, and it is pronounced by Ajax during the fight over Patroclus' body.

¹⁸⁵ This obviously also works for the τιμή that Melissos deserves for his own victory. We hear from Herodotus that the Thebans, even though they were on the Persians' side, fought valiantly (Hdt. IX 67-9).

¹⁸⁶ I take Homer, in this passage, to refer to the poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* only. Accordingly, I hold that if Homer has raised the fallen hero with his verses, it is precisely because he presented him in his best light (unlike poems like the *Aethiopis* and the *Ilias Parva*), since he ignoring his suicide and madness, in which the story features. Fitch (1924), Burkert (1987: 46), Vallozza (1989), amongst others, think that for Pindar 'Homer' refers to epic poetry in general, and thus that *Isthm.* 4.37-9 alludes to the material of the *Aethiopis*. I fail to see why it must be the case. Pindar mentions Homer twice besides the reference in *Isthm.* 4 (Pyth. 4.277; *Nem.* 7.21), and once the Homeridae (*Nem.* 2.1). In *Pyth.* 4.277ff. he appears to be hinting at the *Il.* O 277 (Wilamowitz 1884: 352; Burkert 1987: 44, 58 n10; *pace* Most 1990: 48), while in *Nem.* 7 he unambiguously alludes to the poet of the *Odyssey*. See Nisetich 1989:9-11; Burgess 2001: 130-1.

τῶν ἀπειράτων γὰρ ἄγνωτοι σιωπαί,
ἔστιν δ' ἀφάνεια τύχας καὶ μαρναμένων,
πρὶν τέλος ἄκρον ἰκέσθαι:
τῶν τε γὰρ καὶ τῶν διδοῖ:
καὶ κρέσσον' ἀνδρῶν χειρόνων
ἔσφαλε τέχνα καταμάρψαις'.

30

Isthm. 4.30-4.

Greed, lies, and Odysseus are not mentioned either in the context of *Isthmian* 4, which again is especially relevant in a context where Athens is not more at fault than the other Greeks. In fact, Herodotus says that the Spartans were behind the Thebans' execution, and not Themistocles or any other Athenians. Pindar certainly implies that the Greek alliance is to blame for what happened. He does not deny that the Thebans were on the wrong side of the war, but he defends his fellow countrymen by explaining that it was only the circumstances (τύχαι) which placed the Thebans on the losing side.

AJAX IN AEGINA IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE PENTAECOETIA

(EARLY 470S-457)

Nemean 4

In *Nemean 4*, Ajax is only named in passing in the extended list of the Aeacidae that the poet rehearses along with the lands they rule over.¹⁸⁷ Accordingly, it is manifest that the hero is only mentioned *qua* Aeacid, and therefore his presence in the poem should be interpreted in relation to the other members of his family. The poem provides little evidence for dating, apart from the mention of Melesias, the Athenian trainer named in *Olympian 8* (460 BCE) and *Nemean 6*;¹⁸⁸ who probably should be identified with the father of Thucydides (the politician and opponent of Pericles in the 440s).¹⁸⁹ Since we may infer from *Olympian 8* that he already had a long career by 460 BCE,¹⁹⁰ a date sometime in the 470s seems likely.

Accordingly, *Nemean 4* would then have been composed in the aftermath of Salamis and Plataea. Furthermore, this context would help explain why Pindar pays homage both to the victor's dead father (ll. 13-4) and uncle (ll. 80-6), while the grandfather is apparently still alive.¹⁹¹ *Isthmian 5* and 8, which undoubtedly were composed shortly after the war, also honour a deceased family member alongside the victor.¹⁹²

The passage rehearsing a list of the Aeacidae and of the territory they are connected to reads as follows:

ἐξύφαινε, γλυκεῖα, καὶ τόδ' αὐτίκα, φόρμιγξ,
Λυδία σὺν ἀρμονίᾳ μέλος πεφίλημένον

¹⁸⁷ The list includes Teucer in Cyprus, Ajax in Salamis, Achilles in the Euxine, Thetis in Phthia, Neoptolemus from Dodona to the Ἴόνιον πόντον (l.53). Peleus takes Iolcos, while Telamon sacks Troy.

¹⁸⁸ In *Ol.* 8, Melesias, who is also mentioned in *Nem.* 6, is praised for the 30th crown won by one of his pupils. We can, therefore, assume that he already had a long career behind him by 460. Consequently, *Nem.* 4 is likely to have been composed before this time (Henry 2005: 23).

¹⁸⁹ Wade-Gery (1932). The identification rests on a fragment by Androtion (*FgrHist* 324), which is the only source transmitting Thucydides' patronymic.

¹⁹⁰ On Melesias, see Figueira 1993: 205-6.

¹⁹¹ Unless one accepts Boeckh's emendation of the text at l. 90. The allusion to the twelve heroes who died while fighting Alcioneus alongside Heracles and Telamon in lines 25-31 may suggest a death in battle, and would tie in well with the emphasis that is put, in the following lines, on the inescapability of loss at war with the gnomic expression 'ῥέζοντά τι καὶ παθεῖν οἶκεν'. Furthermore, Telamon is described as the hero who destroyed Troy with Heracles, which may perhaps hint at the Persian Wars (ll. 25-6).

¹⁹² See above: p. 92.

Οινῶνα τε καὶ Κύπρω, ἐνθα Τεῦκρος ἀπάρχει
 ὁ Τελαμωνιάδας· ἀτὰρ
 Αἴας Σαλαμῖν' ἔχει πατρώαν·
 ἐν δ' Εὐξείνῳ πελάγει φαεννὰν Ἀχιλεὺς
 νᾶσον· Θέτις δὲ κρατεῖ
 Φθία· Νεοπτόλεμος δ' Ἀπείρῳ διαπρυσία,
 βουβόται τόθι πρῶνες ἔξοχοι κατάκεινται
 Δωδώνῃθεν ἀρχόμενοι πρὸς Ἴόνιον πόρον. *Nem.* 4.45-54.

The list is rather surprising. It frustrates expectations, since one would expect a myth explaining why the two brothers rule two different places named Salamis (Salamis in the Saronic Gulf and Cyprian Salamis) after the account of Telamon's deeds and the subsequent mention of Ajax and Teucer.¹⁹³ Moreover, the addition of Thetis to the catalogue sits rather oddly: no extant tradition makes her the ruler of Phthia, and she is not an Aeacid.¹⁹⁴ It is true that Achilles comes from Phthia, but, in the *Iliad*, the goddess went back to Nereus, her father, after she left Peleus. It is Peleus who is waiting for his son in his palace (just as Telamon waits for Ajax and Teucer in Salamis). Achilles is situated in the Euxine. This conforms to non-Homeric traditions in which it was recounted that Thetis had brought the dead Achilles to Leuke,¹⁹⁵ the equivalent of the Isle of the Blessed. A real island in the Black Sea was identified and conflated with the mythical place.¹⁹⁶ Neoptolemus' entry also presents some difficulty. His kingdom comprises the whole of Epirus, while he is only supposed to rule over Molossia – a district of this region (*Nemean* 7.36-40; *Paean* 6.109).¹⁹⁷ Moreover, it should be his sons rather than himself who are meant to be connected to Epirus. Neoptolemus lives in Scriphus before going to Troy, then settles in Molossia for a short time because he cannot find his way home. Shortly thereafter, he travels to Delphi and is killed there (since he is destined to reside in this place as a cultic hero).

All of this indicate that the catalogue is probably not decorative, but aims at delineating a specific territory.¹⁹⁸ The question is why it is so. Kurke and others after her understand the list as a metaphorical

¹⁹³ Henry 2005: 24.

¹⁹⁴ It must be noted that a place near Phthia was apparently called Thetideion (Eur. *Andr.* 19-20), but this does not change the fact that it is Peleus who should normally rule over Phthia (*Il.* A 155). On Thetideion, cf. Allan 2000: 49. Otherwise, she ruled over Cape Sepia with her sisters (Hdt. VII 191).

¹⁹⁵ Proclus (summary of the *Aethiopis*, ll. 199-200).

¹⁹⁶ Burgess 2001: 164-5.

¹⁹⁷ The kings of Molossia, who claimed descent from Neoptolemus' son, Molossus, were powerful in the fifth century. For instance, they managed to take control of Dodona from the Thesprotes, another tribe from Epirus: (*LACP*: 338-40).

¹⁹⁸ Pace Burnett 2005: 26, 128. She is right to note, however, that the Aeginetans apparently never used their primacy over the Aeacidae to seek control over these regions.

peregrination ultimately leads to the victor's return home, a sort of νόστος.¹⁹⁹ But this interpretation fails to account for the problems in the list that are mentioned above.²⁰⁰ If we combine all of the Aeacid lands together, we obtain a territory that stretches as shown in **FIGURE 29**. This territory bears striking similarities with that covered by the Delian league. The league, being an unprecedented novelty, probably was present in the minds of people at the time Pindar composed *Nemean* 4, thereby lending itself naturally to comparison. In fact, the territory obtained when drawing the surface delineated by the surprising entries – that is those of Teucer, Thetis, Achilles, and Neoptolemus – shows that these entries are probably designed so as to cover a territory corresponding broadly to that of the Delian league.

If I am right to argue that the list is meant to recall the Delian league, we need to understand why it may be so. Drawing a comparison has two potential effects. It either highlights the differences between the two objects being compared or emphasises their similarities. Accordingly, we need to determine whether the comparison between the territories held by the Aeacids and those controlled by the Delian



FIGURE 29

¹⁹⁹ Kurke 1991: 38, 45.

²⁰⁰ Fearn (2010: 199-201) notes the problem with regard to Neoptolemus' territory, but interprets it as a sign of rivalry between the different aristocratic clans on Aegina. I fail to see 'competitive oligarchic politics' among the members of the Aeginetan elite in the Aeginetan odes. See p. 79n16.

league is meant to create distance (and thus antagonism) or proximity (and thus reconciliation) between the *comparanda*.

Several elements internal to the poem support the second option. Firstly, it must be noted that the concept of ‘generations’ is one of the main themes around which the poem revolves.²⁰¹ In addition to the victor, Pindar praises the dead father and uncle, as well as his grandfather. Similarly, the catalogue of the Aeacidae presents the successive generations of this family of heroes. Moreover, although much attention is paid to Telamon and Peleus, neither of them is named as the ruler of a territory: only the Aeacidae of the subsequent generations and Thetis, whom I understand here to be representing a wife more than a goddess, are described in this way. This is noteworthy in a poem in which the victor’s father and uncle have passed away.

The second reason that leads me to think that the list suggests that Aegina should participate in the Delian league (not as a πόλις constrained to pay an expensive tribute, but as a major actor, since there is no hierarchy between the different members of the Aeacidae) is the fact that the grand-father, Euphanes, whom Pindar enjoins to praise the Athenian trainer Melesias may himself originate from Athens, or at least have some connections with the πόλις. The *LGPV* indicates that his name is only attested in Athens and in Prospalta, one of the demes of the φυλή Acamantis, in the fifth century.²⁰² Moreover, Euphanes is the maternal grand-father of the victor, and appears to have been on very good terms with Melesias, as Pindar affirms that he would be great at praising him in a poem.²⁰³ Finally, it must also be noted that in the *Gorgias*, Socrates mentions *Aeacus* to his interlocutor, Callicles, who bears the same name as the victor’s uncle, and Olympiodorus, a neoplatonist commentator from the sixth century AD, explains that Socrates does so because Callicles is Aeginetan.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ L. 93f.

²⁰² 1. *Ag* XVII 831 (fifth or fourth century BCE, Athens) 2. *IG* II² 11498 (fifth or fourth century BCE, Athens) 3. *IG* I³ 305, 6; *IG* 306, 23; *IG* 307, 47; *IG* 329, 4; *IG* 330, 17; *IG* 331, 34; *IG* 370, 25; = PA 6026 (417/16 BCE, Prospalta) 4. *IG* I³ 1190, 27; = PA 6016 (ca 411 BCE, Athens) 5. *SEG* LII 60, 39 (ca 411 BCE Athens, Erechtheis tribe).

²⁰³ Euphanes is only called προπάτωρ in l. 89, but it is explained, in *Σ Nem.* 4.144b, that he can only be the maternal grand-father, since he is explicitly connected to Timasarchus’ maternal uncle rather than to his father who is praised in another section of the poem (Henry 2007: 47).

²⁰⁴ Olympiodorus, *Commentary on Plato’s Gorgias* 50. 14. Jackson *et al.* (1998: 322) do note that the name Callicles appears in *Nem.* 4.

Nemean 3, Nemean 6, and Olympian 8

Nemean 3, Nemean 6, and Olympian 8 are among the latest poems Pindar composed for Aeginetan patrons, and by the same token among those dating closest to Aegina's defeat by Athens. What is particularly interesting about them, as far as Ajax is concerned, is the fact that the hero is mentioned in none of them, while the Aeacidae (and Telamon with them) still prominently feature. This probably reflects the new balance of power that emerged after the Second Persian War, and perhaps the renaming of one of the Athenians' *φύλαί* after Ajax.²⁰⁵ As Figueira convincingly argues, Aegina was an independent *πόλις* until it was subdued by Athens. It was neither part of the Delian nor of the Peloponnesian leagues.²⁰⁶

Ethnicity – and therefore myth – still played a major role in the constitution of such leagues, as well as in the strength of alliances between *πόλεις*. The Aeginetans who had put greater emphasis on the Achaean Aeacidae as their forebears than on the Dorians should thus probably have felt more natural affinity with the Delian league. This league, moreover, had substantial naval power, and its military actions were mainly situated in the East of mainland Greece, where Aegina's main commercial interests lay. Thus, becoming a member of such a league would have been quite appealing, were it not for Athens' leadership. In 460 (the date of the victory *Olympian 8* is celebrating) Aegina was in fact in an alarming situation: after several decades of mutual hostility which was manifested by constant – though intermittent – passive-aggressive behaviour against one another, it had become increasingly unrealistic for the Aeginetans to believe they could rival and stand against Athens' expanding navy any longer. Moreover, they must certainly have been aware that their territory constituted a crucial strategic position for controlling the Saronic Gulf. As war was on the verge of breaking out, they probably understood that the Athenians had an eye on their wealth and must have been expecting to be attacked at any time.²⁰⁷ Consequently, the only hope the Aeginetans had of preserving their freedom was to be fully supported by the Peloponnesian league, as it followed from this system of alliance that if one of its *πόλεις* were under attack, all the others would retaliate against the offender.

²⁰⁵ Part III: 151ff.

²⁰⁶ Figueira 1993: 87-112 [= updated version of Figueira 1981b].

²⁰⁷ Cimon, who had influentially supported the view that Athens should have a good relationship with Sparta, was ostracised in 461. Moreover, Megara joined the Delian league in 460, and so defected from the Peloponnesian league, thereby making it difficult for the Peloponnesian league to besiege Athens.

For this reason, it appears that the more Aegina felt threatened by the growing hegemony of the Ἀθηναίων ἀρχή, the more support from the ‘Doric’ Peloponnesian league it sought. One of the most efficient ways to achieve such a goal was therefore to find and promote the narrative of Dorian Aegina.²⁰⁸ Panhellenic gatherings such as athletic competitions would thus provide an ideal occasion to spread the idea of the Doric roots of Aegina. Consequently, it is probably not a mere coincidence that the three Aeginetan ἐπινίκια that refer to a ‘Dorian Aegina’ happen to be precisely three of the four latest ones. Furthermore, they all are poems from which Ajax is completely absent.²⁰⁹ In *Olympian* 8.30, the Dorians are even presented as having been guardians of Aegina from as early as its origin:

Δωριεῖ λαῶ ταμεινομέναν ἐξ Αἰακοῦ 30

This is most odd, above all because it is impossible in terms of mythical chronology. According to the Greeks’ conception of their past, the Dorians had invaded the Peloponnese with the sons of Heracles, and were consequently not supposed to have already reached mainland Greece at the time of Aeacus. Moreover, this problem did not escape ancient scholiasts, who insist in the scholia to this line that Pindar refers in reality to the Dorian population that settled on Aegina μετὰ τὸν Αἰακόν.²¹⁰

Therefore, by branding itself as a Dorian city from the earliest times of its history, Aegina reached out to Sparta and its allies, as an attempt to show that they were ethnically connected. Dorian ethnicity was a powerful cement among the members of the Peloponnesian league in the first part of the fifth century. It was taken very seriously, as the episode of the attack on Doris by the Phocceans in 459 shows.²¹¹ Although the Lacadaemonians had been quite reluctant until then to be engaged in a conflict that could potentially end up in a war against Athens,²¹² they nonetheless sent 1500 of their own hoplites to the rescue of the inhabitants of Doris, on the grounds that they were Dorians, while it had only sent a force of 300 hoplites to break Aegina’s siege the previous year. This intervention forced the Peloponnesian league

²⁰⁸ After at least three decades of insistence on its Achaeian roots through the Aeacidae, (re-)establishing its Dorian identity was crucial for Aegina in order to be perceived by both Sparta, and the Peloponnesian league, as a natural ally.

²⁰⁹ *Nem.* 3.3: Δωρίδα νᾶσον Αἴγινα; *Pyth.* 8.18-20: ὅς εὐμενεί νόῳ Ξενάρκειον ἔδεκτο Κίρραθεν ἐστεφανωμένον υἱὸν ποῖα Παρνασσίδι Δωριεῖ τε κώμῳ – here the *kómos* is Doric in as much as Aegina is defined by its Dorian ethnicity (Anderson 1994: 98; Gentili *et al.* 1995: 569; Prauscello 2012: 78). Ancient scholia, for once, do not link the allusion to ethnicity with musical mode (Σ *Pyth.* 8: 29a); *Ol.* 8.30: Δωριεῖ λαῶ ταμεινομέναν ἐξ Αἰακοῦ. In *Nem.* 5 and *Isthm.* 8 the word is also used but it simply qualifies the Ἰσθμός, which is a Dorian place.

²¹⁰ Σ *Ol.* 8.37b, 39a: 1, 39b; Σ *Ol.* 8.33-40 (Triclinius).

²¹¹ Thuc. I 107-8.

²¹² De Ste. Croix 1972: 188.

to directly confront the Athenians, since they were actively supporting their Phocaeen allies. This resulted in a victory for the Peloponnesian league at Tanagra in 458. It thus appears that the Aeginetans, after decades of promoting their Achaean heritage through the Aeacidae at a Panhellenic level, failed to convince their prospective allies about the legitimacy of its (re)-claimed Dorian ethnicity: they were forced to surrender to Athens only a year after the Delian league's defeat at Tanagra.²¹³

²¹³ Interestingly, when the Corinthians try to convince their allies that they should help the Potidaeans (who were not members of the League and lived far from the Peloponnese), they use the same kind of rhetoric: the Poetideans are Dorians who are being besieged by Ionians (Thuc. I 124.1). On the question: Debnar 2001: 88.

AJAX IN AEGINA AFTER ITS SUBJUGATION IN 457

Pythian 8

Pythian 8 is the only extant ἐπινίκιον written for an Aeginetan patron which can be dated with confidence after Aegina's surrender to Athens. The victory, which probably was recorded in Aristotle's Pythian victor list, was won in 446 BCE, the same year the Thirty Years' Peace was signed.²¹⁴ It is, incidentally, the only Aeginetan poem that does not recount a myth in which a member of the Aeacidae features. Instead, the mythical account is drawn from 'Theban myth.' It focuses on Amphiaraus and his son, the Ἐπίγονος Alcmaeon to whom the victor is compared.

In the last strophe of the poem, Pindar nonetheless appeals to Aegina herself exhorting her to send the Aeacidae to the rescue of the Aeginetans and free them again:²¹⁵

Αἴγινα φίλα μᾶτερ, ἐλευθέρω στόλῳ
πόλιν τάνδε κόμιζε Διὶ καὶ κρέοντι σὺν Αἰακῷ
Πηλεΐ τε κάγαθῷ Τελαμῶνι σὺν τ' Ἀχιλλεΐ.²¹⁶ *Pyth.* 8.98-100

Ajax's absence from the list is conspicuous, as one would expect him to be mentioned alongside Aeacus, Peleus, Telamon, and Achilles. This omission strikingly contrasts with the hero's particular prominence in the corpus of the Aeginetan odes, especially the earliest ones (he is exceptionally present in the poems composed up to the early 470s). Given the importance the hero takes in the context of Aegina and Athens' rivalry, his unexpected absence from the list should probably be considered as highly significant, especially since the manner in which the list unfolds creates a strong impression that his name will appear next.²¹⁷ Furthermore, the frustration that the poem provokes in failing to meet this

²¹⁴ On Aristotle's list of Pythian victors: De Ste-Croix 1981: 69-70; Christesen 2007: 191, 375.

²¹⁵ Nagy 2011: 190.

²¹⁶ *Pyth.* 8.99-101.

²¹⁷ Polinskaya (2013: 138) interprets Ajax's absence as a sign that he had no cult on Aegina, unlike Aeacus, Peleus, Telamon, and Achilles. Although her remark has the merit of drawing attention to Ajax's omission in the list, I do not find the explanation very convincing, especially given the pervasive presence of the hero in the Aeginetan odes. Furthermore, why would Achilles receive a cult on the island and not Ajax?

expectation is enhanced by the fact that the poem ends at this point. The void left at its end exacerbates our final impression, for there is no new flow of words that can divert our minds from it.²¹⁸

In his account of the ἀκήρυκτος πόλεμος between Aegina and Athens, Herodotus mentions that the Athenians were advised by a Delphic oracle to wait for thirty years, before building a τέμενος dedicated to Aeacus in the agora, and declaring war on the Aeginetans.²¹⁹ He adds that the Athenians refused to wait, even though they nonetheless built a τέμενος for Aeacus. Herodotus testifies that the precinct existed in his days,²²⁰ as he clearly speaks about what he has himself witnessed.²²¹ Scholarship is divided regarding the date of the τέμενος' construction, as any proposition largely depends on one's understanding of Herodotus' narrative of the ἀκήρυκτος πόλεμος. The central disagreement is on whether or not one should take the oracle as a *post-eventum* invention (or reformulation). If the period of thirty years reflects a *posteriori* knowledge of the events, then one should consider the date of 460, and subtract 30 years to find out when the Athenians received the oracle and started to build Aeacus' τέμενος. This leads us to the date of 490.²²²

The other scenario does not take into account the oracle and its thirty-years period, but rather puts the date of the consultation of the Pythia around 507 when the Thebans ask the Aeginetans for support in their conflict against Athens. In this case, it is argued that this marks the start of the conflict

²¹⁸ This absence cannot be explained metrically. Αἰάντι, which scans either as - - - (Ξ 459; P 123) or as - - u (H 203; O 483, 674; Ψ 822), can fit the metre.

²¹⁹ Hdt. V 89.2. Herodotus' account of the war between Athens and Aegina (the ἀκήρυκτος πόλεμος) is misleading and poses severe difficulties. Andrewes (1936-7) is probably right to argue that the sequence of events does not start before 506 BCE, and he is followed by Podlecki (1976) who identifies three periods in the conflict (500-490; 490-480; 480 and later). *Pace* Hammond 1955: 406-11; Jefferey 1962. See also Figuera 1985; 1988; 1993: 13-49, 36-60; Mikalson 2003: 23.

²²⁰ An inscribed Athenian tax law of 374/3 BCE (*Agora* I 7557) found in 1986 indicates that the Αἰάκειον had been turned into a granary by the end of the first quarter of the fourth century. This makes Thompson's (1953: 43-6) tentative identification of the Αἰάκειον with the ἐσχάρα next to the altar of the twelve gods on the Agora impossible. His suggestion was adopted by many scholars (Wycherley 1957: 48-9, 103-4; Zunker 1988). Stroud (1998: 85-108), in his *editio princeps* of the inscription, convincingly situates it close to the *Tholos*, a location which is supported by P. Oxy. 2087. He identifies it with the 'Rectangular *Peribolos*' that was previously thought to be the *Helaea* or a simple law court. For a good summary of the question, *cf.* Hall 2014: 89-92. Most interestingly, this Rectangular *Peribolos*, dating from c. 500 BCE, has incidentally been built with Aeginetan limestones (Thompson and Wycherley 1972: 62-5), and it looks similar to the Aeginetan Αἰάκειον, from what we can tell from Pausanias' description (II 29.6). Finally, it must be noted that Pausanias seems to ignore the existence of the Athenian Αἰάκειον, which suggests that the τέμενος probably lost its sacred status when it was turned into a granary, although it would still be called by its name.

²²¹ V 89.5. According to ancient testimonies, Herodotus was believed to have moved to Athens c. 447, (and therefore after Aegina became a subject of the πόλις) and to have written the main part of his *Histories* there. According to the third-century historian Diyllus, he received ten talents from the Athenians while he was living there. Eusebius reports that the money was given to him around 445 BCE.

²²² It is arguable whether the date should be calculated from the start of the war between Athens and Aegina during the *Pentecontaetia* (460) or from the date of Aegina's surrender (457).

between Aegina and Athens. Since this conflict happens to be called an ἀκήρυκτος πόλεμος, I am more inclined to date its start in the wake of Marathon, especially as Aegina's support of Thebes seems too formal a start for a war whose characteristic is to be ἀκήρυκτος. Moreover, 490 ties strikingly well into one of the arguments developed in this chapter, namely the Athenians' active interest in the Aeacidae from around the time of the battle of Marathon onwards.²²³ It follows that the introduction of Aeacus in Athens was probably part of the measures taken by the Athenians to appropriate the Aeacidae during the period, no matter which date one allocates to the construction of the Αἰάκειον.

The fact that the growing threat Athens comes to represent for Aegina is simultaneous with Ajax's absence from the last poems written by Pindar for Aeginetan patrons – especially the last lines of *Pythian* 8 – is unlikely to be due to chance.²²⁴ On the contrary, it reflects in a remarkable manner how the portrayal of Ajax – and to a lesser extent that of the other Aeacidae – was influenced in the first part of the fifth century by the Aegineto-Athenian conflict, as the hero functioned during these decades as the repository of the tensions created by the hostility both πόλεις bore towards one another.

Nemean 8

Nemean 8 is the last poem I will examine. The central myth of the ode focuses on Ajax's death, and is indeed the third and most extensive account of it. Similarly to the other *Nemean* poems, the date of the poem is unknown. Nevertheless, the poem appears to have been written at a time when Athens and Sparta had emerged as the two dominant powers in Greece, since both πόλεις are mentioned together in the poem as the two places that fostered the best heroes (among all of those who would come to Aegina in order to consult Aeacus).²²⁵ Therefore, it probably was composed at least some years after the establishment of the Delian league in 478 BCE. Besides this, Pindar casts himself as a suppliant begging Aeacus for protection on behalf of the Aeginetans in the following lines, before adding that prosperity lasts longer with the assistance of a god.²²⁶ This hints at a context in which Aegina is in serious difficulty,

²²³ See Part III: 163ff.

²²⁴ In fact, the presence of the Aeacidae appears to adopt a similar but less dramatic tendency. *Nem.* 6 only devotes a few lines to Achilles; the myth of *Ol.* 8 only names Aeacus: he has a part in the narrative as he helps Apollo and Poseidon to build Troy's walls, but he is not the main character of the account; finally, *Pyth.* 8 alludes once to the Aeacidae (ll. 22-4: ἡ δικαιοπόλις ἀρεταῖς κλειναῖσιν Αἰακιδᾶν θηροῖσα νᾶσος) apart from the last strophe of the poem in which Aeacus, Peleus, Telamon, and Achilles are named.

²²⁵ *Nem.* 8.9-12. Athens and Sparta are also mentioned together at *Pyth.* 1.76-7. The ode dates from 470 BCE.

²²⁶ *Nem.* 8.13-18.

and thus more probably at the period subsequent to its defeat against Athens. In the present analysis, I shall, consequently, consider *Nemean* 8 to postdate Aegina's defeat against Athens, and, hence, *Pythian* 8.²²⁷ A late date, although not vital to my argument, ties in with it very well.

The account of Ajax's death in *Nemean* 8 (like the one in *Nemean* 7, although less centrally) is used as a mythological *exemplum* of unfair distribution²²⁸. This time, however, those who are said to be at fault are not so much people with poor judgement, but those who manipulate the judgement of others with mendacious discourse for the sake of their personal profit.²²⁹ The setting of the award of ἀριστεία is again carefully suggested by the vocabulary chosen to tell the story: for instance, envy 'does not *compete*' with lesser men (οὐκ ἐρίζει l. 22); Ajax's due γέρας is *awarded* to a shifty lie (αἰόλῳ ψεύδει γέρας ἀντέταται l. 25);²³⁰ the decision is taken '*in a secret vote*' (ἐν ψάφοις κρυφαίαις l. 26).²³¹

Particular attention is paid to the list of Ajax's deeds, which is meant to emphasise the extent of the Greeks' ingratitude towards him. This has the effect of making the overall tone of the narrative far more reproachful and polemical than it is in *Nemean* 7:

ἧ μὰν ἀνόμοιά γε δάοισιν ἐν θερμῷ χροῖ
 ἔλκεα ῥῆξαν πελεμιζόμενοι
 ὑπ' ἀλεξιμβρότῳ
 λόγχῃ, τὰ μὲν ἀμφ' Ἀχιλῆϊ νεοκτόνῳ,
 ἄλλων τε μόχθων ἐν πολυφθόροις
 ἀμέραις. 30
Nem. 8.28-32

Moreover, no reparation is offered to Ajax this time. Rather, the story of his death is used negatively. That is either as the counter-example of a positive situation, or as the parallel to present circumstances in order to condemn them harshly. The ἄρα...καὶ πάλαι in the following lines, however, clearly indicates that the myth is meant to be taken as a negative parallel:

²²⁷ Mullen 1973/1974: 476.

²²⁸ In the lines preceding the introduction of the myth, Pindar seems to stress the significance of his take on Ajax (Henry 2005: 71).

²²⁹ They cannot see the truth, as they are made blind by seductive but false discourse (*Nem.* 7.21-7).

²³⁰ Ἀνατείνω means 'to lift up,' 'to hold up.' The image is that the prize is held up by the victor, but here the prize is described as being lifted by a personified lie.

²³¹ The words in *italics* are my own emphasis.

ἐχθρὰ δ' ἄρα πάρφασις ἦν καὶ πάλαι,
αἰμύλων μύθων ὁμόφοι-
τος, δολοφραδῆς, κακοποιὸν ὄνειδος· Nem. 8.32-3

The attack made on *πάρφασις* is unusually vehement. It is not only *ἐχθρά*, but also no fewer than three negative paraphrases (*αἰμύλων μύθων ὁμόφοιτος*; *δολοφραδῆς*; *κακοποιὸν ὄνειδος*) which are used in apposition to strengthen the harshness of the poet's judgment. Though Ajax is presented in *Nemean 7* as the victim of an injustice that is only a short-lived harm without long-term consequence (since he is still granted the only prize that matters: *κλέος*), the narrative in *Nemean 8* does not provide any direct form of atonement, apart perhaps from Pindar's poem. Instead, the emphasis is put on the ill-effects of envy. Consequently, expanding on Ajax's worth serves to decry all the more violently what happened to him.

Pindar's targets are those, like Odysseus, who resort to falsehood (l. 25 *αἰόλῳ ψεύδει*) for their own profit, thereby becoming impersonations of envy (*φθόνος*). They do harm to those they envy, the *ἑσθλοί*, through their action,²³² but the prize they snatch from them has no real value because of the very conditions in which it was acquired. The *μέγιστον γέρας* that they are able to hold (l. 25 *ἀντείνειν*) becomes degraded by their action, and thus they hold (l. 34 *ἀντείνειν*) what has turned into a rotten *κῦδος* instead of what would have become their *κλέος* after their death.²³³ This is the comforting point of the myth: the wrong-doers in the end fail to gain what they unlawfully coveted.

The fact that the episode of the *ὄπλων κρίσις* is told a second time in an Aeginetan context with the same insistence on unfair distribution suggests that it probably also engages with the issue of the Aeginetans' *ἀριστεία* during the Persian Wars, and of its acknowledgment. If this hypothesis is correct, the less optimistic tone, and the change of focus in the narrative would correspond to the new circumstances in which Aegina found itself, when Athens became unprecedentedly powerful in the aftermath of the war; the more so as the *πόλις* established its hegemony by promoting and capitalising on its role against the Persians, thereby securing the leadership of the Delian league. However, contrary to *Nemean 7*, the poem places far more emphasis on the theme of ungratefulness, as if rehearsing Ajax's feats during the war was a way to remind the Greek community that it was indebted to Aegina due to its achievements during the

²³² *Nem.* 8.22.

²³³ *Nem.* 8.25.

Persian War. This might thus be understood as an invitation to support the restoration of the island's autonomy (or its preservation depending on when one dates the poem), since it had remained occupied by the Athenians after its surrender in 457 BCE.²³⁴

The strong insistence on φθόνος which is presented as the cause of the unfair treatment Ajax received fits nicely in such a context. As mentioned above, the Greeks gave up on awarding the prize of ἀριστεία after Salamis precisely because of envy: 'οὐ βουλομένων δὲ ταῦτα κρίνειν τῶν Ἑλλήνων φθόνῳ'.²³⁵ More importantly, however, Themistocles, whom the figure of Odysseus arguably echoes by way of his σοφία in *Nemean* 7, was also notorious for his greed,²³⁶ and for violating 'the canons of distributive fairness that operate within the [Hellenic] league'.²³⁷ Furthermore, in the *Histories*, πλεονεξία (greed) is one of the defining features that frame the depiction of Themistocles. This trait is closely related to that of φθόνος, for greed directly stems from envying what others have. Furthermore, φθόνος is also the central motif of the *Parallel Lives* of *Themistocles* and *Camillus* in Plutarch.

It thus follows that Themistocles – and through him Athenian democracy as a whole – is probably alluded to through the figure of Odysseus in *Nemean* 8.²³⁸ In fact, Plutarch reports that Themistocles himself used to be nicknamed Odysseus at the time.²³⁹ If this is the case, such allusion would constitute a good reason for explaining why Pindar gives agency to Odysseus in Ajax's fall, contrary to the traditional version(s) found in epic sources, in which Athena is its instigator.

Even though the account of the ὅπλων κρίσις in *Nemean* 8 alludes, through its phrasing, to an award of the ἀριστεία, and thus probably to what happened after Salamis, the poem does not solely engage with this, as may be expected from a poem composed quite some time after the event took place. The myth is certainly used again as a paradigm of distributive unfairness, but this time this issue is only one

²³⁴ At any rate, it was a current issue. In the Thirty Year Peace, one of the demands made by the Spartans on the Athenians was that the Aeginetans regained their αὐτονομία (Thuc. I 67, 139-40; Plut. *Per.* XXIX). Interestingly, it seems that they requested this on the ground that the Aeginetans were Ἑλλήνες (and not Δωριεῖς), since they declare shortly after that all Ἑλλήνες should remain autonomous.

²³⁵ Hdt. VIII 123.

²³⁶ Hdt. VIII 111.

²³⁷ Balot 2001: 18. Interestingly, Balot also notes (and does so without having the parallel of Ajax in mind) that 'by hoodwinking the process of collective distribution, Themistocles recalls Agamemnon's famous violation of distributive procedure in the first book of the *Iliad*'.

²³⁸ Themistocles had been ostracised in 471 BCE, but he embodied for his opponents the most negative aspects of democracy in general. See Timocreon fr. 1 (*PMG* 727) and Kurke's discussion of the poem (2002).

²³⁹ *Mor.* 869F. Bowie (2007: 144-5) notes a strong parallel between Themistocles and Odysseus (in particular in the scene before Salamis and that of the assembly in *Iliad* B).

aspect of the Greeks' ungratefulness. Through the enumeration of the several moments during which Ajax's prowess was decisive for the Greeks, the poem appears to refer to a more general situation, a situation that has been lasting for quite some time.²⁴⁰

Given the poem's marked insistence of the concept of φθόγος, and the way it resonates in several portrayals of Themistocles, it is reasonable to suppose that the broader context of the ode may be that of Athens' leadership of the Delian league, and of the tribute it required from its allies,²⁴¹ especially since Aegina was in its crosshairs.²⁴² As previously mentioned, the progressive establishment of a yearly tribute is one of the central developments of the Delian league. The concept of tribute, however, was alien to the way Greek cities from the mainland articulated their relationship with one another in the first part of the fifth century; conversely, it was well-known as a Persian institution,²⁴³ and thus, by default, probably perceived in a negative way. In fact, the concept of paying a yearly tribute appears to have been linked to a sense of 'unfairness' in the value system operating within the Panhellenic community. This is not at all surprising, since it is in many respects conflicting with the idea of ἐλευθερία for which the Greeks fought during the Persian Wars.²⁴⁴

A further argument in favour of such a hypothesis is found in the etymological signification of the word 'tribute' in Greek. *Dasmos* is the operative term: while it seems that *phoros* was actually coined for the purposes of the Delian league' but 'the slippage in application of the two words, and the compound *dasmophoros*, allowed for correspondences/analogies to be made.'²⁴⁵ Incidentally, δασμός refers not only to a general concept of distribution through its etymology,²⁴⁶ but, in the *Iliad*, it means precisely the

²⁴⁰ *Nem.* 8.28-32. Ajax's superiority was seen during: (i) the battle of the ships (ii) the rescue of Achilles' body (iii) on the battlefield in general.

²⁴¹ The members of the league could choose to pay a tribute or to provide men and ships to the league but most of them preferred to pay (Thuc. I 99). This strengthened Athens' position considerably, as its allies would give the city money to build ships, instead of building them for themselves.

²⁴² When the Aeginetans were forced to surrender, the Athenians imposed on them a yearly tribute of thirty talents, which is a considerable sum. It was the largest amount paid by any member of the Delian league. Thasos was paying the same amount but was five times bigger than Aegina (Nixon and Price 1990: 148).

²⁴³ Low 2008: 159. The Athenians were the first Greeks to ask a tribute from their allies (Thuc. I 96). The alleged reason (πρόσχημα) for claiming money from the members of the Delian league consisted in demanding compensation for their effort against the Persians. Croesus was the first to introduce a tribute in Greece, when he required one from the Ionian Greek cities (Hdt. I 6).

²⁴⁴ Xenophon's description of the enthusiasm expressed by those taking Athens' long walls down is indicative of the perceived opposition between the Ἀθηναίων ἀρχή (and the tribute it imposed), and ἐλευθερία, even though this obviously reflects a later the point of view (*Hell.* II 2.23).

²⁴⁵ Irwin 2007: 201. For a detailed discussion of the use of these words and their connotation: Whitehead 1998.

²⁴⁶ See *Lfgre s.v.* δασμός, as well as p. 112n142.

‘distribution of the spoils.’²⁴⁷ Therefore, it results that the ‘distribution of spoils,’ which is what the tradition of awarding the ἀριστεῖα is supposed to regulate, is at the heart of the concept of a tribute in Greek.

This means that the φόρος imposed by the Athenians on their allies, which certainly must have been considered as unjust by the Aeginetans,²⁴⁸ can easily be linked to the notion of distributive unfairness,²⁴⁹ in a manner similar to the unsuccessful award of the ἀριστεῖα following the Greeks’ victory at Salamis. Therefore, the myth of Ajax in *Nemean* 8 probably still hints at what happened after Salamis, while engaging with the wider context of the λυγρὸν νείκος between Athens and Aegina. In so doing, Pindar underscores the ingratitude that the Greeks manifest through their reluctance to defend Aegina’s independence, even after the many services its citizens had rendered to Greece during the Persian War. Oblivion seemed indeed to have prevailed.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ A 166. The word is also used in referring to the distribution of the world between Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades (*Hom. Hymn Dem.* 86).

²⁴⁸ Isocrates (*On the Peace*: 82-4) mentions that it was most unpopular among the members of the Delian league. Since the Aeginetans were forced to join the league, and had to pay the highest tribute with the Thasians, it is logical that it would appear unjust to them.

²⁴⁹ Balot (2001: 119) argues that the Athenian tribute was also perceived as a violation of the canon of distributive fairness that was supposed to regulate the relationship between the actors of the Panhellenic community.

²⁵⁰ At lines ll. 24-5, I think that λάθρα κατέχει ἐν λυγρῷ νείκει refers to the Greeks’ forgetfulness (of Ajax’s deeds) in the quarrel that opposed him to Odysseus, for words are what envious people feed on (l. 21), not the braves (ἔσθλοί).

CONCLUSION

*E se il piloto ti drizzò l'antenna
oltre l'isole egèe, d'antichi fatti
certo udisti suonar dell'Ellesponto
i liti, e la marea mugghiar portando
Alle prode retée l'armi d'Achille
sopra l'ossa d'AJace: a' generosi
giusta di glorie dispensiera è morte:
né senno astuto, né favor di regi
all'Itaco le spoglie ardue serbava,
ché alla poppa raminga le ritolse
l'onda incitata dagl'inferni Dei.*

– Ugo Foscolo, *Dei Sepolcri*: 215-25

Overall it appears that the portrayal of Ajax in the Aeginetan context is consistent with his figuration in epic poetry, except for one crucial point: the cause of his downfall.²⁵¹ As we saw in Part I, Ajax's ἀσέβεια, and thus Athena's agency were the determining factor which precipitated his defeat in the ὀπλων κρίσις. It was the goddess, and not the Greeks themselves, who deprived the hero of the prize he deserved on account of his prowess, as she interfered in the Trojans' judgment. The gist of Ajax's myth, therefore, arguably revolved around his antagonism with Athena, since his defeat, and subsequent death, was the consequence of his ὕβρις against her. It constituted the resolution of his outrageous ἀτιμία towards the goddess.

Pindar, however, chose to leave the goddess out of the picture, which suggests that he wanted to give a completely new signification to the ὀπλων κρίσις. As a matter of fact, it follows from Athena's absence in the narrative that a new reason for Ajax's defeat had been found, and this, in turn, profoundly altered the characterisation of the hero, since his failure to secure Achilles' arms could not correspond to a divine punishment anymore. Consequently, it is manifest from Pindar's decision to leave Athena out that he wanted to turn Ajax into a blameless victim.

²⁵¹ The influence the Aeginetan paradigm of Ajax had overall on tradition will be discussed in the next chapter, as the rest of the sources alluding to Ajax that date from the fifth century are all coming from Athens.

The innovation Pindar introduced to the myth had further consequence.²⁵² It laid the foundation for the motif of the debate between Ajax and Odysseus which can first be traced in *The Award of the Arms* by Aeschylus, as we shall see. Although it can be assumed from *Nemean* 7 and 8 that Odysseus made a speech in order to convince the Greeks that they should award him the arms,²⁵³ nothing in the poems suggests that Ajax was expected to make one himself. In fact, Ajax's speech is not required by the logic of



FIGURE 30

²⁵² Apparently, the motif was not present in the epic tradition (Part I: 61ff.). Pindar may perhaps not have introduced it for the first time: on an Etrurian *pelike* dating from 520-490 BCE (FIGURE 30), Odysseus is represented standing on a platform, probably trying to persuade the Greeks to award the arms to him, while Ajax, standing in front of him, listens.

²⁵³ He would not be called a liar, if he did not make a speech.

the narrative. Furthermore, it appears that this possibility should probably be excluded, as it is recounted in *Nemean* 8 that the hero remained ἄγλωσσος.²⁵⁴

Pindar nonetheless preserves one crucial *datum* in the episode of the ὀπλῶν κρίσις, which, at least from what we can tell, was common to all its epic accounts.²⁵⁵ As noted above, Ajax's defeat was unambiguously presented as unfair, according to the terms by which the prize was awarded.²⁵⁶ This point is fundamental because this *datum* only changes once the debate between Ajax and Odysseus has been introduced to the story, as we shall see. The idea that Ajax lost because he was lacking in rhetorical skill or in any essential quality is not conceived of in Pindar's refiguration of the hero. For the equivocality of Ajax's worth precisely stems from the introduction of the debate in the story, as it has the effect of putting the two heroes on the same level, thereby creating a dichotomy, and antagonises them. It thus follows that the treatment of Ajax by Pindar is probably instrumental in the radical shift of paradigm his myth undergoes in the fifth century, a shift which later emerged as the norm. As I have attempted to demonstrate throughout my analysis of the Aeginetan material, this shift can be accounted for (or at least better understood) when linked to the political and historical context.

However, even though I hold that political subtext of the poems strongly influenced the manner in which Pindar represented Ajax, his significance in the odes also transcends the particularity of historical circumstances, as it simultaneously touches upon universal human experience. Considered in this light, the myth of Ajax's death serves two distinct ends: it provides a source of comfort for those who have been wronged, while laying the blame on the offenders. In *Nemean* 7, Ajax serves as an *exemplum* which shows how even the best of men can fall prey to injustice in their existence, but that ultimately truth and justice can be restored, through the poet's capacity to create enduring memory. It assumes a comforting dichotomy between one's ephemeral life, and the eternity of poetical immortality, or – to use the word that Pindar employs for this concept – κλέος. This is also the case in *Isthmian* 4, except that Pindar

²⁵⁴ The adjective is to be taken from its literal meaning: 'without tongue', that is 'speechless', 'silent' (Hesych. α 626). This is the same meaning as in Ar. fr. 756, or Arist. *Part. An.* 690b23 (pace Henry 2005: 81). The signification 'without eloquence' seems to derive from a misunderstanding of *Nem.* 8, as scholars (anachronistically) expect Pindar's narrative to refer to a debate.

²⁵⁵ Pace Brillante 2013: 36. In Part I: 61ff., I argue that in early Greek hexameter poetry Achilles' arms were awarded to Odysseus after either listening to the opinion of some Trojan prisoners or overhearing some Trojan women

²⁵⁶ Although he probably deserved to be punished by Athena, it is manifest that he did not lose because his worth was inferior to that of Odysseus.

identifies τύχη, rather than injustice, as the primary cause of Ajax's misfortune.²⁵⁷ In contrast, in *Nemean* 8, Pindar puts greater emphasis on denouncing the manner in which Ajax has been treated rather than on offering some kind of reparation to the victim. He stresses the aversion one should feel towards the culprits, which is identified by metonymy as envy and ungratefulness. This univocal condemnation of those he considers at fault for what happened also resonates in *Isthmian* 4, as he accuses no less than all the Greeks who went to Troy of being responsible for Ajax's fate. Pindar never attributes any fault to the hero's behaviour, which conversely has the effect of absolving anyone who identifies with Ajax from the responsibility of his own misery. The mode on which the mythological *exemplum* of Ajax works in each poem implies that no one is safe from injustice, since even a hero as blameless as Ajax fell victim to it. The pattern remains similar, although Pindar manages to apply the myth to three distinct contexts by stressing different aspects of the story. Furthermore, the myth of Ajax also allows the poet to put emphasis on the power of his art, as it enables him to exhibit, and exemplify the faculty of his poetry to right a wrong. It promotes a relationship that makes the hero/victor dependent on the poet, for no matter how great the deeds he accomplishes are, they can only be remembered through poetry, and thus the poet is absolutely essential in ensuring his κλέος.

²⁵⁷ As I have argued at p. 118ff., the difference stems from the fact that the poems' addressee come from different πόλεις, and thus is motivated by different circumstances.

PART III

AJAX IN ATHENS

INTRODUCTION

In Part II, we examined how Telamonian Ajax was received in the historical and socio-cultural context of Aegina, in particular during the first half of the fifth century, since most of the available evidence dates or refers to this period in time. It is apparent from this investigation that the rivalry between this one-πόλις island and Athens is especially relevant to understanding the political aspect of Ajax's character in this period, and the influence it had on shaping his reception. These questions, however, have so far only been discussed from an Aeginetan viewpoint. Therefore, we shall now cross the sea of the Saronic Gulf to reach the continent, as we move to κλεινὰ Ἀθήναι.

In this final part, I shall examine the reception of Ajax in Athens during the archaic and the classical period. The discussion is organised in three sections which reflect distinct manners in which the Athenians related to the hero. These sections also happen to correspond to different phases in the history of Athens which means that the material we shall analyse will consequently appear in chronological order.

In the first section, I investigate how the Athenians' struggle to take control over Salamis in the sixth century shaped Ajax's representation in Athens by imbuing his figure with strong political valence. I argue that, in this first phase of Ajax's reception in the πόλις, the Athenians seem to have mainly been concerned about presenting the hero as their close ally, and not yet as a full-blown Athenian, as it is often held. This will prompt a discussion on the issue of the possible influence that the use of the *Iliad* in Athens may have had on the literary transmission of the poem, as I examine the different entries on Ajax in epic catalogues. Finally, I shall also investigate how the rising popularity of his representation on pots (often in scenes that appear for the first time in this period) attests to his increasing importance in Athens.

The second section ranges approximatively from the time of Cleisthenes' reform to that of the advent of a more radical form of democracy in Athens in the middle of the fifth century BCE. The Athenians' relationship to Ajax seems to change fundamentally, as considerable effort is put into co-opting him, and turning him into a full Athenian hero. This period of time corresponds more or less to that of Atheno-Aeginetan rivalry, which means that this section will constitute the counterpart of Part II. I will first examine the different roles the figure of Ajax plays as one of Athens' eponymous heroes, and as a symbol of the Greeks' victory against the Persians following the battle of Salamis. Accordingly, Ajax is used by the Athenians to assert their hegemony over other Greek πόλεις. Concomitantly, these two roles also enable the Philaidae, one of Athens' foremost families which claimed to descend from the hero, to strengthen their sphere of influence within the πόλις. Once we have reviewed the different manners in which Ajax is politically significant in this period, I shall analyse his representation on contemporary vases as well as in some plays by Aeschylus (of which only some fragments survive).

In the last section, I shall examine Ajax's reception in the second part of the fifth century BCE. The discussion rests on the premise that the political dimension attached to the hero in Athens fades incrementally, as it becomes less and less relevant in the new circumstances that emerge in this period. This is triggered by several interrelated events that all took place in the space of a few years: (i) the advent of Ephialtes' reforms in 461 BCE, (ii) the decline of Philaid influence in Athens, after Cimon's ostracism in 461 BCE (iii) Aegina's surrender to Athens in 456 BCE resulting in the loss of its independence.²⁵⁸ We shall mainly focus on Sophocles' *Ajax*, as the play constitutes the last major work of the classical period in which the hero features. Furthermore, this constitutes an ideal conclusion to our study, as this particular work marks the crystallisation of the hero's narrative for centuries to come.

²⁵⁸ Interestingly, Rhodes (1997: 7) believes that 'full belief and commitment to democracy (...) came in the time of Ephialtes'.

AJAX IN ARCHAIC ATHENS

In the sixth century BCE – perhaps even earlier – Athenians and Megarians were contending for control over Salamis. The competing claims over the island appear to have been formulated on the basis of the special connection each πόλις professed to enjoy with Ajax. This quarrel is the first attestation of a link between Athens and the hero, and thus constitutes, for us at least, the starting point of its interest in him. Since the hero does not feature in any extant literary work dating from this period,¹ it is not possible to examine how his political significance shaped his narrative in archaic Athens. What we can do instead is discuss the probable influence it may have had on the literary transmission of the *Iliad*, for his entry in the Catalogue of Ships has long been suspected to have been interpolated by Solon so as to strengthen Athens' claims over Salamis. Therefore, this section will review his different entries in epic catalogues (namely the Catalogue of Ships, the Τειχοσκοπία, and the Hesiodic list of Helen's suitors), which will in turn prompt some considerations on his genealogy. Finally, we shall explore how Ajax's particular importance in archaic Athens may have influenced the way he is depicted on vases.

But let us first linger a little over the quarrel itself. Salamis represents an important strategic position in the Saronic Gulf, as it offers privileged access to the sea,² and it is thus no wonder that Athens and Megara should have coveted this territory, since both ἄστυ are located on the mainland. Salamis appears to have been a flourishing, and independent Mycenaean centre during the late Bronze Age, although its population (mostly the elite) deserted it at the end of the twelfth century BCE. Those who remained abandoned the palace, and moved further inland.³ In the sub-Mycenaean period, the

¹ This is not surprising given how few extant works from the archaic period there are.

² See **FIGURE 1**, p. 17.

³ Part I: 17ff.

Salaminians lived on the other side of the island, much closer to Athens.⁴ Very little is known about Salamis' political status during the Dark Age. The question is further complicated by the fact that we are uncertain of the precise boundaries of 'Athens' and 'Megara' at the time.

Power was divided between prominent aristocratic families whose members often inter-married.⁵ From what we can gather from mythological data, it is apparent that the history of both πόλεις has often been intertwined.⁶ This can also be inferred from the story of Cylon. Although Herodotus identifies him as Athenian, he was married to the daughter of Theagenes, the tyrant of Megara, and the latter supported his attempt to take control of Athens.⁷ Therefore, it seems important to conceive of this period as a time of intense rivalry between competing aristocrats (under the banners of their οἰκία, their γένος, and their φράτρα) rather than between competing πόλεις strictly speaking. The tyranny of Pisistratus and his sons clearly contributed to create a stronger Athenian identity, but Athens' boundaries were nonetheless considerably smaller than in the classical period,⁸ and a given territory could probably fall under the control of one πόλις or the other, depending on the allegiance pledged by those to whom it belonged.⁹

The earliest allusion to Athens' interest in Salamis is found in an elegy composed by Solon, of which three fragments are still extant.¹⁰ These fragments are quoted by Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius in their *Life of Solon*, as they both give an account of the quarrel between Athens and Megara so as to explain how Solon contributed to Athens' gaining control over the island.¹¹ The whole episode is mentioned by several other ancient sources, but the versions transmitted are unfortunately conflicting with one another,

⁴ A sub-Mycenaean cemetery has been identified close to the archaic and classical settlement, across the Piraeus (FIGURE 1, p. 17).

⁵ For instance, Agariste, who was the daughter of the tyrant of Sicyone and possibly an ἐπίκληρος (Lacey 1968: 276n29), married the Athenian Megacles. '[T]he burial plots of competing groups (however they were constituted) scattered across the Greek countryside might (...) suggest (...) regional-/kin'-based configuration of powers' (Foxhall 1997: 119).

⁶ Davies 1997. For instance, Pandion II became king of Megara after he was expelled from Athens by his nephews (Apollod. *Bibl.* III 15.3). Strabo (IX 11) suggests that Megara was part of Attica in early times (τὸ παλαιόν).

⁷ Cylon, whose chariot won at the Olympic games of 640 BCE, is the earliest Athenian we can date with certainty.

⁸ Before and under Pisistratus and his sons, the political borders of Athens appear to have been considerably smaller than that of Cleisthenian Athens. '[T]he concentration of funerary kouroi and korai in southern Attica and the presence of exiles in places like Anaphlystos, Aphidna, and perhaps Brauron seem to indicate that these limits [Athens' borders] did not lie a great distance beyond the plain of Athens and the natural boundary formed by Mounts Aigaleios, Pentelikon, and Hymettos' (Anderson 2003: 34). See Anderson 2000, 2003: 13-86; Hall 2014 [=2007]: 218-25.

⁹ This is what happened with Salamis according to L'Homme-Wéry (2000).

¹⁰ The elegy is called *Salamis*, and the fragments have survived through indirect tradition. Fr. 1 is quoted by Plutarch (*Sol.* VIII 1-3), while fr. 2 and 3 have been transmitted by Diogenes Laertius (I 47).

¹¹ We could never have guessed from these fragments alone that the poem referred to the context of a war between Athens and Megara over the island. Fr. 2 seems to imply that Athens is about to give up on Salamis (with the result that any man from Attica would then be counted amongst the Σαλαμινιαφετέοι), while in fr. 3 the poet enjoins his audience to fight (μάχεσθαι) for the island. No mention of Megara is found in any of them.

thereby making the exact circumstances of the struggle unclear.¹² It is uncertain when the events took place, how many times the island changed hands, or whether it was an armed conflict or not, amongst other things.¹³ Even the role of Solon remains uncertain, as his role is attributed to Pisistratus in some of the accounts.¹⁴ Nevertheless, we can at least be confident that the Athenians had succeeded in taking control over the island by the end of the sixth century,¹⁵ and that the figure of Ajax had been utilised in one way or another to legitimise their manoeuvre.¹⁶ This, in turn, had far-reaching and long-term consequences with regard to the Athenian reception of the hero.

There are two types of anecdotes in which Ajax is involved. In one version of the story, his entry in the Catalogue of Ships was used to prove his closeness to the Athenians, when the contention over Salamis was submitted to Spartan arbitration, and this was enough to rest Athens' case against Megara.¹⁷ A second version simply reports that Ajax's sons offered the island to Athens so as to receive Athenian citizenship.¹⁸ In what follows, we shall therefore examine Ajax's entries in epic catalogues.

Ajax's Entries in Epic Catalogues

Ajax's entry in the Catalogue of Ships is surprisingly short. It counts only two lines, whereas those of all other important Greek leaders are between seven and fourteen lines long:¹⁹

¹² Il problema (...) è senza dubbio uno fra i più complessi ed intricati della storia greca arcaica' (Piccirilli 1978: 1).

¹³ Solon 'gained victory either by submitting the question to arbitration and arguing the case persuasively on the grounds of Athenian history, burial customs, and genealogy, or by using military force, backed by an oracle from Delphi. One tradition recorded that Solon sought to ensure Athenian control over Salamis even after his own death through the use of his ashes' (Higbie 1997: 280).

¹⁴ Aristotle mentions Pisistratus in [*Ath. Pol.*] XVII 1 (to disprove the claim that he commanded in the war against Megara to retrieve Salamis), and the Athenians in *Rhet.* I 15. Justinus (*Epit.* II 7-8) and Strabo (IX 1.8-10) name both Solon and Pisistratus, while Plutarch (*Sol.* VIII-X) integrates everyone in his narrative, although he assigns different roles. The figure of Solon is quite problematic in itself, which further complicates the matter.

¹⁵ This is confirmed in a late sixth-century decree found on Salamis (ML 14). The letter forms of the inscription suggest that it was written between 520 and 480 BCE.

¹⁶ It must be noted, however, that Salamis did not become an Athenian deme, which means that the Salaminians probably had to be registered elsewhere in order to receive full Athenian citizenship (Taylor 1997: 95-101). This is probably what happened to Timodemus of Acharnae, the victor celebrated in *Nemean* 2 whom Pindar associates with the island (although none of the ancient commentators mentioned in *Σ Nem.* 2.19 seems to have conceived of this possibility).

¹⁷ Arist. *Rhet.* I 15 (1375b 32); Strabo IX 1.8-10; Plut. *Sol.* VIII-X; Diog. Laert. I 46-8; *Σ Rhet.* I 15 (1375b 30); *Σ(b)* B 558.

¹⁸ Plut. *Sol.* VIII-X

¹⁹ The Lesser Ajax's entry is nine lines long, Diomedes' ten, Agamemnon's twelve, Menelaus' ten, Nestor's twelve, Odysseus' seven, Idomeneus' nine, and Achilles' fourteen.

Αἶας δ' ἐκ Σαλαμῖνος ἄγεν δυοκαίδεκα νῆας
 στῆσε δ' ἄγων ἴν' Ἀθηναίων ἴσαντο φάλαγγες.²⁰

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Moreover, the second line of the entry is odd for several reasons. Firstly, it mentions where Ajax stations his camp, a piece of information included in no other catalogue.²¹ Secondly, the position of Ajax's camp itself is problematic, as the hero's tent is clearly situated in the rest of the poem: he occupies one of the furthest ends of the Greek army, a position symmetric to that of Achilles,²² while Agamemnon finds Menestheus next to Odysseus in the *Epipoleis*, and thus close to the middle.²³ Thirdly, the mention of the Athenians' φάλαγγες instead of νῆες is slightly inappropriate in the middle of a Catalogue of Ships.²⁴ Fourthly, Ajax is presented as an ally of Menestheus, while the latter, conversely, seems to be subordinated to Ajax in the rest of the poem.²⁵ Finally, Teucer, whom we would expect to feature in Ajax's entry, surprisingly remains unmentioned in the catalogue.²⁶ Thus there are good reasons to consider the line as spurious, and consequently, the suspicion that it was interpolated seems legitimate (an idea reported from as early as Aristotle's time).²⁷

Strabo reports that the Megarians replied with their own parodic entry (ἀντιπαρωδήσαι):

Αἶας δ' ἐκ Σαλαμῖνος ἄγεν νέας, ἐκ τε Πολίχνης,
 ἐκ τ' Αἰγειρούσσης Νισαίης τε Τριπόδων τε.²⁸

In this version, Ajax is presented as a Megarian ruler, since his ships come from places that are all located in the Megarid. This is not a particularly outrageous claim to make, since Ajax is supposed to be the son of

²⁰ B 557-8.

²¹ Kirk 1985: 207-8.

²² Θ 224-6. Achilles and Ajax occupy the most vulnerable positions of the Greek camp, since they are the best warriors in the army. See Janko 1994: 131-2.

²³ Δ 326-31.

²⁴ Finkelberg 1988: 31.

²⁵ Menestheus only features in two scenes. In the *Epipoleis* (Δ 327-48), he is reproved by Agamemnon who paints a rather unflattering portrait of him, and remains silent, as if he could not deny the wrongdoing imputed to him. In M 331-77, he takes fright (ρίγησε) at the sight of Sarpedon and Glaucus coming towards him with the Lycians. He looks around for help, sees the two Ajaxes with Teucer, but is unable to call them (l. 337: ἀλλ' οὐ πῶς οἱ ἔην βῶσαντι γεγωνεῖν). Consequently, he has to send a messenger to ask them if they will come to protect him. Furthermore, although he has not even attempted to fight the Lycians (they have not yet arrived), he is convinced that he is going to die unless he benefits from support. He even insists that both Ajaxes come (l. 344: ἀμφοτέρω μὲν μάλλον).

²⁶ West 2011a: 116.

²⁷ Arist. *Rhet.* I 15 (1375b 32); Σ(A) Γ 230; Σ(bT) B 558. 'Faßt man alle Gesichtspunkte zusammen, so spricht doch mehr dafür, in diesen Vers zu sehen, der nicht vom Iliasdichter stammt. Ausschlaggebend für diese Vermutung ist dabei weniger die Kürze der Beschreibung als vielmehr metrische Gesichtspunkte und der Begriff der φάλαγξ, der hier offenbar zu einem falschen Zeitpunkt in Hinsicht auf die imaginierte Erzählsituation gebraucht wird' (Visser 1997: 452). See also Bolling 1925: 8; *pace* Kirk 1985 207-9.

²⁸ Plut. *Sol.* X 3.5; Strabo IX 1.11. These lines had apparently been preserved by the Megarian historian Hecaeus.

the Megarian princess Eriboia (or Periboia in later versions).²⁹ Megara's absence from the *Iliad* is far more puzzling than an entry in which Ajax would lead its men.³⁰ What is truly problematic with this Megarian entry (in addition to the fact that it is introduced as some sort of parody) is its failure to indicate the number of ships brought by Ajax.³¹ Furthermore, it is equally too short, which probably indicates that it was indeed conceived so as to respond to B 557-8, especially given that it starts with the same hemistich.

West is probably right to suspect that Ajax's entry in the Catalogue of Ships has been 'severely pruned',³² and this is particularly apparent if we compare our two lines with his entry in the Hesiodic catalogue of Helen's suitors, since they both clearly draw from the same traditional material:³³

Αἴας δ' ἐκ Σαλαμῖνος ἀμώμητος πολεμιστῆς	
μνᾶτο· δίδου δ' ἄρα ἔδνα ἐ[ο]ικότα, θαυματὰ ἔργα·	45
οἱ γὰρ ἔχον Τροίηνα καὶ ἀγ[χ]ιάλον Ἐπίδauρον	
νῆσόν τ' Αἴγιναν Μάσητά τε κοῦρο[ι] Ἀχαιῶν	
καὶ Μέγαρά σκιόεντα καὶ ὀφρυόεντα Κόρινθον,	
Ἑρμιόνην Ἀσίνην τε παρέξ ἄλα ναιεταώσας,	
τῶν ἔφατ' εἰλίποδάς τε βόας κ[α]ὶ [ῖ]φια μῆλα	50
συνελάσας δώσειν· ἐκέκαστο γὰρ ἔγχρῃ μακρῶι. ³⁴	

Strictly speaking, only lines 44-5 correspond to those at B 557-8. Line 44 starts with the same formula (Αἴας δ' ἐκ Σαλαμῖνος) as B 557, and the second hemistich could have sat well in the Catalogue of Ships.³⁵ Line 45 does not lend itself well to comparison since it is composed with expressions that are typical of a Catalogue of Suitors.³⁶ The following lines are more interesting for our purpose, as they contain material that is found in the entry of other heroes in the Catalogue of Ships. Along with Salamis, Ajax is said here to control no fewer than eight Greek πόλεις— Troezen, Epidaurus, Aegina, Mases, Megara, Corinth,

²⁹ She is Eriboia in Pind. *Isthm.* 6.45; Bacchyl. *Ode* 13.69; Soph. *Aj.* 569 (although no mention is made of the fact that she is the daughter of Alcaeus in these three authors); Diod. Sic. IV 72.7.5; Tzetz. *Chil.* III 263; Tzetz. *Theog.* 616; Σ(D) Π 14; Σ Lyc. 53.10, 452; Σ *Isthm.* 6.60 Σ *Isthm.* 5.54; Σ *Aj.* 507, but Periboia in Xen. *Cyn.* I 9; Philostephanus fr. 35.8; Plut. *Thes.* XXIX 1.6; Apollod. *Bibl.* III 162.1; Paus. I 42.2.5, 42.4.11; Σ Plat. *Alc.* 121a.

³⁰ Pausanias (I 42.4) even assumes that the hero must have inherited the kingdom of Megara at some point in order to explain the existence of a cult to Athena Aiantis in the πόλις.

³¹ Erhardt 1894: cx-cxiii; West 2011a: 116.

³² West 2001a: 180. Furthermore, Ajax's entry only counts one single line, if we athetise the problematic (and quite suspicious) line that is B 558.

³³ 'The points of coincidence between the two versions are so obvious that we may say with certainty that they are mutually related' (Finkelberg 1988: 33). See also Schwartz 1960: 421–3; Meier 1976: 95–6, 175–9, 184–6; Pavese 2000: 316–17; Cingano 2005: 145.

³⁴ Fr. 204: 40–51.

³⁵ It must be noted that ἀμώμητος πολεμιστῆς does not appear to be formula (the expression is unique). However, πολεμιστῆς is systematically found at the end of the hexameter (on the fourteen occurrences of the word in the *Iliad*; elsewhere, it is found only once).

³⁶ Θαυματὰ ἔργα appears to be a formula which is always found at the end of the hexameter (Hymn. Hom. *Merc.* 80, 440; Hymn. Hom. *Bacch.* 34; Hes. [Sc.] 165).

Hermione and Asine – most of which are situated around the Saronic Gulf and represent a geographically consistent territory.³⁷ This account differs from that offered by the *Iliad*, in which Troezen, Epidaurus, Aegina, Mases, Hermione and Asine are under Diomedes' command, while the people of Corinth are the followers of Agamemnon.³⁸ Interestingly, Megara is also mentioned here, while it is strangely absent from the *Iliad*.³⁹ Overall, this entry seems more appropriate for a hero of Ajax's calibre, although it could obviously not be inserted as it stands in a Catalogue of Ships.

What is particularly intriguing here is the fact that we find the same material creatively used over at least five lines in two different traditions, something rather unique in all extant early Greek hexameter poetry. This prompts the question of how these two passages relate to one another. Three scenarios are possible: (i) the Hesiodic entry has been directly modelled on the Catalogue of Ships; (ii) both the Hesiodic and the Homeric Catalogues derive from the 'same' source, but it has been considerably corrupted in the course of the literary transmission of the *Iliad*, while the Hesiodic Catalogue transmits a more conservative (and thus genuine) version; (iii) Epic Catalogues, although stemming from the same traditional material, were creatively composed, and could thus be reconfigured at will to fit the expectations of a given audience. The problem with this question is that one's preference for a given answer necessarily reflects one's views on the Homeric Questions, for it raises, by extension, issues regarding the literary transmission of the Homeric poems. We shall come back to this issue at the end of the section.

In the *Τειχοσκοπία*, which constitutes the second catalogue of Greek leaders in the *Iliad*, Ajax's entry also happens to be proportionally much shorter than that of all the other characters.⁴⁰ It is introduced by Priam's inquiry about the hero, to which Helen answers rather abruptly:

³⁷ The exact nature of Ajax's relation to the people of the different *πόλεις* that are named at Il. 46-9 is unclear. Does the fact that the hero promises to give to Helen (if she were to choose him for her husband) sheep and oxen that belonged to the men inhabiting these places imply that these men are his subject, or only that he is strong enough to plunder them? For Leaf (1910: 179-80), Hirschberger (2004: 410) and Cingano (2005: 147-8) amongst others, the passage implies that Ajax does not hold any political power over these places, as he can only boast to be able to raid cattle because of his strength. On the contrary, Finkelberg (1988: 32) argues that if Ajax can claim to be able to gather cattle from all these places, it means that they are subjected to him, and thus that he rules over them all. I find this second argument more convincing, for it seems quite logical that force is to be involved in the controlling. Furthermore, it would be rather unexpected to present one of the most celebrated heroes in the larger tradition of the Trojan War as a mere pirate.

³⁸ The entry of Diomedes' contingent follows Ajax's, which is in turn followed by Agamemnon's (B 559-580). The geographical classification of the entries of the Catalogue appears to have been in part preserved.

³⁹ Aegina is also surprisingly absent from the *Iliad* (it is only named once at B 562). Furthermore, Strabo (VIII 16) explains that *νήσον τ' Αἴγιναν* (as in the Hesiodic catalogue) is a variant of *οἱ τ' ἔχον Αἴγιναν* (B 562) meant to distinguish between Aegina the island and a second Aegina which was located next to Epidaurus. Consequently, we cannot even be sure that the Aegina alluded to in the *Iliad* refers to the famous Aegina.

⁴⁰ Krieter-Spiro 2009: 91.

It is true that her answer, although short, accurately conveys some of Ajax's most defining characteristics.⁴² However she only describes him in one single line, while all the other heroes who are named in the passage keep Helen's attention for at least three lines, without counting the remarks added by Priam and the elder Trojans. For instance, after Helen has explained who Odysseus is, Antenor tells a story about the hero and Menelaus that lasts twenty-two lines.⁴³ It is true that only Agamemnon, Odysseus, Ajax, Idomeneus and, Menelaus are reviewed by Priam and Helen during this scene, but still, since Ajax features amongst the heroes that are mentioned, it is puzzling that only one line is allocated to him. Moreover, after this single line, Helen directly moves on to Idomeneus, even though Priam has not asked her any question. Additionally, neither Priam nor the elder Trojans comment upon Ajax, which is also different from all other entries. It is obviously tendentious to base one's argument on what a poem 'ought' to have contained, but since Ajax's entry in the Catalogue of Ship, which also seems too short, has clearly been manipulated in some way or the other, it seems reasonable to suppose that his entry in the *Τειχοσκοπία* has also been pruned. Ajax's entry would thus have been subjected to two different kinds of manipulation: the insertion of an 'Athenian line' at B 558, and the deletion of several lines in his entries in the Catalogue of Ships as well as in the *Τειχοσκοπία*. These obviously need not have happened at the same time.

But what would Ajax's entries originally have contained? And why would they have been cut? Any answer is bound to be speculative. However, if we accept the possibility that the poem may have been to some extent altered in the process of its Athenian edition (whoever may be behind it), it is rather likely that Ajax's entries were shortened according to some political agenda. In these conditions, the missing lines probably contained information pertaining to Ajax's dominion (as in fr. 204 of the *Catalogue of Women*) and/or his genealogy,⁴⁴ for both an Ajax ruling over too big a territory and one belonging to the Acacidae could have upset an Athenian audience for obvious reasons.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Γ 229.

⁴² Bergold 1977: 87-8. The more so if Ajax was known to be invulnerable in the larger epic tradition, as argued in Part I (pp. 36ff.).

⁴³ Menelaus is not directly described by Helen, but only mentioned. However, we learn more about him than we do about Ajax.

⁴⁴ Part I: 29ff.

⁴⁵ See Part I: 31.

Ajax on Attic Pots from the Archaic Period

Ajax is almost always depicted alongside Achilles on Attic pots from the archaic period, unlike in Corinthian art in which the representation of his suicide is very popular (a comparatively rare scene in Attic art). The scenes that are repeatedly drawn are: (i) the rescue of Achilles' body, (ii) Achilles and Ajax playing a board game, and (iii) the *Πρεσβεία*. The earliest known Attic vase which features Ajax is the famous François vase, a volute crater dating from 570-55, found in Chiusi.⁴⁶ This is over a century after our first extant representations of the hero.⁴⁷ However, this probably does not reflect the painters' conscious preferences, given that no mythological scene is found on Attic pottery before the start of the sixth century. The François vase is richly decorated with no less than six different mythological scenes, most of which are thematically linked to the figures of Peleus and Achilles.⁴⁸ On both of its handles, Ajax is represented carrying Achilles' body (FIGURE 31). The identification of the scene is made certain by the names of the heroes which are inscribed next to each figure.⁴⁹ It is probably not a coincidence that the period of time during which Ajax is most often represented on Attic pots corresponds to the same years



FIGURE 31

⁴⁶ On the François Vase, see Schefold 1964: 64-60, fig. 46-51; L'Homme-Wéry 2006; Whitley 2012: 586-91 amongst others.

⁴⁷ The two earliest known representations of Ajax date from the late eighth century and depict him with a sword in his hand, just before he commits suicide (Part I: 58n254). They are several precedents to this scene in non-Attic art (Part I: 49-51), and thus Clitias (the painter) is borrowing an established iconography. *Pace* Shapiro (1990: 126).

⁴⁸ Stewart 1983.

⁴⁹ Scenes in which a character is represented carrying a dead body on his shoulder are usually believed to be Ajax and Achilles, even when the names are not inscribed. The name Aristodamos can be read instead of Achilles' one on a series of shield bands (*LIMC* Aias I: 26-9) from Olympia (575-50 BCE), but it has recently been established that it is in reality the artist's signature (Siewert and Tauber 2013: 155-7).

when he was most politically significant in Athens.⁵⁰ As discussed in Part I, the scene only becomes truly popular in Attic art some decades later.⁵¹

The second very widespread scene depicts the two heroes absorbed in a board game. It was remarkably popular, as is attested by the 168 specimens that are still extant today.⁵² The earliest is probably a cup from the Vatican collection on which the scene is represented twice (**FIGURE 32**),⁵³ and not the famous amphora found in Vulci by Execias (**FIGURE 35**), as is often believed.⁵⁴ It must be noted, however, that Achilles and Ajax are not named on the Vatican cup.⁵⁵ None of the inscribed letters makes sense. Furthermore, the fact that the heroes are surrounded by soldiers does not correspond to the



FIGURE 32

⁵⁰ Shapiro 1981: 174.

⁵¹ Part I: 49.

⁵² Buchholz 1987: 126-84 (in particular p. 184). Other lists can be found in Brommer 1973: 334-9; Mommsen 1980: 141-2. 'The representation of two armed heroes playing a game on a plinth set between them occurs as early as the mid-sixth century on carved seals and shield straps found in Aegina, Olympia, and near Tarentum in Italy' (Kurke 1999: 261). The names of Ajax and Achilles are written on ten of them (Kenzler 2003/4: 82).

⁵³ Mommsen 1980: 147 n. 26; *LIMC* Achilleus 398. Schefold (1978: 245) even proposes a date of 550 BCE.

⁵⁴ Schweitzer 1929: 116 n. 1, Moore 1980: 418.

⁵⁵ We have discussed the connection shared between Ajax and the eagle (*αιετός*) in Part I (pp. 19ff.). Here, their presence may be an allusion to the fact that both heroes are descendants of Zeus-born Acacus.



FIGURE 33



FIGURE 34

typology of the scene. Consequently, the version created by Execias is probably the one that was taken as model by Attic painters, thereby greatly influencing subsequent representations (FIGURE 35).⁵⁶ As Kurke argues, the game cannot be κύβοι (dice), given that it ‘involves the throw of dice as well as pieces moved on a board.’⁵⁷ Variations start to appear in the 520s BCE, consisting mainly in the addition of Athena or of a tree in the middle of the scene, right between the two heroes (FIGURE 33 and 34).⁵⁸

Interestingly, Achilles seems to be the usual winner in the series. This interpretation is based on the fact that the hero is almost always represented on the left when he is named, which by convention is the ‘winning side,’⁵⁹ and that Athena always supports him (*LIMC* Achilleus 402-9, 420, 423).⁶⁰ This is indicated by the body language of the goddess: she always stands by Achilles’ side or looks at him. The presence of Athena highlights the crucial difference – in spite of all their similitudes – between the two heroes,⁶¹ which lies in their relationship with Athena: the goddess supports Achilles throughout the *Iliad*, while she completely ignores Ajax in spite of his valour. As argued in Part I, this is not to be ascribed to the fact that Ajax is unworthy of her help, but rather to the fact that he alienated Athena by rejecting her support.

⁵⁶ Brunori 2011: 61.

⁵⁷ Kurke 1999: 261; *pace* Boardman 1978.

⁵⁸ According to Buchholz (1987: 184), Athena features in 89 (out of 168) representations of the scene.

⁵⁹ That the left is the ‘winning side’ can be systematically noticed in the representations of duels of which we know the outcome, such as, for instance, that of Achilles and Memnon. *LIMC* Achilleus 394 is the only example on which Ajax is on the left side.

⁶⁰ Ajax usually throws a smaller number than Achilles (as on figure 34), but we should not deduce anything from the score since we do not know how the game was played. Interestingly, in *Ar. Ran.* 1400, Dionysos, apparently quoting from a lost play, states that Achilles has thrown δύο κύβω καὶ τέτταρα. We may infer from the context that the score is not great.

⁶¹ Brunori 2011: 59.



FIGURE 35

This scene is unique in Attic art; it was only painted in a precise window of time (c. 540 to c. 480 BCE) during which it was remarkably popular,⁶² and its extraordinary success is mysterious. Scholars have attempted to account for this peculiarity in several ways. Since the motif is absent from our extant literary sources, it has long been believed to refer to a lost epic,⁶³ perhaps a *Palamedia*,⁶⁴ but although this view has not been decisively disproven it is no longer widely accepted.⁶⁵ The different explanations that are put forward fall into two types: (i) ones that put emphasis on explaining the meaning of the scene *per se*, and (ii) ones that above all focus on understanding the specific choice of mythological characters (Ajax and Achilles).

Many of the explanations belonging to type (i) are interesting and perfectly valid; however, they are less pertinent for our purposes, since they do not engage with the question of Ajax's striking, but short-

⁶² 'Eines der beliebtesten Themen der Bildkunst in der Zeit zwischen 540 und 480 v. Chr.' (Kossatz-Deissmann 1981: 102) [= *LIMC* Achilleus].

⁶³ Boardman 1978: 18-24; Moore 1980: 414. For a summary on the issue of literary sources, see Hedreen 2001: 91-104. It has also been hypothesised that the scene was modelled after a statue on the acropolis, but the theory is hardly supported by present evidence. It is mainly based on the fact that the motif ceases to be represented between around 480 BCE, which would then be explained by the fact that the statue was destroyed during the sack of Athens in 490 BCE (Schrader *et al.* 1969: 284-7 [= 1939]; Thompson 1976: 30-9).

⁶⁴ Robert 1892: 57 n. 36; Caskey and Beazley 1931: 65; Kemp-Lindemann 1975, 85-86.

⁶⁵ Scepticism is expressed by Lamer (1927, col. 1994), Thompson (1976), Woodford (1982, 178-80), and Kurke (1999: 261), amongst others.

lived, popularity on Attic pots.⁶⁶ The interpretations that are more attentive to the presence of the hero (type (ii)) are similar overall. They all link the popularity of the scene with Exekias' rendering of it, and conjecture that the artist had some links with Salamis.⁶⁷ The most stimulating view is perhaps that of Shapiro, who stresses the importance of 'the relationship between artists and patrons,' as he notes that 'Exekias painted a vase for a member of the Philaid family.'⁶⁸ We may perhaps take this a step further, although the following remarks are bound to be purely tentative.

It is usually assumed that Athens had good relationships with Aegina under Pisistratus and his sons,⁶⁹ and it is probable that Attica constituted one of its Greek markets.⁷⁰ This may be inferred from the fine Attic wares dating from the sixth century that have been found in Etruria (for instance, in Gravisca and Adria) which were manifestly imported by Aeginetan merchants.⁷¹ However, it might be a mistake to identify 'Attic pots' from the archaic period as exclusively Athenian.⁷² The numerous pots dating approximatively between 540 and 480 BCE on which representations of Ajax are painted were certainly not exclusively destined for an Athenian market, and may perhaps not have been produced only by Athenian artists. One thing that is striking with regard to these images is the fact that the hero is systematically associated with Achilles.⁷³ In view of what has been discussed until now, it seems almost certain that one important effect that may result from the coupling of the two heroes on a picture is to

⁶⁶ For instance, Hurwit (1985: 260-1) reads the scene as meditation on the fate of heroes, while Kurke (1999) proposes a more political reading, as she argues that the scene displays the first signs of a democratic ideology in Athens. Kenzler 2003/4 interprets it as a metaphor of the hoplitic ideal.

⁶⁷ Boardman (1978) first suggested that Exekias probably had Salaminian connections, while Moore (1980) went a step further by proposing that he may even have originated from the island.

⁶⁸ Shapiro 1981: 174. The pot is a *πυξίς* found in Brauron depicting Stesagoras II. See Immerwahr 1972: 181-6. If L'Homme-Wéry (2000) is right to argue that both the Philaidae and the Eupatridae (Alcibiades' *γένος* through his father Clinias) were noble families which originally were from Salamis, and had ties with Aegina (in virtue of the fact that they claimed to descend from the Aeacid Ajax), Shapiro's view (that Exekias may perhaps have painted Ajax often because he was complying to Philaid commands) remarkably complements that of Boardman and Moore, who posit a link between Exekias and the island.

⁶⁹ On the chronology of the conflict between Athens and Aegina, see Part II: 122n169.

⁷⁰ Interestingly, the Attic pots that the Aeginetan Sostratus had imported in Gravisca (see following note) were all made before 505 BCE. That is, by a strange coincidence, precisely until the advent of democracy in Athens.

⁷¹ Most Attic pots found in Gravisca bear the trade-mark ΣΟ which has been identified as belonging to the Aeginetan merchant Sostratus (Johnston 1972; Harvey 1976). Furthermore, Johnston (2000: 25) notes the existence of a 520-510 BCE Attic kantharos from Gravisca of which the dedication to Apollo is almost certainly written in Aeginetan script. As for Adria, Colonna (1974) demonstrated through the analysis of the graffiti found on the site that it also was an Aeginetan *ἐμπόριον*, as already suspected by Strabo (V 1.7). Interestingly, many pots (or rather fragments of pots since they were used by their purchasers) found in Adria were made by great masters of Attic art, such as Brygos, Macron, or Douris). See also Baldasarra 2013.

⁷² On the different perceptions of scholars regarding Attica, see Houby-Nielsen 2009: 190.

⁷³ The three most popular scenes (and the only ones that regularly recur) are: (i) Ajax and Achilles playing a board game (ii) the rescue of Achilles' body (iii) the *Περσεία*.

stress Ajax's Aeacid lineage.⁷⁴ Interestingly, representations of Achilles and Ajax playing a game, as well as of the rescue of Achilles' body, are widespread until *c.* 500 BCE, which corresponds to the time of the advent of democracy; from this time onwards, their popularity appears to decline until they are no longer produced *c.* 480 (which incidentally coincides with the acquisition of a fleet by the Athenians). In these conditions, one may wonder if these images did not serve to emphasise the ties shared between Salaminians, Athenians (Ajax), and Aeginetans (Achilles), and promote co-operation as well as friendship. This obviously cannot be proven, but remains a possibility, especially if ceramic artists had close connections with the men for whom they worked and/or those who were selling the wares they produced.

The distribution of representations of the Πρεσβεία (FIGURE 36) over time, the third recurring scene in which Ajax and Achilles are painted together, appears to corroborate the hypothesis formulated above. All extant specimens of the scene appear to have been painted between 500 and 480 BCE.⁷⁵ Consequently, if we assume that Achilles may represent Aegina, the image could then be interpreted as a critique (and potentially also as a warning) of the fact that the πόλις did not participate, if not in the Ionian revolt, at least in the First Persian War, perhaps because its citizens were upset regarding the new circumstances that the advent of democracy brought in Athens. At any rate, the cautionary dimension of the image can be inferred from the fact that this episode in the *Iliad* clearly marks the moment when



FIGURE 36

⁷⁴ As Thomas (1989: 164) shows, the early ancestors were crucial in a genealogy and held great significance for the individual who would be at end of the line. Consequently, Aeacus (and Aegina) would probably come to the mind of those looking at the two heroes playing together quite naturally.

⁷⁵ LIMC Achilleus 437-65. Ajax is not always represented on the scene, as it is only loosely (if at all) inspired by the *Iliad*.

Achilles' anger goes overboard, as it results in his losing what was most dear to him: his refusal to fight is what ultimately provokes Patroclus' death. This is speculative, but would allow us to make sense of the following data:

- (i) The scene has been current for only approximatively twenty years.
- (ii) These twenty years coincide with a period when the Aeginetans refuse to fight the Persians, although the occasion presents itself.
- (iii) The scene stops being produced right at the time when these same Aeginetans join the Greek alliance in order to repel Xerxes' army.
- (iv) The situation to which the scene refers is one in which Achilles refuses to fight the Trojans with his allies, who incidentally often are equated with the Persians.⁷⁶
- (v) Achilles was considered to be an Aeginetan hero.

Conclusion

The chronology of sixth-century Athenian history is unfortunately very uncertain. This is mainly due to the fact that we draw information from two types of sources which often are in conflict with one another. On the one hand, we have a fifth-century witness, Herodotus, who describes, in a digressive, discontinuous manner, the main events that occurred in Athens over the course of the sixth century, usually with the aim of casting light on his main narrative about the Persian Wars.⁷⁷ Although he mainly bases his narrative on the account made by contemporary witnesses, he can be inaccurate (especially regarding dates) due to the oral nature of the information he gathered.⁷⁸

On the other hand, the Attidographers give dates that are usually based on the list of the eponymous archons (*IG I³ 1031*). The list was published around 425 BCE, and hence after Herodotus'

⁷⁶ See Part II: 99-102.

⁷⁷ He mentions in V 71, Cylon's failed attempt to seize power, which is usually thought to have happened in 632 BCE. The date is reliable because Cylon was a victor of the Olympic Games.

⁷⁸ 'La première source pour le sixième siècle reste Hérodote, bien entendu, mais sa crédibilité pour cette époque serait compromise du fait qu'il se base essentiellement sur la tradition orale, peu fiable. Des redoublements et des affabulations abonderaient. En outre, le calcul chronologique par générations, fréquent également dans la Constitution athénienne aristotélicienne, n'aboutit qu'à de la fiction' (Frel 1994: 161). See also Flament 2007: 290-1. Hignett (1952: 31) believes nevertheless that Herodotus is our best source, despite his inaccuracies, because he is less biased than fourth-century historians. For an extensive discussion of all the sources, see Rhodes 1976.

time.⁷⁹ The chronology it provides is accurate overall, although less so in the case of earlier dates, since they have probably been made up so as to provide a more complete chronology.⁸⁰ Furthermore, they fail to match Herodotus' own chronology. The Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians*, rediscovered in 1890 on two papyri leaves, is based on this list. Since it was considered to be the work of Aristotle, it held authority and greatly influenced later commentators on this period of the history of Athens. It must also be noted that the accounts of the Atthidographers show certain biases in their treatment of the early days of the Athenian democracy, as they tend, by default, to portray Pisistratus negatively, while Solon's actions are magnified and augmented.

For instance, two positions prevail among scholars attempting to place the reforms of Solon. Some scholars claim that the reforms were enacted in 570 BCE, which conjecture derives from the chronologically coherent pieces of information Herodotus gives about Solon's encounters with several of his contemporaries.⁸¹ Other scholars offer an earlier date, 594/593 BCE, that derives from the list of the eponymous archons, which was elaborated after Herodotus' time. Relying upon the archons' list necessarily affects what dates one gives to Pisistratus' three seizures of power and his subsequent exiles; it also has an impact on the time when one believes Pisistratus established the Great Panathenaea and additionally when his sons introduced the recitation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to the program of the festival.⁸²

In these conditions, it is not surprising that our sources (on the conflict between Athens and Megara, for instance) are so confused and contradictory; for it seems that many of Pisistratus' achievements were ascribed to Solon after the tyranny was over and had fallen into disgrace.⁸³ Despite these problems, we should not doubt that these sources contain at least a partial truth. Accordingly, the abundance of testimonies regarding the role of the Great Panathenaea in the establishment of the *Iliad* should be taken into serious consideration. Even a scholar as strongly in favour of orality as Nagy gives

⁷⁹ Hignett 1952: 4.

⁸⁰ Precise pieces of information regarding events before 462 BCE were probably not available in the fourth century (Hignett 1952: 12).

⁸¹ Flament 2007: 289.

⁸² On the date of the establishment of the Great Panathenaea, see Davison 1958; Corbett 1960; Lavelle 2014: 314-21.

⁸³ 'Comme l'avait déjà souligné H. A. Shapiro, il semble qu'une fois la tyrannie tombée en disgrâce les réalisations de Pisistrate (...) avaient été transférées sur la personne de Solon' (Flament 2007: 298). About the fifth-century anti-tyrannical tradition, see Lavelle 1993; McGlew 1993: 150-5.

credit to it.⁸⁴ I would like therefore to argue that sixth-century Athens, no matter the exact chronology of the events in question, provides a context in which the difficulties we have just analysed regarding the figure of Ajax can be made sense of, especially if one takes into consideration their cumulative weight.

Given the canonical status the *Iliad* had already acquired by the fifth century,⁸⁵ this step in the shaping of the figure of Ajax is particularly important because the Homeric and the Hesiodic poems became the reference point for what we now call Greek mythology. Hence, innovations inserted into the *Iliad* came to be accepted as elements of the ‘original story’, and any mythological tradition that was not present in the established corpus of the poems was considered a latter-day fabrication. For this reason, everything that disagrees with what is said in the Homeric poems or simply relates a fact that is found in the Epic Cycle (in particular, but also in any other work), while left untold in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, has systematically been judged as the innovation of later writers (the νεώτεροι);⁸⁶ and this often without contemplating the possibility that the Homeric poems might have adapted traditional elements that these other works may have preserved.

It turns out that the reception of Ajax in archaic Athens has been influenced paradoxically by two opposed factors: (i) the problem that his connection to Aegina, and to a lesser extent to Megara, through his lineage posed to the Athenians, and (ii) the great popularity he enjoyed as Salamis was absorbed by the πόλις. The first factor probably had a direct effect on our text of the *Iliad*, as Ajax’s entries in the Catalogue of Ships and the Τειχοσκοπία have arguably been shortened so as to eliminate any piece of information contradicting Athens’ idealised representation of itself (like mentions of Ajax’s tie with the Aeacidae, or

⁸⁴ Nagy (2001: 110-1) [= 2004: 27] distinguishes between five stages: ‘1. A relatively most fluid period, with no written texts, extending from the early millennium into the middle of the eighth century in the first millennium. | 2. A more formative or “Panhellenic” period, still with no written texts, from the middle of the eighth century to the middle of the sixth. | 3. A definitive period, centralized in Athens, with potential texts in the sense of transcripts, at any or several points from the middle of the sixth century to the later part of the fourth; (...) | 4. A standardizing period, with texts in the sense of transcripts or even scripts, from the later part of the fourth century to the middle of the second; (...) | 5. A relatively most rigid period, with texts as scripture, from the middle of the second century onward; (...)’ One wonders if the poems were already conceived of as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* during stage 1 (at least) and 2, and if the poems can still be called ‘multiform’ after stage 3 (Finkelberg 2000), but this model, for what it is worth, perceptively shows that sixth-century Athens was a key step in the formation of the Homeric poems as we have them today. For a criticism of Nagy’s position, see West 2001b.

⁸⁵ The process was probably initiated by the establishment of the recitation of the Homeric poems at the occasion of the Great Panathenaea. A tradition reports that Lycurgus, the legendary or semi-legendary legislator of the Lacedaemonians, had introduced the Homeric poems to Sparta (Arist. fr. 611.10 Rose; Plut. *Lyc.* IV 4), but this is probably a fourth century invention. See Graziosi 2002: 217ff. Janko (1992: 31n50) thinks that this is a sixth century tradition, but then it could be a reaction to the establishment of the Homeric poems in Athens.

⁸⁶ This is the name given to any poet coming after Homer and Hesiod and hence applied to any other poet giving a story that is different from what we find in the poems of Homer or Hesiod.

any elements that could undermine the story of the *synoecism* of Attica by Theseus).⁸⁷ On the other hand, Ajax's particular significance to Athens because of Salamis (ii) also greatly influenced his Athenian reception. This is attested by the great number of pots on which he is depicted. Interestingly, he was only introduced in Athens as a friend at first, while attempts to co-opt him through his genealogy or by integrating him into the Athenian mythological landscape (by naming one of the ten tribes after him) seem to have been later manoeuvres.

This explains the ambivalent reception of Ajax in Athens: for the reasons we have just seen, the manipulation of several lines of the poem that happened at some point during the sixth century undermined his standing in the *Iliad*, even as Athens celebrated him in other respects at the same time. In fact, as Kelly notes, Ajax has a 'somewhat ambiguous configuration' in the *Iliad*,⁸⁸ because his underrepresentation in the Catalogue of Ships as well as in the *Τειχοσκοπία* is at odds with his pre-eminence on the battlefield; hence, the reasons for Ajax's ambivalence in the *Iliad* may very well be explained by the historical context of the sixth century and the editorial activity that probably happened (at least to some extent) when the Homeric poems were chosen as a set 'text' to be recited during the Great Panathenaea – although it is equally possible that some lines were deleted later, at a time when Aegina posed a serious threat, for instance. Whatever it may be, it must be noted that the scale of the manipulations targeting the figure of Ajax in the poem are minimal in comparison to the size of the *Iliad*. If these manipulations show us anything about the genesis of the poem, it is how little room for manoeuvre there was at this stage of its transmission.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ It is precisely with elements of the Atheno-centric story of Theseus as well as of the lineage of Ajax that the Megarians came to disagree again with the Athenians. As a matter of fact, the latter reported that one of Theseus' feats consisted of killing a criminal named Sciron, while the Megarians gave another picture of the same story: according to the Megarians, this Sciron was in reality a Megarian king who was treacherously killed by Theseus when he took the city of Eleusis. Furthermore, they also held that he could only have been a good man, since he was the father of Endeis – Peleus and Telamon's mother, a story that created a genealogical connection between Ajax and their city. On the question, see Wickersham 1991: 18-20.

⁸⁸ Kelly 2007: 203.

⁸⁹ Page (1959: 171) similarly notes the 'self-control of the Athenian editor.'

AJAX IN ATHENS

DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE FIFTH CENTURY

As it has already been mentioned in Part II, Ajax takes his full political dimension in Athens during the first-half of the fifth century. It is true that during the time of Pisistratus and his sons, and perhaps even before, for that matter, the Athenians had already been showing interest in the figure of the hero, but at the time the importance they invest in him mainly stems from a concern to assert the legitimacy of their claim over Salamis. Consequently, their efforts aim not so much at appropriating and integrating Ajax into their πόλις' own mythological background as at proving the 'historicity' of Ajax's particular friendship towards them.⁹⁰ The strategy proved successful, as the legend goes,⁹¹ and Salamis never returned to Megara's control from the time of the tyranny onwards, although it is probably right to note that the support of the Salaminian elite played a great part in it.⁹²

This change of attitude towards the hero is prompted by several factors which reflect the new preoccupations of the democratic era, as distinct from ensuring control over Salamis. The establishment of a democratic regime in Athens sets a balance of powers within the πόλις that is without precedent in the Greek world. The body of citizens grew considerably in a very short time, which meant that the traditional

⁹⁰ See previous section.

⁹¹ Strabo IX 10; Plut. *Sol.* 1-2; Diog. Laert. I 48-9; Σ(b) B 494-877, l. 37-40.

⁹² The γένη that claimed to descend from Ajax's sons Philaios and Eurysaces (Philaidae and Eupatridae) appear to have formed this Salaminian elite, and were both probably also connected to Aegina (L'Homme-Wéry 2000: par. 21).

power dynamics of the πόλις underwent deep mutations as even the descendants of the most prestigious aristocratic families needed to win the support of the Athenian citizenry to retain political power.⁹³

In this section, we shall first make a few observations connected to the transition from tyranny to *ισονομία*, since it had, as we shall see, important bearing on the manner in which the representation of the hero evolved and was actualised in Cleisthenian Athens. This will include a discussion on the tribe Aiantis as well as on the Philaids. We shall then proceed to discuss the representation of the *ὀπλων κρίσις* on pots, before examining a set of Aeschylean plays about Ajax that are generally thought to form a tetralogy.

Ajax in Democratic Athens

I would like to stress some of the consequences wrought by the establishment of democracy in 508/7 BCE which indirectly but significantly influenced the Athenian reception of Ajax. When the regime of *ισονομία* is instituted, Athenian identity is transformed in terms of the social status and the territory it refers to. Not only does the politically active population grow considerably, but also its fabric is deeply altered by the reform, as members of lower classes, the *δῆμος*, acquire for the first time the right to participate in the political life of the πόλις.⁹⁴ This means that the balance of power and the dynamic of the relationship between the different actors of the Athenian political life dramatically – and very suddenly –

⁹³ In Part II, I have put a strong emphasis on the antagonism between Athens and Aegina in the fifth century, especially since it played a central role in structuring the Aeginetans' sense of identity. As we have seen, the Aeacidae (and among them Ajax) are at the very heart of the Aeginetans' self-definition. From an Aeginetan perspective, this means that the use of the Aeacidae in works of art, or in cults serves two ends: it reinforces Aegina's unity by strengthening the ties between the members of its community, while highlighting at the same time their differences from the rest of Greece, and especially from their Athenian neighbours. This means that the function of the Aeacidae can be cohesive and polarising at the same time, depending on the level at which one observes its effects. This dichotomy, however, does not provide an adequate model for understanding the reception of Ajax in Athens, as the state of affairs is more complex. This is not surprising: the Athenian *πολιτεία* experienced several phases of profound mutations in the space of a century, which resulted in exacerbated tensions between the different actors of the Athenian political scene. On the contrary, the Aeginetan *πολιτεία* – as far as we can tell – remained remarkably stable throughout the archaic period. Furthermore, we are simply better informed about the vagaries of Athenian politics.

⁹⁴ See, for instance, Manville 1990: 76; Forsdyke 2000: 256-9.

change.⁹⁵ Accordingly, the members of old aristocratic families are forced to adapt and invent new strategies so as to maintain their privileges,⁹⁶ which alters their relationship to the *πόλις*.⁹⁷

This naturally had repercussions on the manner in which Ajax was received in Athens, as his figure came to be employed in the service of conflicting ideologies. As a matter of fact, during this period, he can embody aristocratic values (especially as the proclaimed ancestor of the Philaidae and of the Eupatridae, the family from which Alcibiades descends by Clinias), but also represent democracy (as one of the ten Athenian eponyms), while expressing Atheno-Aeginetan connections (as an Aeacid). Following the Persian Wars, he also comes to epitomise the victory against the Medes. He is then not only the hero from and of Salamis:⁹⁸ he is a paradigm of military excellence against the barbarians. Given the unparalleled cultural and political reverberation of battles such as Marathon, Salamis, or Plataea around the Greek world, it is not at all surprising to see the figure of Ajax instrumentalised and brandished as the symbol of quite opposite causes, even though the aim is usually similar: to capitalise on the exceptional victory over the Persians. In the following two sections, we will explore more closely the different ways in which Ajax became particularly significant in Athens. This will contribute to the overall picture of his reception in Athens.

⁹⁵ Raaflaub 2013: 90.

⁹⁶ Naturally, the old mechanisms that served to increase one's prestige, and, consequently, one's power and legitimacy do not disappear all at once. Both the aristocratic and the democratic value systems co-exist for a while, but the aristocratic one has less and less leverage. Two votives made after Marathon, Callimachus' Νίκη and Miltiades' helmet, are revealing of the contrasting attitude generated by these two systems. Callimachus, who was polemarch at the time of Marathon, died in battle. A post-mortem monument was erected, probably with public funds, in his honour. In the dedication, his position (*πολέμαρχος*) and demotic (*Ἀφιδναῖος*) are carefully mentioned, but at the same time it is stressed that the battle is an *Ἀθηναίων ἀγών* (IG I³ 784). See Shefton 1950, 1952; Keesling 2010. As for Miltiades, who is remembered as the instigator of the victory, he privately dedicated a helmet to Zeus at Olympia, omitting any reference to Athens, while highlighting his special proximity to Zeus. As a matter of fact, his claim to be a descendant of Ajax makes Zeus his ancestor (Neer 2004: 81).

⁹⁷ Hall 2013: 13-4. Neer (2004: 86) explains well how the dynamic works, as he comments on a late sixth century Alcmaeonid votive (IG I³ 1469): 'it is not enough, apparently, to be famous at Athens; and Athenian citizenship is not worth proclaiming. In fact, the polis does not figure into the equation at all: for Alcmaeonides, the only thing that matters is the dissemination of his deeds and parentage within a larger interstate community.' Thomas (1989: 107-9) notes that Athenian democracy influenced the focus of what was recorded by family tradition. Homeric ancestry became quasi obsolete, to the benefit of 'one's ancestors' patriotic behaviour in fighting the tyrants or other enemies and his ancestors' service to the polis' (p. 108).

⁹⁸ One of the three Phoenician triremes the Greeks dedicated after the battle was offered to Ajax on Salamis (Hdt. VIII 121.1). For the very active role during the Persian wars that was assigned to the gods and the heroes, see Hdt. VIII 109.3.

The Tribe Aiantis

It is usually assumed that Ajax was chosen to become one of the ten eponymous heroes of Cleisthenian Athens in order to strengthen Athens' claim over Salamis.⁹⁹ It is true that the reform of the *φύλαι* aims, amongst other things, at unifying Athens and its citizens. However, Salamis does not appear to be a disputed territory anymore, at the time of the establishment of democracy.¹⁰⁰ This can be inferred, for instance, from the fact that, unlike Thebes and Aegina, Megara does not avail itself of the political instability in Athens to attack it.¹⁰¹ Consequently, the explanation according to which Ajax was introduced amongst the Athenian eponymous heroes with the aim of strengthening Athenian domination over the island of Salamis does not sound very satisfactory.¹⁰² There must be different reasons or at least additional ones, especially since Ajax was not a straightforward candidate, but rather an anomaly: he is the only eponymous hero who does not come from Attica,¹⁰³ and who did not even have an altar there.¹⁰⁴

Several facts touching upon the tribe Aiantis are perplexing. First of all, there are a series of curious coincidences that connect the tribe Aiantis with the Persian wars. According to Plutarch, the tribe Aiantis particularly distinguished itself at Marathon:¹⁰⁵ they were posted on the right flank of the phalanx – apparently an honour bestowed on them because their general, Callimachus, was holding the office of polemarch.¹⁰⁶ Callimachus not only had a decisive role in the victory by deciding to follow Miltiades'

⁹⁹ Ferguson 1938:17; Parker 1996: 108.

¹⁰⁰ The question of Salamis' status over the course of the sixth century is controversial, especially since two inscriptions referring to a *γένος* of the *Salaminioi* (Agora I 3244 and Agora I 3394) were published by Ferguson (1938). The designation *γένος* of the *Salaminioi* can be read on IG, II2, 1232, 20-24 (see Wade-Gery 1931). For a good review of all the different positions adopted on the issue, see Taylor 1997; L'Homme-Wéry 2000.

¹⁰¹ Hdt. V 79-81.

¹⁰² The sources about the arbitration are Plut. *Sol.* X 1-11; Strabo IX 1.10. See Patterson 2010: 168 (who prefers 560s).

¹⁰³ Herodotus notes the particular status of Ajax and explains that he earned his title of eponymous hero by being a *σύμμαχος* of Athens (V 66.2), but he does not seem to be aware that his introduction to the tribal system postdates the establishment of democracy by Cleisthenes.

¹⁰⁴ Kearns (1989: 82) is clear about this: 'in the fifth century he [Ajax] was still a Salaminian, accommodated only by courtesy at the altar of his son at Melite'.

¹⁰⁵ Incidentally, Marathon also happens to be one of the demes of the tribe. This is significant, as the fallen at Marathon were buried there (Thuc. II 34.5; Paus. I 32.3). It became a place of cult shortly after the Persian Wars, which was still in use during the Hellenistic period (IG II/III² 1006: 26-7, 69-70 (*SEG* 14.77; 19.108); Ael. Arist. II 229; Paus. I 32.4). The fifth century practice is substantiated by the black-figure vase fragments that have been found in the sacrificial pit (Pritchett 1960: 140-3).

¹⁰⁶ Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 628E.

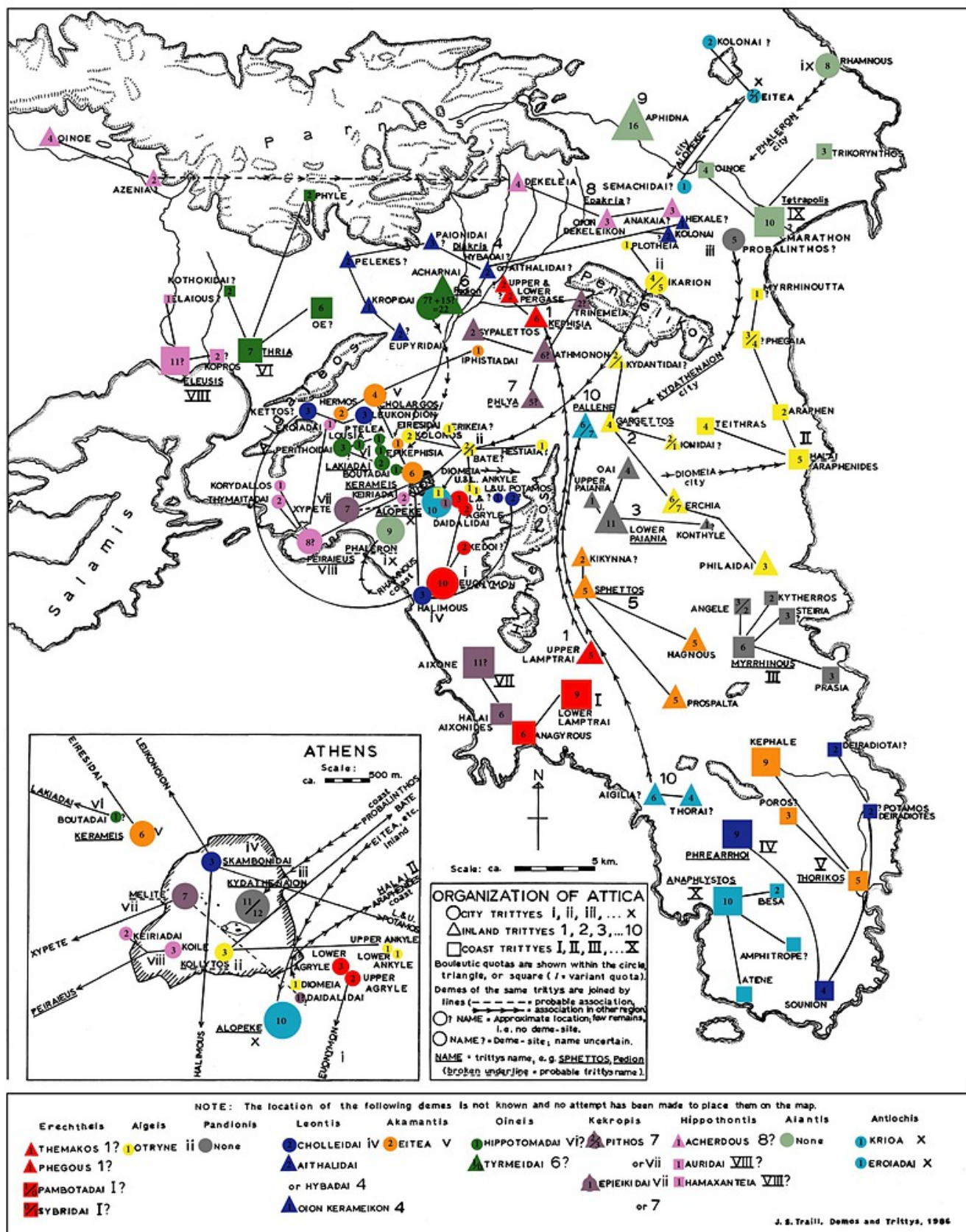


FIGURE 37

plan,¹⁰⁷ but he also fought particularly well and died in battle.¹⁰⁸ The Athenians even dedicated a monument in his honour on the Acropolis, although it was partly destroyed in 480 BCE,¹⁰⁹ when Athens was sacked by the Persians.¹¹⁰ At Plataea, the Aiantides again distinguished themselves. Amongst the 52 Athenian casualties that were reported,¹¹¹ all of them were from the tribe. For this reason, they were chosen to carry an annual sacrifice to the Σφραγίδες nymphs on Mount Cithaeron at the expense of the πόλις.¹¹²

A second particularity of the tribe Aiantis is the span of its territory (FIGURE 37).¹¹³ Unlike in other tribes, its τριπτύες are contiguous, forming a north-east block (except for the deme of Phaleron).¹¹⁴ Furthermore, it never had more than six demes,¹¹⁵ half of which are conveniently closely connected to Ajax in some ways. The inland τριπτύς only comprises the deme of Aphidna, which by coincidence is where Callimachus (the polemarch who died in battle at Marathon) was from, while the coast τριπτύς formed by the old Marathonian Tetrapolis,¹¹⁶ preserves a pre-Cleisthenian structure.¹¹⁷ Finally, its main city deme, Phaleron (Athens' main port until c. 480) was a place with strong Salaminian connections.¹¹⁸

Thirdly, Ajax does not figure in a group of statues representing the ten eponymous heroes, which happens to be our earliest attestation of them. The monument, described at length by Pausanias,¹¹⁹ was

¹⁰⁷ Hdt. VI 109-10.

¹⁰⁸ Hdt. VI 114. Pausanias, reading from a casualty list at the *Soros* (the grave of the fallen Athenian), reports that 192 men fell at Marathon (VI 117).

¹⁰⁹ It must be noted that the monument was not rebuilt after 479, and that no extant source refers to it. See Raubitschek 1940: 56.

¹¹⁰ The Νίκη of Callimachus (see p. 164n96). We are only able to tell that Callimachus belonged to the tribe Aiantis because we know he was from Aphidna.

¹¹¹ Plutarch quotes Clidemos here (*FgrHist* 323), but Herodotus gives the same number in IX 70.5. The latter does not mention the demotic of the fallen Athenians, probably because he is listing the Greek casualties by πόλις. Several attempts have been made at explaining this strange coincidence. Wilamowitz suggests that Clidemos is biased because he is himself from the tribe Aiantis (1893: 1286, n° 36); others suppose some sort of misunderstanding (Hignett 1963: 14; Lazenby 1993: 246). Harding (2008: 106), following Jacoby suggests that 'Kleidemos' emphasis upon the tribe [should be linked] to his knowledge of their annual sacrifice to the Sphragis [*sic*] nymphs.

¹¹² The cult is both attested by Plutarch (*Arist.* 11.3-4; *Quaest. conv.* I 10.628E), and by Pausanias (IX 3.9). Its location was closed to Marathon. Larson (2001: 19-20) suggests that their name, which derives from σφραγίς, refers to the authority of their oracles. Iversen (2007: 383) rightly suspects that the tradition has been fabricated by the Athenians after the Second Persian War.

¹¹³ See Polignac 2007: 115-6.

¹¹⁴ Lewis (1963: 36) convincingly argues against the view that the solid block formed by the τριπτύες of the tribe Aiantis is a sign of Pisistratid influence. However, the supposed randomness of the τριπτύες repartitions does not solve the problem either. On τριπτύες, see Rhodes 1971.

¹¹⁵ Lewis 1963: 30. All the other tribes are composed of between eleven and twenty-one demes.

¹¹⁶ It was composed of the following four πόλεις: Marathon, Trikorynthos, Oinoie, and Probalinthos, but Probalinthos was part of the tribe *Pandionis* (Lambert 2000: 43).

¹¹⁷ It was apparently part of the *Cecropian dodecapolis* (Philoch. *FgrHist* 328 fr. 94).

¹¹⁸ For instance, the Salaminian cult of Athena Sciras had been established at Phaleron, and the γένος of the *Salaminioi* was in charge of it (Polignac 2007: 118).

¹¹⁹ Paus. X 10.1-2.

erected in Delphi as a dedication to Apollo built from the tithe of the spoils from Marathon.¹²⁰ He explains that statues of Athena, Apollo, and Miltiades stood on a base, flanked by statues of the ten eponymous heroes, which he is able to list, as their name was apparently inscribed on the base of the monument. In so doing, however, he himself notes that three of the heroes present in the composition are not regular eponyms:

ὁ δὲ Μελάνθου Κόδρος καὶ Θησεὺς καὶ †Φιλεύς† [ἔστιν], οὗτοι δὲ οὐκέτι τῶν
ἐπωνύμων εἰσί. τοὺς μὲν δὴ κατεileγμένους Φειδίας ἐποίησε, καὶ ἀληθεῖ λόγῳ
δεκάτη καὶ οὗτοι τῆς μάχης εἰσίν.

Thus, we find Theseus, Codrus, and Phileus (Philaïos or Neleus?), instead of Hippothoon, Oineus, and Ajax.¹²¹ This anomaly is sufficiently striking for Pausanias to remark upon it, though he unfortunately does not provide any explanation.

The monument poses several intricate problems.¹²² Firstly, Pausanias' description is slightly incoherent, as he says that the monument is made from the tithe of Marathon (which implies that the monument was erected shortly after the victory), but that the sculptor was Phidias (which suggests a date in the 460s).¹²³ Secondly, the remains of a 'Marathonian base' have indeed been identified in Delphi, but at a different location than expected. It has been found next to the Athenian treasury, south-west of the sacred path [= Marathonian base T(reasury)],¹²⁴ while the one described by Pausanias is supposed to be at the entrance of the sanctuary, south-east of the sacred path, [= Marathon base P(ausania)]. This duplication is startling, especially as the remains of the Marathonian base T, discovered by French

¹²⁰ The nature of the dedication is assumed on the basis that Miltiades is present on the monument, and that Pausanias mentions that it was made from the tithe of a battle (which he calls *the* battle). See Kron 1976: 218; Kebric 1983; Hocker/Schneider 1993: 39-50; Krumeich 1997: 95-6. As Amandry explains, 'il faut, en effet, comprendre que les Athéniens ont dédié, non pas la meilleure part du butin, mais un monument à titre de (ou en guise de, ou pour tenir lieu de) prémices du butin. Il en va de même de δεκάτη dans la plupart des dédicaces (1998: 83).

¹²¹ The three best manuscripts (Vn, Pc, and Fb) transmit Φιλεύς who is an otherwise unattested hero. The reading Φιλεύς is a corruption of Φιλαῖος. Φιλαῖος (Ajax's son and the ancestor of the Philaidae) is a conjecture first made by Curtius, while Νελεύς (the ancestor of the Pisistratidae) has been proposed by Goettling. See Vidal-Naquet 1981: 382.

¹²² The whole dossier is commonly referred to as 'l'énigme de Delphes' (Vidal-Naquet 1981: 381).

¹²³ Given the prominence of Miltiades in the composition, the monument is thought to have been supervised by his son Cimon. This would thus give us a *terminus post quem* of 461 BCE, as this is the date of his ostracism.

¹²⁴ The base has been identified by the inscription that can still be read on it (Amandry 1998: 76). 'The plan of the Treasury takes the base into account from the earliest phase of construction. The two structures are thus integral, and both must date after the battle of Marathon in 490. With this archaeological datum, the chronology of the Athenian treasury must be considered settled. Pausanias was correct' (Neer 2004: 67).

archaeologists, also appear to have been used to display statues of the *eponymoi*.¹²⁵ Similarly puzzling is Pausanias' silence on the existence of a second base.¹²⁶

No matter what the relationship between the two bases is, Ajax's absence from the monument is very perplexing,¹²⁷ especially as it may have been 'the first large-scale representation of the Tribal Heroes ever.'¹²⁸ For this reason, the attempts at solving the problem that have been made usually consist in correcting Pausanias' text,¹²⁹ or in finding a way to read the three missing eponyms into the monument by considering them as 'éponymes de substitutions.'¹³⁰ Several explanations of this type have been suggested, none of which is satisfactory,¹³¹ for no substitution theory truly succeeds in finding a good enough reason for Ajax's and Oineus' (the eponym of Miltiades' tribe) absence from the monument.¹³² Finally, Neer holds the view that one monument is a public dedication (the Marathonian base T), while the other is a private one offered by Cimon (the Marathonian base P). His theory is very appealing, and he rightly points out that it is unimaginable that any tribe which fought at Marathon would consent either (i) to its hero being omitted from the honorary monument or (ii) to his removal from that monument or (iii) to his representation on that monument being expressed in some 'symbolic' form. However, he fails to explain why Cimon would have chosen to omit his own ancestor (Ajax) as well as the eponym of his own tribe (Oineus) from the monument.

Kearns tentatively infers from the absence of three official eponyms on the Marathonian base (P) that Ajax, Oineus, and Hippothoon perhaps did not originally belong to the ten *eponymoi*, and accordingly that their presence in the group may probably only date from after the Persian Wars

¹²⁵ Amandry 1998: 84. Only the holes that served to fix the statues to the base remain. Amandry argues that these statues represented the ten eponymous heroes on the ground that the base appears to have originally displayed ten statues, before three others (which would then be those of Antigone, Demetrios, and Ptolemeus) were added, when the number of Athenian tribal heroes was increased to thirteen. These additional statues would perfectly mirror what happened to the other 'Marathon base', according to Pausanias.

¹²⁶ Paus. X 11.5.

¹²⁷ Pace Vidal-Naquet 1981.

¹²⁸ Knauer 1992: 384n32.

¹²⁹ Curtius 1899 [= 1866]. Curtius infers that Pausanias' text contains an important lacuna, and consequently that the monument originally had sixteen statues (instead of thirteen). Although a scenario that posits such a heavy intervention on the text is not receivable, Curtius, nonetheless, draws attention to the main difficulty: how could the tribe Aiantis be absent from a Marathonian monument, when its members enjoyed special privilege for their heroic behaviour during the battle?

¹³⁰ Vidal-Naquet 1981: 407.

¹³¹ For good discussions on the base(s), see Vidal-Naquet 1981; Neer 2004: 65-7; Jung 2006: 96-108.

¹³² Götting 1854; Mommsen 1889; Petersen 1900; Pomtow 1924: 1214-8; Berger 1958; Vidal-Naquet 1981.

(following a revision/updating/fixing of the tribal heroes?).¹³³ This is obviously a very controversial assumption to make, since it is always assumed that the ten tribes were established by Cleisthenes once and for all, but it is worth noting that ‘not much of our evidence for the tribal affiliation of demes is earlier than 450, although some of our evidence for the affiliation of *τριττύες* is earlier’ and that there is ‘some reason to believe that some *τριττύες* were renamed between 450 and 420.’¹³⁴ At any rate, the Marathonian base(s) predates our earliest epigraphical attestations of the name Aiantis. In his notes, Griffiths remarks that the three tribal heroes that are absent from the monument ‘have one thing in common: they represent border areas of Athenian territory. Ajax comes from Salamis, Hippothoon from Eleusis. Oineus, as a son of Dionysos and grandson of Semele indicates the Boiotian marches.’¹³⁵ Furthermore, they all had a particular role during the second Persian War: Ajax obviously at Salamis, Hippothoon at Eleusis,¹³⁶ and Oineus at Plataea (if it is right to connect him to Oinoe, towards Plataea). This means that among the ten usual eponyms, they are the ones whose absence from the Marathonian base P can be most plausibly rationalised (*i.e.* they represent liminal territories that may not have been considered to be truly Athenian at the time, even if they were not disputed by other *πόλεις*), as can their later insertion to the official eponyms (because of their role in the Persian Wars).¹³⁷

The upshot of all this is that, contrary to what is usually assumed (because it is held that the tribe Aiantis is a product of Cleisthenes’ reform), Ajax had apparently not yet been fully integrated to Athens at the beginning of the fifth century. This would tie in well with the fact that Ajax’s profile in Athens rises considerably upon Miltiades’ return to Athens, and following the Persian Wars, as we are going to see in the next section.

¹³³ Kearns 1989: 81. She mentions (n. 8) that the idea was suggested to her by Alan Griffiths, who kindly gave me his notes on the matter (in an email exchange dating from the 14th of May 2015). Kron (1976: 215-6) tries to solve the problem by supposing that the original group of statues did comprise Ajax, Hippothoon, and Oineus, and that it was modified in later times. This is far less likely, as the Athenian tribe Aiantis still existed in Pausanias’ time. Furthermore, the Περικλής, who appears to be well-informed regarding the creation of new tribes in Athens in later times, fails to account for the absence of the three eponyms on the monument.

¹³⁴ Lewis 1963: 30.

¹³⁵ Dem. LX 30.

¹³⁶ Hdt. VIII 64.

¹³⁷ It must be noted, however, that this theory is also problematic. It presents two *crucis*, as we have to explain that (i) no record would have survived, and that (ii) the members of three tribes would have accepted the plan to change their eponyms.

The Philaidae and the Persian Wars

Two other factors helped confer a new significance upon Ajax in fifth century Athens, which in turn facilitated his appropriation by the Athenians. The first factor is connected to the Philaidae, a γένος which claimed to descend directly from the hero, while the second factor stems from the Persian Wars.

The Philaidae were the members of an old aristocratic Athenian family, which can be traced up to the seventh century.¹³⁸ What is particularly interesting for our purposes is the fact that they were living far away from Attica, in the Thracian Chersonese, during the early years of democracy.¹³⁹ Under the rule of the Pisistratids, Miltiades (the Young) established himself there as a tyrant, but was forced to return to Athens around 493 BCE, as he probably feared retaliation from the Persians after the failure of the Ionian Revolt. The Athens he returned to, however, was very different from the one he had left: the tyranny had not been replaced by the old oligarchic regime that preceded it, but by an entirely new system: *isonomia*. Consequently, he had to find a new way to relate to Athens so that he could maintain the prominence of his γένος, which left him no choice but to embrace democracy. Accordingly, upon his return, his position was rather precarious. Herodotus reports that he was prosecuted because he had been a tyrant in Chersonese.¹⁴⁰ He won the trial, however, and was elected στρατηγός at the battle of Marathon, where he is believed to have been instrumental in securing the victory.¹⁴¹ Consequently, Ajax became associated with the First Persian War, as the ancestor of the victor of Marathon.¹⁴² However, he is also linked to the famous battle in virtue of the fact that many men from the tribe Aiantis who were occupying the right wing died in the fight; among them Callimachus, the polemarch. Through Ajax, the credits for the victory

¹³⁸ They also seem to have been related to Corinth through the tyrant Cypselos as well as to Aegina (Hdt. VI 35).

¹³⁹ Herodotus reports several phases in which they were exiled or willingly away: under Pisistratus, Miltiades (the *oikist*) left Athens to settle in Chersonese (Hdt. VI 34-6). His brother Cimon (the Olympic victor) is exiled at some point by Pisistratus, but manages to return to Athens under treaty (ἐωυτοῦ ὑπόσπονδος), after letting the tyrant appropriate his second Olympic victory (Hdt. VI 103).

¹⁴⁰ Hdt. VI 104.

¹⁴¹ Hdt. VI 109-11.

¹⁴² Fifth-century discourse referring to Marathon, Salamis, or Plataea for instance, tends to have an epic undertone, as they often present motifs borrowed from epic poetry. Simonides' Plataea elegy constitutes the earliest unequivocal attestation of the parallel, but, as argued in Part II: 88-93, it may already be at work in Bacchylides' *Ode* 13. Given Miltiades' Aeacid lineage, the comparison would naturally be drawn.

at Marathon could both be claimed privately (as a sign of Philaid excellence), or publicly (as a symbol of democracy).¹⁴³

However, Miltiades' success did not last. In 489 BCE, he fell into disgrace following the failure of his expedition against Paros, and died in prison leaving a debt of fifty talents behind.¹⁴⁴ Consequently, his son Cimon was in a precarious situation at the dawn of Salamis, and had to re-establish the influence of his family in Athens. Therefore, he had a great stake in the figure of Ajax: as the hero was becoming more and more Athenian, he was an ideal figure to use in order to promote his family; and restore the image of his father.¹⁴⁵ The proud aristocrat Miltiades, through his connection with Ajax, would be turned into a champion of democracy in the collective memory of the Athenians. This kind of rhetoric was all the more powerful, as Ajax had also become an emblem of the battle of Salamis.

The "Οπλων Κρίσις on Pots

In the first quarter of the fifth century, the episode of the ὀπλων κρίσις starts appearing on pots for the first time.¹⁴⁶ The scene is found on approximately ten Attic vases, mostly κύλικες,¹⁴⁷ which are all dated between 500 and 450 BCE.¹⁴⁸ Most interestingly, representations of the scene are only known within this window of time. The representation of the episode on these κύλικες appears to follow a common pattern, allowing, nonetheless, room for variation. On the outside, we consistently find the quarrel between Ajax and Odysseus on one side, and the vote on the other. The tondo shows a third scene which tends to be

¹⁴³ "The Athenian politician of the early fifth century appealed to the demos, but he did so through symbols of wealth and birthright that would have been familiar to his sixth-century ancestor. (...) By the third quarter of the century, however, the developing ideology of the Athenian masses was making the established road to a political career more problematic. The Athenians became increasingly suspicious of old symbols of aristocratic and class power, and they began to look askance at elites who seemed to prefer the company of their social peers to that of ordinary citizens" (Ober 1989: 86).

¹⁴⁴ Hdt. V 132-6.

¹⁴⁵ Neer 2004: 82. Cimon's efforts to rehabilitate his father are, for instance, apparent from the paintings he commissioned on the Stoa Poikile: one of them represented the battle of Marathon, and gave particular prominence to Miltiades (Aeschin. III 186). See Harrison 1972: 356-7; Miller 1997: 32.

¹⁴⁶ Williams 1980: 141; Spivey 1994: 47.

¹⁴⁷ Spivey (1994: 40-5) counts eleven vases, but there are in reality only ten of them listed, as the fifth one is missing. Nr. 6, however, may potentially count for two. He shows some reserve regarding the identification of the last item.

¹⁴⁸ They appear to span from c. 490 to 475, according to Spivey (1994: 47).

thematically related, but its subject varies from vase to vase.¹⁴⁹ We find the following combinations amongst the best preserved κύλικες:

1. Κύλιξ signed by the Douris painter; Vienna; *LIMC Aias* I 81¹⁵⁰
Side A: Quarrel
Side B: Vote
Tondo: Final destination of the arms¹⁵¹
2. Κύλιξ attributed to the Brygos painter; London; *LIMC Aias* I 84¹⁵²
Side A: Quarrel
Side B: Vote
Tondo: A woman being led by a man
3. Κύλιξ attributed to the Brygos painter; New York; *LIMC Aias* I 83¹⁵³
Side A: Quarrel
Side B: Vote
Tondo: Ajax's corpse drapped by a woman (Tecmessa?)
4. Κύλιξ attributed to the painter of Louvre G265; Leiden; *LIMC Aias* I 86¹⁵⁴
Side A: Vote
Side B: Result of the vote¹⁵⁵
Tondo: Vote
5. Fragments of a κύλιξ attributed to the Triptolemos painter; no *LIMC* entry¹⁵⁶
Side A: Quarrel
Side B: Vote
Tondo: Seizure of Dolon (?)
6. Fragments of a κύλιξ attributed to the Makron painter; Athens; *LIMC Aias* I 85¹⁵⁷
Side A: ?
Side B: Vote¹⁵⁸
Tondo:?

¹⁴⁹ The tondo image is clearly meant to be placed in relation to those on the sides of the κύλιξ. Interestingly, this type of vase is typically used to drink wine at the symposium. This means that the third image would reveal itself to the symposiast after the wine has been drunk. This suggests some sort of play on the interpretation of the ὅπλων κρίσις. An effect of surprise was sought, which would explain why only the third scene changes each time.

¹⁵⁰ The fragments of several κύλικες attributed to the Douris painter, and apparently depicting the ὅπλων κρίσις in the same format have been found. These are 1. Vatican 35091 2. Vatican 35092 (might be the fragments of two vases) 3. Paris, Cabinet des Médailles 675 [=ARV 428].

¹⁵¹ It either represents Odysseus receiving the arms from an attendant, or Neoptolemus receiving them from Odysseus (Spivey 1994: 44). The second interpretation is more likely.

¹⁵² British Museum E69 [=ARV 369.2].

¹⁵³ New York Metropolitan Museum, Barciss Collection L.69.11.35.

¹⁵⁴ Rijksmuseum PC75 [=ARV 416].

¹⁵⁵ Ajax is aggrieved, while someone seems to talk to him; Odysseus is wearing the armour and a second character is handing a piece of cloth to him.

¹⁵⁶ J. Paul Getty Museum 90.AE.35.

¹⁵⁷ Athens, National Museum, Acr. 315.

¹⁵⁸ The voters' name are inscribed. There are Agamemnon, Diomedes, Tydeus, Antimachos, and Pyleides.



FIGURE 38 (nr. 1 - Douris)



FIGURE 39 (nr. 3 - Brygos painter)

The first scene usually represents the *νεῖκος* (FIGURES 38 and 39).¹⁵⁹ Ajax and Odysseus are portrayed with swords in hand, ready to fight one another. Each of them is being contained by two men. Agamemnon (likely) stands in the middle; on FIGURE 38, Achilles' arms are depicted at his feet.¹⁶⁰ Ajax is perhaps on the victor's side (since he would be the stronger in this contest), in which case Odysseus is on the right. The character on the left looks like he has unsheathed his sword before the one on the right. The

¹⁵⁹ The vase by the London painter follows a different logic, while we do not know the scene that was depicted on the outside of the *κύλιξ* by the Macron painter.

¹⁶⁰ Interestingly, the arms are also represented in the tondo of this vase.

second scene is that of the vote (FIGURE 40 and 41). In each case, we see the Greek army voting. Ajax is represented aggrieved, on the far right (which is symbolically the side of the loser), while Odysseus is on the far left, but his expression varies and is harder to interpret. Athena is always present, from what we can tell. She usually stands in the middle, where the votes are cast, but the Brygos painter places her closer to Odysseus on his two extant κύλικες (FIGURE 41).

These representations are valuable for our understanding of Ajax's reception in Athens for several reasons. First of all, they identify a paradigm shift in the myth of Ajax. As we have seen, in epic poetry, the arms are awarded on the basis of the Trojans' opinion. Here, as in Pindar's accounts, they are awarded to the winner of a vote cast by the Greeks themselves.¹⁶¹ As Spivey notes,¹⁶² it is tempting to connect this change with the political climate of post-Cleisthenic Athens. Furthermore, each character – except Athena obviously – is wearing a long chiton, which is the typical 'civic' garb.¹⁶³ They are portrayed as normal citizens. The democratic dimension of the scene would, moreover, explain the later emergence of the debate between Ajax and Odysseus, instead of the quarrel,¹⁶⁴ since debating and voting were crucial to the functioning of Athenian democracy.



FIGURE 40 (nr. 1 - Douris)

¹⁶¹ The fact that Pindar may not have been the first to introduce Greek judges to the episode of the ὅπλων κρίσις does not weaken the overall argument of Part II about his take on the figure of Ajax, especially given that Athena is always presented on this series of vases, while she is absent from all three of Pindar's accounts (thereby unambiguously making Ajax a victim who bears no responsibility in what is happening to him).

¹⁶² Spivey 1994: 49-51.

¹⁶³ Spivey 1994: 48. On one of the fragments by Douris, the characters are even wearing their long chiton on top of their armour, which efficiently draws attention to its significance.

¹⁶⁴ The quarrel itself could probably still feature, but its nature would change, for the insertion of the debate implies that Ajax is accepting the terms of the arbitration, while otherwise these are imposed on him.



FIGURE 41 (nr. 2 Brygos)

At any rate, it is clear that we move from an epic story in which Athena (ἄγελειν) orchestrates Ajax's defeat in order to punish him for his ὑβρις,¹⁶⁵ to one in which the quarrel over the arms is settled through a democratic vote. As a result, the focus of the story shifts. In the epic version, I have argued that the question of Ajax's piety is central, and that his valour is not fundamentally challenged. Rather, his figure problematises the agency of heroes and their relationship to gods. With the arms awarded after a vote cast by peers, the story takes on a whole new dimension, especially if one admits its democratic resonance. The issue then becomes whether or not Ajax's defeat is the result of his own failure.¹⁶⁶ When the sympathies lie with Ajax, the vote will be presented as flawed, either because Odysseus has manipulated the voters or because there is cheating involved. He is thus presented as a victim. When they lie with Odysseus, Ajax loses because he lacks some kind of essential quality: either his merit is challenged (and it turns out that he is not good enough), or he is not skilled enough at debating.

This leads to my second point. Not only does this series of vases show a paradigm shift in the treatment of the award of Achilles' arms, but also, through the variations each individual item displays, they reveal the ambivalence the figure of Ajax then takes on. On FIGURE 40, Athena stands in the centre of the scene. She looks like she is presiding over the vote. However, she does not seem to be interfering, as she does not look into the eyes of the voters; rather she is trying to make eye contact with Odysseus, who is the farthest figure on the left. Her right arm is stretched horizontally, as she makes a sign with the hand directed at Odysseus. The gesture is probably suggesting that he calm down and wait. In any case, her body

¹⁶⁵ See Part I: 61ff.

¹⁶⁶ For instance, in Pindar's accounts or in the version of the judgement Teucer gives in *Aj.* 1135.



Detail 1 (Odysseus) of FIGURE 40



Detail 2 (Ajax) of FIGURE 40

language strikes us as rather protective, maybe even reassuring. Odysseus is looking very tense indeed (detail 1 of FIGURE 40). His two hands are wide open as he watches the result of the vote in shock.¹⁶⁷ The disparity between the number of ψῆφοι that are on his side and those on Ajax's is great.¹⁶⁸ He is clearly winning, although he does not look very happy about it. By turning her head towards Odysseus, Athena turns it quite dramatically away from Ajax. Furthermore, the spear that she holds vertically with her left hand accentuates the distance between them. But the son of Telamon is not to be outdone. He is himself turning his back on the whole voting scene, and thus the only character standing with his back to Athena (detail 2 of FIGURE 40). Most interestingly, the tondo of the κύλιξ represents Odysseus handing in the arms to Neoptolemus, their true owner, given that he is the son of Achilles (FIGURE 42). Therefore, this representation of the ὅπλων κρίσις suggests that the vote is fair, and that Odysseus is blameless. He is portrayed with an expression of surprise, to say the least, at the result of the vote, which implies that he has not been scheming to obtain it, since it is represented as unexpected to him. Moreover, the fact that he gives back the arms to Neoptolemus presents him in his best light, as it absolves him from any suspicion of greed.

¹⁶⁷ *Contra* Williams (1980: 140) who believes that Odysseus 'raises his hand in joy'. I fail to see how Odysseus' expression can be interpreted as joyful.

¹⁶⁸ The vote is always represented as open on these vases (probably because it is important to see the pebbles to interpret the image as a voting scene). Pinney and Hamilton (1982) think that an amphora from the Syleus painter (Kansas City 30.13) depicts secret voting in connection with Achilles' arms for the first time. They think that the scene is inspired by Pindar *Nem.* 8.25-6; a debatable point. Nonetheless, they are surely right to link the image with representations of the ὅπλων κρίσις.



FIGURE 42 (nr. 1 Douris - tondo)

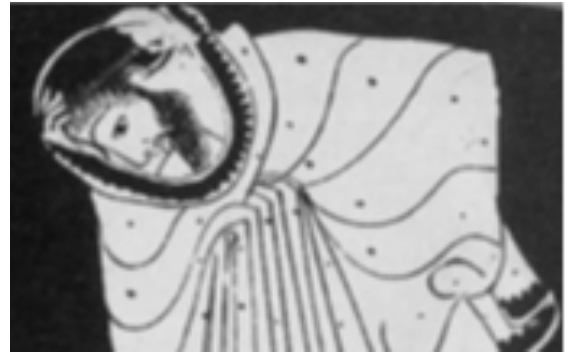
By contrast, FIGURE 41 presents another interpretation of the myth. This time, Athena stands more on the left, on Odysseus' side, and she is interfering with the vote.¹⁶⁹ She seems to be addressing the two men who are about to cast their vote. In any case, she is clearly making eye contact, and they are also looking at her. Their posture suggests that they were interrupted as they were about to cast their vote, and accordingly have stopped to listen to Athena. The disparity between the number of ψῆφοι on each side is less drastic than on FIGURE 40.¹⁷⁰ Odysseus has a completely different expression (detail 1 of FIGURE 41). He is following the vote from the far left, his upper body eagerly leaning towards the table on which

¹⁶⁹ From what we can see, this seems also to be the case on item nr. 6 (from the list above), where she is talking to the two men on her left. She is equally standing on the left on one of the fragments attributed to a vase by Douris (Vatican 35092).

¹⁷⁰ FIGURE 40 is the only depiction, from what we can tell, of the scene with such a strong disparity between the numbers of ψῆφοι on each side.



Detail 1 (Odysseus) of FIGURE 41



Detail 2 (Ajax) of FIGURE 41

the votes are cast. It seems that he is just checking that everything goes according to plan. His right hand is on his hip, however, which gives him a self-satisfied and nonchalant air. This contrasts with Ajax, who is represented weighted down by the burden of his disappointment. He is holding his head with one hand, as it bends towards the ground (detail 2 of FIGURE 41). He seems completely defeated, so much that he does not even notice the man on his left who is looking towards him. The man is just about to vote, his right arm is already stretched with his $\psi\eta\phi\omicron\varsigma$ in hand; his right leg shows that he was walking towards the centre, but he has interrupted his movement to look back at Ajax, as if in doubt. All of this suggests that the vote is represented as flawed, or at least we are meant to perceive that something is not quite right about it. This interpretation appears to be corroborated by the choice of the subject for the interior of the vase. It shows a man holding a woman firmly by the wrist, as he leads her away (FIGURE 43). He is wearing a $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\tau\alpha\sigma\omicron\varsigma$, the travelling hat, which is reminiscent of the typical Odyssean iconography. The interpretation of the scene is contested,¹⁷¹ but it probably represents Odysseus whisking Briseis away (from Achilles' hut supposedly). If this is correct, we would have a scene inside the $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\lambda\iota\varsigma$ that

¹⁷¹ The scene has surprisingly been interpreted by some as representing either Odysseus and Chriseis or Tecmessa and Ajax himself (or Teucer), see Spivey 1994: 45 ; William 1980: 139. This is maybe due to the old and mistaken idea that pots illustrate poems. In the *Iliad*, Briseis is taken away by two messengers, while here the woman is led away by only one character (who is most likely Odysseus). There are several parallels to the scene (British Museum E 76 [=Beazley 204400]); Mus. Naz. Etrusco Di Villa Giulia 121110 [=Beazley 13363]; Louvre G 146 [=Beazley 204682]).

unambiguously presents the ὅπλων κρίσις as unfair to Ajax, by drawing an unequivocal parallel between Achilles and Ajax, as they are being deprived from their γέρας.¹⁷²



FIGURE 43 (nr. 2 - Brygos tondo)

¹⁷² There is a second vase by the Brygos painter, which also seems to be more favourable to Ajax (item nr. 2 on the list above). The scene of the quarrel does not show any drastic change, unlike the voting scene where Athena is standing on the far left, next to Odysseus. The vote seems to be over and we can count fifteen ψῆφοι for Odysseus and 14 for Ajax. Odysseus (whose lower body only remains) seems to be about to receive the arms. The tondo shows Ajax, dead, a sword piercing his flanks. A woman (Tecmessa or another concubine) is putting a veil on his corpse (for a discussion of the identification of the scene, see Shefton 1973). The main difference between this vase and the other one by the Brygos painter is not related to the overall interpretation of the ὅπλων κρίσις, rather it is a question of focus. Here the emphasis is placed on the result of the events. The vote is already over, and Ajax already dead.

Aeschylean Ajax

Only a few fragments remain from three plays whose subject matter revolves – so far as we can tell – around Ajax's *gesta*.¹⁷³ These plays are usually thought to have originally belonged to a single tetralogy,¹⁷⁴ as their themes look like they are intertwined.¹⁷⁵ In this section, I will first review what can be conjectured regarding the content of the plays from extant evidence. Particular attention will be paid to the *Thracian Women*, as I will contend that the standard understanding of the play fails to account for many curious aspects linked to the fragments. I will tentatively suggest that the play was not a tragedy, but a satyr play, which will then prompt some consideration about the content of the tetralogy. The discussion will include a brief examination of Aeschylus' political stance, as I will argue that his views may have influenced his portrayal of Ajax. We shall also consider how this Aeschylean Ajax relates to his epic and Pindaric counterparts.

Three extant titles appear to be related to Ajax: *The Award of the Arms*,¹⁷⁶ *Thracian Women*, and *Women of Salamis*.¹⁷⁷ According to the *communis opinio*, the tetralogy began with Ajax's defeat in the judgment of Achilles' arms (*The Award of the Arms*), followed by Ajax's suicide (*Thracian Women*), and then perhaps by the story of Teucer who was sent into exile upon his return to Salamis by his own father for failing to bring back Eurysaces and/or Ajax's remains (*Women of Salamis*).¹⁷⁸ A satyr play which was thematically connected to the trilogy would have ended it. This scenario, however, is far from certain. The idea of the tetralogy is based on our knowledge that Aeschylus wrote several tetralogies,¹⁷⁹ and on the fact

¹⁷³ Sommerstein 2008.

¹⁷⁴ This is assumed, for instance, by Mette (1963: 122); Ferrari (1982: 154); March (1991-3: 4); Sommerstein (1996: 57). In their scenario, the fourth play would be an unidentified satyr play.

¹⁷⁵ On the difference between the terms *τριλογία*, *τετραλογία*, *διδασκαλία*, see Gantz 1979. Following his compelling arguments, I use the word tetralogy 'restricted to what was seemingly its original sense, *ie.* a set of four plays presented together and related in plot (with appropriate allowance for the satyric segment)' (p. 293).

¹⁷⁶ The title is well attested in the indirect tradition. However, it must be noted that in the *Odyssey* (λ 546) as well as in *TrGF* 451q10 the word used for Achilles' arms in the context of the judgement is not *ἔπλα* but *τεύχεα*. As for Pindar, he only uses *ἔπλα* (*Nem.* 7.25; *Nem.* 8.27).

¹⁷⁷ On this group, see Welcker 1824: 438-40; Hermann 1970: 362-87 [= *Opusc.* vii (1839)]; Wecklein 1880: 624-9; Mette 1963: 121-7; Ferrari 1982: 141-9.

¹⁷⁸ The content of the *Women of Salamis* is the least sure of the three plays. The hypothesis is based on (i) the name of the play, and (ii) the fact that we know that Aeschylus wrote a play in which Teucer was the protagonist (*Ran.* 1040). Furthermore, a fragment from a chorus, transmitted by P. Oxy. 2256, fr. 71 [= *TrGF* 451q], which Mette (1959: 106-7) attributes to this play alludes to Ajax's death. Although Snell, and more recently Sommerstein, dismiss his conjecture, I am inclined to follow Mette all the same, as I think that it ties well into a play which supposedly focus on Teucer, who was held responsible for Ajax's suicide.

¹⁷⁹ We almost certainly know of four productions in which the plays were narratively linked, against one in which they definitely were not connected. This is the production of 472 BCE in which Aeschylus competed with the *Persae*.

that those titles look like they could form a coherent series.¹⁸⁰ Even if we accept the idea of a tetralogy, the plays that constituted it could be arranged differently. It is equally possible that it started with a play focusing on events that led to *The Award of the Arms*, such as Achilles' death, or that instead of the *Thracian Women* another play followed *The Award of the Arms*.¹⁸¹

The Award of the Arms

But let us have a closer look at the evidence. The fragments of *The Award of the Arms* permit us to deduce confidently two components of the plot: it featured a quarrel as well as a judgement.¹⁸² A scholion to Aristophanes' *Acharnians* indirectly implies that the chorus was in all likelihood composed of the Nereids, with Thetis occupying the position of the corypheus. As a matter of fact, we may infer from the scholion that they were physically present on stage during the play, since they are said to have come out of the sea (ἐξελθούσας):

ὁ στίχος ἀπὸ δράματος Αἰσχύλου Ὅπλων κρίσεως οὕτως ἐπιγραμμένου, ἐν
ὧι ἐπικαλεῖται τὰς Νηρείδας τις ἐξελθούσας κρίναι πρὸς τὴν Θέτιν λέγων:
– δέσποινα πεντήκοντα Νηρήϊδων κορᾶν¹⁸³

At first, one might be tempted to infer from the scholion that the Nereids were cast in the role of judges, but this is in reality not necessarily the case.¹⁸⁴ Ἐπικαλεῖν means 'to summon, to invoke' in the active only, while ἐπικαλεῖσθαι (+infinitive) is commonly used in the sense of 'to appeal to someone (usually a god) to do something'.¹⁸⁵ Accordingly, the scholiast only means that at some point in the play someone asked the

¹⁸⁰ The Suda credits Aeschylus with 90 plays, but the medieval catalogue lists only 73 titles, and at least nine more were known to ancient scholars' (Lloyd 2007: 1). P. Oxy. 2256, first edited by Lobel (1952) confirms the existence of two tetralogies: one about Oedipus (*Laius, Oedipus, Seven Against Thebes, Sphinx*), and one about the Danaids (*The Suppliants, The Egyptians, The Danaids, Amyclone*). Welcker (1824) was the first scholar to attempt to identify possible tetralogies in the corpus of Aeschylus' plays. He has been followed by Mette (1959), a former student of Wilamowitz, who groups Aeschylus' fragments according to the tetralogy he believes they belonged to. Recently, Sommerstein (2008) has abandoned this arrangement in the new Loeb edition.

¹⁸¹ As Gantz (1980: 149) rightly suggests the tetralogy could have started with the episode of Achilles' death and Ajax's retrieving of his body.

¹⁸² It should not necessarily be inferred from this that there was a debate or a competition between Odysseus and Ajax in the play. By quarrel, I mean the fact that Ajax becomes angry with Odysseus for claiming the arms for himself, and, by judgement, I refer to the process of deciding who is going to be awarded the arms (which does not necessarily mean that a debate took place).

¹⁸³ TrGF 174 from Σ Ar. Ach. 883.

¹⁸⁴ Williams (1980: 142) notices it, although he assigns the lines to Odysseus. I would rather expect Ajax to have pronounced them: who other than Thetis and her sisters would be perceived by the hero as ideal judges, since one of the main reasons why he believes he deserves the arms is that he retrieved Achilles' body. Moreover, since Ajax is always presented as being confident that he stands on the side of justice when claiming the arms, it seems logical that he would expect goddesses to be more objective judges than human beings. Welcker (1839: 38) even argues that Thetis was only summoned but did not come, or that she came as a witness. Foley (2003: 24) gives three possibilities with equal degrees of plausibility regarding the chorus' identity: foreign women, Nereids, or soldiers.

¹⁸⁵ Williams (1980: 142) also understands these lines in this manner, but he conjectures that the character who appealed to the Nereids was Odysseus and not Ajax.

Nereids to judge the matter; not that they inevitably did so.¹⁸⁶ One may object that this interpretation creates a difficulty, as we would still need to have judges (probably men from the Achaean army) on stage in addition to the chorus of Nereids.¹⁸⁷ This objection can easily be dismissed. The judges ought not to be present on stage, as their decision may have been reported by a messenger; but they could also simply have formed a secondary chorus, like that of Athenian judges in the *Eumenides*.¹⁸⁸

The alternative according to which the Nereids would have been cast in the role of the judges is impossible for several reasons.¹⁸⁹ Firstly, it is clear from what we know of earlier versions of the episode that the dispute is judged and settled by mortals. In early Greek hexameter poetry, the decision is taken after over-hearing a discussion between Trojan women (*Ilias Parva*), or on the basis of the judgments of some Trojan prisoners (unidentified early Greek hexametric poem, *Odyssey*).¹⁹⁰ This is a fundamental *datum* in the story, as it enables Athena to step in and manipulate the verdict.¹⁹¹ The goddess influences the judgement by assuming the appearance of a Trojan, and then speaking on his/her behalf, a freedom of action which would be unthinkable with the Nereids as judges, since they also are goddesses. In the version of the myth given by Pindar, the cause of Ajax's defeat is different: he loses because of the fallibility of the Greek judges (instead of Athena's agency). This scenario would be equally problematic, as it implies that the Nereids would have been persuaded or even deceived by Odysseus. It would surely be inappropriate for goddesses to be cast in the role of partial judges.¹⁹² Secondly, even if the Nereids were the judges, one would expect them to be on Ajax's side rather than on Odysseus', since it is the former rather than the latter who retrieves the corpse of Thetis' only son, according to tradition.¹⁹³ Finally, it must be noted that in Pacuvius' *Armorum Iudicium*, which is believed to be modelled on Aeschylus' play,¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁶ March (1991-3: 5-7) also rejects the possibility of having the Nereids cast as judges in the awarding of the arms. She does so mainly on the ground that the depictions of the ἑπλών κρίσις on pots always represent the Greek army voting.

¹⁸⁷ Carrière 1977: 73.

¹⁸⁸ The secondary chorus remains silent in the *Eumenides*, but their presence on stage is made certain by the other characters of the play who talk to them (for instance, Athena addresses them at ll. 679-90, 742-3), and mention the votes they cast (over ll. 710-43). On the possibility of a second chorus in the play, see Garvie 1969: 193.

¹⁸⁹ Pace Hadjicosti 2007: 52-54.

¹⁹⁰ See Part I: 58-61.

¹⁹¹ Athena has a central role in Ajax's *gesta*, as she plays the part of the main antagonist. The hostility she bears towards the hero is the cause of his downfall. See Part I: 51-8. I doubt too that it is at all likely that Athena would have intervened with Nereid judges.

¹⁹² Hadjicosti (2007: 55) rightly notes the problem, but then ignores it.

¹⁹³ March (1991-3: 5-7) also dismisses this possibility, mainly on the ground that representations of the judgement of the arms, which start appearing in the fifth century, always depict the Greek army voting.

¹⁹⁴ Warmington 1936: 172.

Agamemnon sets the contest for Achilles' arms (fr. 31-2), and selects the judges following on Athena's or Nestor's suggestion, thus picking up judges who certainly cannot be goddesses.¹⁹⁵

The introduction of the Nereids into the plot of *The Award of the Arms* is a choice which probably stems from tragic conventions that make a chorus necessary, but its appropriateness does not depend on whether or not the goddesses played an active role in the plot. In fact, no extant tradition suggests that they had a hand in determining the winner of the arms. Thetis is mentioned by Odysseus in the *Nekyia*, but only as the organiser of the competition, not as the judge presiding over it.¹⁹⁶ This is perfectly in line with mythological data: the episode of the *ὀπλων κρίσις* traditionally takes place during the funeral games in honour of Achilles, at the occasion of which the hero was famously mourned by the goddesses. Consequently, it is likely that the arms were awarded following a vote by Achaeans judges, but that the Nereids formed nonetheless the main chorus of the play.

We do not know if an actual debate between Ajax and Odysseus took place or not in the play.¹⁹⁷ As noted in Parts I and II, none is attested in any earlier extant work, and I would be rather inclined to believe that it did not feature in Aeschylus' version either.¹⁹⁸ At any rate, the episode is systematically articulated around a *νείκος* on contemporary pots.¹⁹⁹ By this, I mean Odysseus' unexpected claim which leads to an altercation with Ajax. It is during this first constituent part forming the episode of *The Award of the Arms* that Odysseus most probably used his rhetorical skills (and lies in some versions) to convince the Greeks of the legitimacy of his claim, while Ajax, outraged, remained mostly *ἄγλωσσος*.

¹⁹⁵ Warmington (1936: 175) proposes Athena, while Ribbeck (1871: 42) suggests Nestor. It might also be Athena having assumed Nestor's appearance.

¹⁹⁶ Ἐθηκε δὲ πότνια μήτηρ (λ 546). In epic poetry, there are no proper judges, but the decision is based on the opinion of some Trojans – and, above all, on what Athena says. See Part I: 63-5.

¹⁹⁷ By a debate, I mean a situation similar to what we have in Antisthenes or Ovid, in which the arms are awarded to the contestant who best defended his case. In my view, the motif of the debate implies that both Ajax and Odysseus agree on the terms of the competition, while it seems that in the previous accounts Odysseus is attributed some agency in the decision (Part I: 60-2; Part II: 129).

¹⁹⁸ It certainly did not occur in the *Aethiopis* or in the *Iliad parva* (Part I: 60-2), and the mention of the episode in the *Odyssey* (λ 543-8) presupposes a knowledge of a version in which the judges were *παῖδες Τρώων*. Pindar's accounts suggest likewise, as only the words pronounced by Odysseus are mentioned (Part II: 129). The fact that the shadow of Ajax refuses to talk to Odysseus in Hades might perhaps reflect his silent indignation upon hearing Odysseus claim the arms for himself and make a case for it. If this is the case, Pindar's *ἄγλωσσος* in *Nem.* 8, might echo Ajax's silent anger.

¹⁹⁹ See the previous section.

It is almost certain that both Ajax and Odysseus were characters in the play. *TrGF* 175 and 176 are generally believed to have been uttered by Ajax. The former is an insult targeting Odysseus, which fits very well in the context of a heated quarrel:²⁰⁰

ἀλλ' Ἀντικλείας ἄσσον ἦλθε Σίσυφος,
τῆς σῆς λέγω τοι μητρὸς ἣ σ' ἐγείνατο

In all likelihood, the altercation between the two heroes would have occurred either when Odysseus claimed what Ajax considered his due, which then forced Agamemnon (supposedly) to organise an arbitration, or afterwards when Odysseus received the arms. In the latter fragment, a truthful Ajax seems to be contrasted with a treacherous Odysseus:

ἀπλᾶ γάρ ἐστι τῆς ἀληθείας ἔπη.²⁰¹

As a matter of fact, if the truth can only be expressed in simple terms (ἀπλᾶ), the corollary implies that any discourse which is not so (that is to say διπλᾶ) is necessarily untrue. The opposition works particularly well in Greek, as the opposing pair of adjectives ἀπλός/διπλός combines in their meaning ideas of quantity (simple/ double) with notions of truth (frank/double-minded).²⁰² It is not possible to tell on the basis of this fragment whether or not an official verbal ἀγών took place in the play with a view to deciding who of Ajax or Odysseus should receive the arms.²⁰³ Nevertheless, it is highly likely that Odysseus' eloquence was decisive in winning the judges over. It is, however, important to keep in mind that the paradigm of the stupid Ajax, which we see fully realised in Antisthenes' Ajax,²⁰⁴ had not yet been crystallised.²⁰⁵

Finally, *TrGF* 177 indicates that the suicide of Ajax was at least foreshadowed in the play:

²⁰⁰ Interestingly, the most representative moments of the ὀπλων κρίσις for painters are that of the νεῖκος (when Ajax and Odysseus are about to come to blows), and that of the vote, which logically comes afterward in the narrative (see section above). I am unsure whether these images can be connected to a first representation of the play. Döhle (1967), followed by West (2000: 340-1), argues that the influence of the *Myrmidons* can be seen on representations of Achilles in the Πρεσβεία dating from c. 490, but it is rather early. On the Πρεσβεία on pots, see Part III: 145-6. It may be relevant for our purpose that Achilles and Ajax (in the trial, not the νεῖκος) are depicted with precisely the same expression in these two scenes. In the case of Achilles, it is usually understood that he is represented sulking, and remaining silent (as in the play). Consequently, the manner in which Ajax is drawn on this series of pots probably refers to the fact that he was traditionally expected to respond to the trial with a sullen and taciturn mood.

²⁰¹ *Nem.* 8 constitutes a striking parallel. Ajax's silence in the Νεκρία as well, even though the context is slightly different.

²⁰² This kind of rhetoric is typical of earlier representations of Ajax (for instance, *Nem.* 8.23-34). In the Νεκρία (λ. 563-4), the silence that he addresses to Odysseus by way of answer is the epitome of ἀπλότης.

²⁰³ *Pace* Hadjicosti 2007: 55.

²⁰⁴ See pp. 203-6.

²⁰⁵ The portrayal of Ajax as a 'sore loser' (instead of a victim) follows from the paradigm of the 'stupid Ajax', and thus equally constitutes a later development. The idea is explicitly expressed in Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 628A, when Marcus asks his friends why the chorus of the tribe Aiantis would never come last in a competition.

τί γὰρ καλὸν ζῆν βίο<το>ν ὅς λύπας φέρει.

The line was probably pronounced shortly after the arms were awarded to Odysseus, and suggests that Ajax's defeat would lead to his death. One may wonder if Ajax's suicide should not be included in the plot as well, as is the case in Pacuvius' *Armorum Iudicium*. We shall come back to this proposition after we have discussed the fragments of the *Thracian Women* and the *Women of Salamis*.

Thracian Women

The only thing we know for certain about the plot of *Thracian Women* is that it revolves around Ajax's suicide.²⁰⁶ The title of the play is quite puzzling.²⁰⁷ While it can be confidently inferred from this title that the chorus of the play is composed of Thracian women,²⁰⁸ no extant source relates an episode in which Ajax is involved with some Thracians, thus making Aeschylus' choice intriguing.²⁰⁹ In fact, hardly any Thracian warriors are even present at Troy. Apart from Rhesus and his men, who are killed soon after their introduction in the poem,²¹⁰ the only Thracian hero mentioned among the ranks of the Trojans is Acamas, a secondary character who does not stay very long on the battlefield either.²¹¹

The female gender of the chorus is even more problematic. According to a scholion on Sophocles' *Ajax* 134, they are prisoners of war (αἰχμάλωτοι), which makes sense, as any woman present in the Greek camp at Troy is bound to be a captive. However, their Thracian origin remains inexplicable. In the Trojan topography of Troy, Thrace traditionally contrasts with Troad, precisely because it is depicted as a safe place which has remained untouched by war; it is naturally protected by the sea which separates its

²⁰⁶ *TrGF* 83, see also fr. 292c1, c2, d Mette.

²⁰⁷ Interestingly, Aeschylus appears to have given an epic colour to the title of his play. The Attic Greek form would be Θραῦττα, which is the form used by Cratinus (fr. 71 PCG).

²⁰⁸ Cf. also Σ *Aj.* 134.

²⁰⁹ There is one exception to this. In Dictys Cretensis' *Ephemeris belli Troiani* (*FgrHist* 49 fr. 6), Ajax attacks Thracian Chersonese, and concludes a truce with Polymestor, the king of the region, in exchange of a year's supply of grain for the entire army, amongst other things. Thucydides (I 11) explains that the Greeks had to resort to farming in order to survive, an activity he locates in the Thracian Chersonese. 'Another version makes Akamas and Antimachos leaders in cultivating the Chersonese [Σ Thuc. I 11.1.11]; in itself it is late testimony, but it is most likely to originate from a time when Athenian presence in the Chersonese was topical, that is, at the time of the expedition of the elder Miltiades (whose family retained interests there until 493)' (Kearns 1989: 89). The degree to which Dictys tends to invent his stories (rather than taking them from sources unknown to us) is unclear. The narrator of the *Ephemeris* claims to have been one of Idomeneus' followers at Troy. The literary game consists in being 'truer' than Homer, a set-up similar to that of Philostratus' *Heroica*, for instance, in which the events that truly take place are recounted by the ghost of Protesilaus (who saw everything, since he was the first Greek to die).

²¹⁰ Moreover, Dolon notes that he has recently arrived to join the Trojans' side in Υ: 433-6.

²¹¹ Acamas is mentioned in B 844, E 462, and lastly in Z 5-12 which is the passage that recounts his death. It has even been argued that the insertions of Thracians in the poem is a later addition (Shapiro 1983: 109).

shore from that of Troad. Part of *Hecuba's* plot is built on the premise that Thrace is a safe place for the Trojans, since the story goes that Priam has sent his youngest son, Polydorus, to the court of Polymestor in the Thracian Chersonese so that he could avoid the war, and thus survive. It is true that the *Hecuba* is set in the Chersonese, but the story takes place after the fall of Troy, and no Thracian captives feature in it anyway, as Polymestor has then become an ally of the Greeks. The presence of Thracian allies fighting on the side of the Trojans is understandable, but it is inconceivable that they would have brought their wives, mothers, and sisters with them. Furthermore, Briseis, Chryseis, Tecmessa or any known Greek captives from tradition always come from the region surrounding Troy. None of them is ever reported to be from Thrace.²¹²

The scholion mentioned above stresses the pertinence of Sophocles' decision regarding the identity of his chorus in the *Ajax*. It argues that no better choice could have been made, by showing how the alternative choice (a chorus composed of Achaeans) would not have worked. Only then does it allude to the chorus of the *Thracian Women*. The remark the scholiast makes implies that he is not taking into account the possibility that Sophocles could also have considered featuring a chorus of captives in his play:

πιθανῶς αὐτῷ ὁ χορὸς ἐσκεύασται ἀπὸ Σαλαμινίων ἀνδρῶν τοῦτο μὲν παρρησιαζομένων ὡς ἐλευθέρων τοῦτο δὲ συμπαθῶς ἐχόντων ὡς πολιτῶν καὶ αἰδημόνως λαλούντων ὡς ὑπηκόων· οὐ γὰρ πιθανὸν ἐξ Ἀχαιῶν εἰσάγειν καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ συνάχθῃ καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ προσκρούειν τῷ βασιλεῖ. Τὸ δὲ τῶν αἰχμαλῶτων κηδεμονικὸν μὲν, ὡς Αἰσχύλος ἐν Θρήσσαις, οὐ μὴν εὐπρόσωπον· ὅρα γὰρ οἷον αἰχμαλῶτους ἐπιτιμᾶν τῷ Μενελάῳ.²¹³

It is difficult to understand what exactly the scholiast means by τὸ δὲ τῶν αἰχμαλῶτων κηδεμονικὸν μὲν, ὡς Αἰσχύλος ἐν Θρήσσαις, οὐ μὴν εὐπρόσωπον but what is certain is that he considers that for some

²¹² Dictys (V 16) reports that Ajax had not one, but two captive lovers: Tecmessa, and Glauce (daughter of Cynus) who begot him Aiantides (V 16). John Malalas (*Chronographia* V 29.7) also mentions Aiantides, but in his account Glauce is Ajax's first wife (instead of Lysidice from whom he begets Philaios). It may not be coincidence that Glauce is also the name of the Salaminian princess, daughter of Cychreus, who is Telamon's first wife (Diod. Sic. IV 72), and whom Pherecydes (fr. 60) makes his mother. Furthermore, Aiantides is the name of a historical figure: the son of Hippocles, tyrant of Lampsacus. Interestingly, the Philaidae were on very bad terms with the people from Lampsacus, according to Herodotus (VI 36-8). One of the first actions attempted by Miltiades (the oikist) in Chersonese was to declare war on Lampsacus. Both Stesagoras, his successor, and Miltiades died in circumstances linked to this conflict. Moreover, it is worth noting that Lampsacus is situated in Troad, not far from Rhoiteion, where Ajax was believed to be buried. The strong enmity between the Philaidae and the tyrants of Lampsacus might perhaps have been connected, amongst other things, to competing claims over Ajax. It may not be a coincidence that Hippias (once he started to feel threatened in Athens after Hipparchus' assassination) married his daughter to Aiantides; four years later, after his exile, he stayed in Lampsacus (and not in Chersonese) before reaching the court of Darius (Thuc. VI 59).

²¹³ Σ *Aj.* 134. I read the text with the same punctuation as in Christodoulos 1977.

reasons, unknown to us, it was possible for Aeschylus to have a chorus feigning care (for Ajax?) in his *Thracian Women*, but not for Sophocles in his *Ajax*. However, he then notes that a chorus of captives would have been able to reproach Menelaus (as the chorus of Salaminian sailors does in the *Ajax*). It thus follows that there is a fundamental – and, for anyone who had access to both plays, obvious – difference between the *Thracian Women* and the *Ajax*, which forced Sophocles to select a different chorus than the one Aeschylus chose for his version of Ajax's suicide.

We have now two reasons to believe that Aeschylus' chorus of Thracian women is unconventional. The question is why Aeschylus made this choice and what purpose underlies it. It is obviously difficult to answer these questions, when so little of the play has survived, and any element of an answer brought forward is bound to remain tentative. Nonetheless, a connection between Aeschylus' choice and the historical context can be established with a certain degree of confidence. As I have already mentioned, two central figures of Athenian politics – Miltiades, and his son Cimon – notoriously claimed to be direct descendants of Ajax, and, what is more, both had a deep and unique relation to Thrace. Miltiades had been the tyrant of Thracian Chersonese and had married a Thracian princess, Hegesipyle, the daughter of king Oloros, before he was forced to return to Athens in 493 BCE.²¹⁴ His son Cimon who was half-Thracian led two successful expeditions in Thrace (one in 476 and the other in 466 BCE) which enabled him to secure new lands for Athens but above all to retrieve his family's possessions.²¹⁵ Given that the Philaidae, who were particularly prominent in Athens during the first half of the fifth century, and notably claimed to descend from Ajax, had so many Thracian connections, it is hard to believe that Aeschylus would have chosen a chorus with an unconventional identity (Thracian women) for a play centred around Ajax, without realising that this could prompt an association between Ajax and the Philaidae in the mind of his audience.

We do not know when the *Thracian Women* was first performed. Aeschylus' earliest known play is the *Persae* with which he won his first prize in 472 BCE. His last victory is thought to have rewarded his

²¹⁴ Hegesipyle was Miltiades' second wife. Before leaving for Thrace, he was already married, probably to a daughter of Hipparchus, from whom he divorced. According to Herodotus, the son he had from his first union, Metiochos, went to Chersonese with him, but was captured by the Phoenicians when the whole family attempted to escape. They gave him to Darius, who did him no harm but treated him as a member of the Persian nobility (Hdt. VI 41).

²¹⁵ He took the city of Eion in 476-7 BCE (*Cim.* VII 1-3), and expelled the Persians from Chersonese in 466 BCE (*Cim.* XIV 1-2). See Sears 2013: 69-74.

Oresteia in 458. He died shortly after in 456, while he was residing in Gela. The date of 458 obviously marks the *terminus ante quem* of the play's creation, while 472 is likely to be its *terminus post quem*. Consequently, the play was probably performed at a time when Cimon dominated Athenian politics, and was financing art and culture to promote himself as well as his γένος. He was building costly monuments both with private and public money, through which he made his prestigious ancestry conspicuous.²¹⁶ Therefore, the association between Cimon, or his father, with Ajax would have been particularly convincing during this period.

Several ancient testimonies suggest that Aeschylus had strong democratic convictions and felt sympathies for Themistocles, and later Pericles.²¹⁷ For instance, when the Great Dionysia resumed in 476 BCE, shortly after the Second Persian War, Themistocles is reported to have been Phrynichus' *choregos*.²¹⁸ The play, most probably called the *Phoenissae*, is believed to have celebrated the victory at Salamis. Four years later, in 472 BCE, Aeschylus also wrote a similar play, the *Persae*.²¹⁹ This time the young Pericles assumed the role of *choregos*.²²⁰ Furthermore, in the *Eumenides*, the playwright makes the vision of a functional democratic Athens that is 'trans-temporal' emerge from his play.²²¹ Aeschylus' political sympathies seem to have leaned towards the democrats. Therefore, given Aeschylus' political stance, the parallelism that Aeschylus invites us to draw in the *Thracian Women* between his Ajax with his Thracian captives and the Aeacid Cimon with his Thracian conquests (or for that matter Miltiades and his Thracian

²¹⁶ What is commonly considered as the Cimonian era of Athens is situated from the end of the Second Persian War to his ostracism in 461 BCE (*Ath. Pol.* XXVII 3–4; *Theopomp. FgrHist* 115 fr. 89; *Plut. Cim.* X 1–6). See Rhodes 1986: 135–136; Zelnick-Abramovitz 2000; Taylor 2007: 326; Kosmetatou 2013: 240–1; Pownall 2013: 297–8. On the links between the Philaidae and Ajax, see above, pp. 171–2.

²¹⁷ Interestingly, Ajax is hardly mentioned in the *Persae*. He is only named three times in a periphrasis for Salamis: the island of Ajax (307, 367, 596). Moreover, Aeschylus does not even mention Aristides' prowess at Pyttaleia, as he changes the story and has other Athenians land on the island to kill the Persians. This is noteworthy because Aristides was the opponent of Themistocles and mentor of Cimon. In addition to this, Pericles introduced the μισθός, in the 460s BCE, the unavowed aim of which probably was to undermine the influence Cimon could acquire through magnificent patronage; and liturgical responsibilities (*Plut. Pericles* IX 2–3). This payment, to some extent anonymous, allowed the average Athenian citizen to perform public functions without becoming dependent on, or obligated to, the wealthiest. See Pébarthe 2008: 209.

²¹⁸ *Plut. Them.* 5, 4.

²¹⁹ Harrison (2000) argues that the *Persae* are meant to celebrate the greatness of Athenian democracy. He considers that Aeschylus celebrates a united πόλις by referring both to the naval battle *per se*, and the events at Pyttaleia. I am less convinced about this part of the argument (see n. 215).

²²⁰ O'Neill 1942.

²²¹ Revermann 2008. The end of the play has often been read as a homage to Ephialtes, assassinated in 461 BCE, who is the instigator of the reform which decreased the power of the Areopagus, and was key to the establishment of 'radical' democracy. The view is contentious. For a good review on the question, see Podlecki 1966: 80–100; Sommerstein 1989: 13–7 and *passim*; Bruyn 1995: 87–110. Interestingly, Bowie (1993) suggests that the play offers a framework for thinking about contemporary events, but is not the vehicle for a single ideology. See also Leão 2010.

wife) is certainly not meant to glorify Cimon nor to serve his political agenda. Quite the contrary; it is far more likely that Aeschylus' motive for choosing a chorus of Thracian captives for his play on Ajax had the opposite aim.

But this is not all. Further elements in the transmitted fragments of the play strike us as curious. A scholion on Sophocles' *Ajax* 833 indicates that Aeschylus chose to exploit the motif of Ajax's invulnerability in his play:

(...) παραδεδομένον δὲ καθ' ἱστορίαν, ὅτι κατὰ τὸ ἄλλο σῶμα ἄτρωτος ἦν ὁ Αἴας, κατὰ δὲ τὴν μασχάλην μόνην τρωτὸς διὰ τὸν Ἡρακλέα τῇ λεοντῇ αὐτὸν σκεπάσαντα κατὰ τοῦτο τὸ μέρος ἀσκεπαστον εἶσαι διὰ τὸν γωρυτόν, ὃν περιέκειτο.²²²

The motif of invulnerability is not atypical in itself; as it has been argued in Part I, it probably constituted one of the defining characteristics of Ajax in early Greek hexameter poetry.²²³ More intriguing, however, is the location of the only vulnerable spot on Ajax's body: the armpit (μασχάλη). As a matter of fact, it differs from the traditional variants of the motif we have established: on vases, Ajax is depicted with a sword piercing him either διὰ φρενῶν (as in *Nemean* 7.26) or περὶ τὰ πλευρά (as in *Ajax*: 834), while a second version, probably found in epic poetry, has περὶ τὴν κλειῖδα.²²⁴ All our sources agree on the fact that μασχάλη is the version adopted by Aeschylus,²²⁵ which strongly suggests that it is a unique feature of his version of the myth and a deliberate innovation he made.²²⁶ Here again Aeschylus must have had a good reason for deciding to manipulate previous traditions, and we shall now attempt to understand what kind of dimension the relocation of Ajax's traditional vulnerable spot might have added to the play.

²²² Σ *Aj* 833 = TrGF 83.

²²³ For a discussion of the antiquity of the motif, see Part I: 36ff.

²²⁴ Σ(bT) Ξ 404. Σ(D) Ψ 821 has it ἐπ' αὐχένι.

²²⁵ Σ *Aj* 833; Σ(bT) Ξ 404; Eust. *Il* III 670. It must be noted that Tzetzes (Σ Lyc. 455) probably makes a mistake when he stipulates that Ajax is vulnerable around the flanks (περὶ τὰ πλευρά) in the *Thracian Women*. This is made clear by Σ *Aj* 833, which contrasts what he takes to be Ajax's weak spot in Sophocles' *Ajax* (περὶ τὰ πλευρά) against Aeschylus' one (κατὰ τὴν μασχάλην).

²²⁶ The scholiasts always name Aeschylus if they mention that Ajax was vulnerable κατὰ τὴν μασχάλην. It must be noted that Eustathius (*Il* III 670) states that it was the case κατὰ Αἰσχύλον καὶ ἄλλους, but he surely means that other authors, like Aeschylus, follow the tradition of Ajax's invulnerability, not necessarily that his weak spot was also placed under the armpit in their version.

The word *μασχάλη* never appears in Homeric poetry,²²⁷ as is to be expected from a noun that does not fit easily in a dactylic meter.²²⁸ The only exception is *Hymn. Herm.* 242, where the expression has an obvious comic undertone. Interestingly, it is also used in the expression *μασχάλην αἶρειν*, which signifies to be made drunk (*κωθωνίζεσθαι*). It is found, for instance, in the work of the comic poet Cratinus who incidentally also wrote a play called *Thracian Women*.²²⁹

Further comic undertones, which appear to have been at work in the *Thracian Women*, can be detected. The rest of Σ *Aj.* 833 explains that Ajax had to be assisted by a divine intervention in order to kill himself:

φησὶ δὲ περὶ αὐτοῦ Αἰσχύλος, ὅτι καὶ τὸ ξίφος ἐκάμπετο οὐδαμῇ ἐνδιδόντος
τοῦ χρωτὸς τῇ σφαγῇ· τόξον ὥς τις ἐντείνων, πρὶν δὴ τις, φησὶν, παροῦσα
δαίμων ἐδείξεν αὐτῷ κατὰ ποῖον μέρος δεῖ χρήσασθαι τῇ σφαγῇ.

It is true that we do not have a context to replace this scene, but a failed suicide reported by a messenger is intriguingly anti-climactic for a scene which would supposedly have been the tragic peak of the play.²³⁰ Furthermore, we find no parallel for it in extant tragedies.²³¹ The description of Ajax's sword bending like a bow every time he tries to wound himself has obvious cartoonish qualities that are alien to a truly tragic moment, potentially triggering pity or fear. The last piece of information given by the scholiast provides a further argument. He reports that a female *δαίμων* appears (*παρούσα*), and then shows Ajax where his weak spot is located (in this case his armpit) so that he can finally succeed in killing himself. This poses several problems. The idea that a *δαίμων* would physically appear and be witnessed by a third party (the messenger) is quite incongruous, and furthermore it would then have to be clear from its appearance that it was female.

²²⁷ In fr. 292c1 and 292c2 [Mette], which are testimonia about the *Thressae* transmitted in Σ(bT) Ξ 404 and Eust. *Il.* III 670, it is stated that unlike in Homer, Ajax is invulnerable *περὶ τὴν μασχάλην* in Aeschylus. I give Mette's fragment numbers here, as there are not listed in *TrGF*.

²²⁸ It scans as follows: – u –. It must be noted nonetheless that *μασχάλη* can fit 'in a hexameter verse in the dative singular or nom. pl., where the long vowel can be shortened by correption before another vowel, as in fact happens at *Hymn. Herm.* 242 ὑπὸ *μασχάλην* εἶχεν', as Dr Martin West kindly brought to my attention (private communication, 01.03.2015). However, the line in the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* is the only existing instance in which this word is found in the extant corpus of early Greek hexameter poetry, and thus should not invalidate our observation regarding the little compatibility of this noun with the language of epic poetry.

²²⁹ Fr. 301: ὥς ἄνω τὴν *μασχάλην* αἶρωμεν ἐμπεπωκότες. For comical uses of *μασχάλη*, see also Ar. *Ach.* 852 (where the same Cratinus is laughed at for his smelly armpits), or *Ecd.* 60. Otherwise, the word is profusely used in the Hippocratic and Aristotelian corpora, as one would expect in a scientific context since it is also a term from anatomy.

²³⁰ Ajax's suicide should constitute the tragic peak of the play given that no other character is expected to die in the story.

²³¹ Euripides' *Heracles Furens*, is probably the closest we get to a failed attempt of committing suicide in Greek tragedy. However, Heracles is not unable to kill himself, he is persuaded not to by Theseus. Moreover, his killing of his own family already constitutes the tragic climax of the play.

Why did Aeschylus move Ajax's weak spot to his armpit, and why did he chose a chorus of Thracian women? These difficulties can be solved; if we make the hypothesis that the drama was in reality a satyr play instead of a tragedy.²³² This scenario is possible, as we have a parallel for a satyr play by Aeschylus whose main chorus is not composed by satyrs. This is the case of *The Nurses of Dionysos* (*Τροφοί*), a play which certainly is satyric,²³³ but featured the nurses of Dionysos as its main chorus.²³⁴ Moreover, the Thracian identity of the chorus of captives would fit ideally into it, for Thrace was indeed considered to be the homeland of Dionysus and it is thus very common for Maenads to originate from there.²³⁵ In fact, many vases from the early fifth century on which a group of Maenads is depicted represent them in Thracian attire.²³⁶ This of course remains speculative, but the cumulative force carried by all the oddities I have pointed out, and which can be detected in such a small sample of the play, makes it a probable hypothesis.

Two small remaining fragments would tie particularly well into this theory. The first, *TrGF* 84a, reads as follow:

τρόποι δ' ἀμεμφεῖς, φιλόμουσοι, φιλοσυμπόται

The line, which is 'from a chorus song, possibly praising Ajax after his death,²³⁷ praises him for his impeccable ways not on a battlefield or in the assembly, as one would expect, but in a sympotic context.²³⁸ Φιλοσυμπότης is a *hapax*, but the meaning is transparent.²³⁹ Φιλόμουσος is normally used to qualify a

²³² The scene of Polyphemus' blinding in the *Cyclops* provides a good parallel, as Euripides also adapts an existing story from early Greek hexameter poetry into a satyr play. He keeps the terrible events that take place in the story (Polyphemus eating some of Odysseus' companions, his blinding), the revelation of Odysseus true name, and the Cyclops' curse), but they happen off-stage and are reported with the addition of parodic elements. Consequently, I submit that the odd elements in the account of Ajax' suicide in the *Thracian Women* (the bending sword, the female δαίμων, and the μασχάλην) are cut from the same cloth. Ajax still has to die at the end of the satyr play, but the tragedy of his situation is completely undermined by the insertion of a few comical components in the account of his death.

²³³ Sommerstein 2008: 248.

²³⁴ Furthermore, they are traditionally located in Thrace, on Mount Nysa, which anchors them in a setting typical of Maenads.

²³⁵ Z: 130-5. See *EAA s.v.* Menades.

²³⁶ These vases date from the early fifth century onwards and often represent the killing of Orpheus by Thracian maenads. The maenads, however, are always depicted with Thracian attire and not with their usual attribute, but the scene makes their identity clear. Aeschylus wrote a tetralogy around this myth called by modern scholars the *Lycurgeia*. Interestingly, satyrs are often also present in these scenes. See Shapiro 1983; Mannack 2001: 90-1.

²³⁷ Sommerstein 2008: 103.

²³⁸ There is one scene from the *Iliad* in which Ajax is portrayed in the context of a dinner. In H: 313-22, following his duel against Hector, a banquet is held by Agamemnon. On this occasion, he has the honour to receive the best portion of meat from the bull which has been sacrificed at the start of the feast. However, this banquet (δαίς) is very different from what is entailed in a συμπόσιον. As Calame (2013) [= 1999] notes 'the Greeks appear to have drawn a clear distinction between the various ritualized forms of the banquet, in particular the δαῖς and the *sumposion*' p. 93.

²³⁹ Hdn. fr. 12: Φιλοπότης ὁ τοὺς πότους καὶ τὰ συμπόσια φίλων· φιλοπότης ὁ πολλὰ πίνειν φίλων.

positive trait, but it is often used (when referring to the symposium) with words that have negative connotations linked to the concept of *τροπή*. For instance, Hipparchus, who was strongly associated with the *symposium* in the Athenians' collective memory is characterised by the adjectives *παιδιώδης*, *έρωτικός*, and *φιλόμουσος* in the *Constitutions of the Athenians*.²⁴⁰ *Παιδιώδης* and *έρωτικός* cannot possibly be laudatory here, as they hint at the character traits that led the tyrant to his end:²⁴¹ Hipparchus is famous for having been killed because of the consequences of the unrequited love he had for Harmodius.²⁴²

If Sommerstein is right in supposing that *TrGF* 84a is praising Ajax after his death, we may then suppose that the line is slightly ironic, as Ajax, earlier in the play, would have demonstrated his fondness for the *symposium*; that is, in the context of a satyr play, indulging in banqueting and drinking. This would constitute a neat reversal of his madness, as he would thus not have been driven mad by anger (nor by Athena), but as a consequence of his advanced state of refreshment.²⁴³ Since Aeschylus has the reputation of having introduced drunk heroes on stage,²⁴⁴ the instance of a drunk Ajax in one of his plays would not be out of the ordinary. Furthermore, Ajax belongs to a type of hero similar to the figure of Heracles, who is notable for being full of potential for comical elaboration.²⁴⁵ Both heroes are known for their outstanding bravery, tenacity, and boundless force, which easily turns into bottomless appetite and a propulsion to drinking combined with simple-mindedness, when taken in its comic counterpart. Incidentally, this trope is most productive for generating jokes and laughter in association with the world of the *symposium*, which happens to be alluded to in *TrGF* 84a.

Sympotic connections are not only particularly fitting in the context of a satyr play, but in our case it also strengthens the association I have argued that the *Thracian Women* were meant to prompt with the figure of Cimon. As a matter of fact, Cimon's public persona appears to have been strongly associated

²⁴⁰ *Ath. Pol.* XVIII 1. See also Ar. Nub. 358 Men. *Citharistae*, fr. 5 as well as Theopompus' critic of the *symposia* at Philip's court, which is 'characterised primarily by intemperance and licentiousness' (Hobden 2013: 130).

²⁴¹ Herodotus (V 55) and Thucydides (Thuc. I 20, VI 54-9) insist that Hippias (and not Hipparchus) held the tyranny, although it was both of them who were tyrant according to *Ath. Pol.* 18. Whatever it may be, Hipparchus was clearly considered as a tyrant by the Athenians, as is implied in the *scholia* about Harmodios and Aristogiton (*PMG* 893, 895-6).

²⁴² Hdt. V 55, VI 121-123; Thuc. VI 56-9; Arist. [*Ath. Pol.*]: XVIII.

²⁴³ In Greek one can both be driven mad (*μαίνεσθαι*) in anger or by wine. For instances of inebriated madness: *Od.* σ 406, φ 298; Luc. *Dial. D.* XVIII 2.

²⁴⁴ Chamaeleon, fr. 40a-b.

²⁴⁵ His comic potential has indeed been exploited often, both in satyr plays and in comedies (e.g. Euripides' *Bousiris*; Ion's *Omphale*; Aristophanes' *Frogs*; Epicharmus' *Bousiris*). Ajax obviously has a lesser comical potential than Heracles (or in any case it was not developed as much), but it is definitely from the same vein; they belong to the strong but stupid character type.

with the world of the *symposium* in the minds of his contemporaries, for sympotic allusions are omnipresent in the ancient sources referring to him.²⁴⁶ In fact, his portrayal as the epitome of the symposiast is adopted and used by both his partisans and enemies, as one can infer from several texts quoted by Plutarch in his *Life of Cimon*.

The reason for this is quite simple: a sympotic association is ambivalent. If used in a context of praise, it usually characterises conservative public figures with aristocratic backgrounds and highlights qualities pertaining to an idealised representation of the *symposium*. For instance, when Cimon is portrayed as a perfectly accomplished symposiast by Ion of Chios,²⁴⁷ his manners are described as ἐμμελής (harmonious), ὑγρός (soft), and μεμουσωμένος (polished).²⁴⁸ On the other hand, this topos can also be employed for undermining someone's reputation by hinting at a lack of moderation, loose morals, and inappropriate behaviour. The εὐκοσμία of the symposium becomes a chosen setting for unleashing uncontrolled appetites – to which simple-mindedness is naturally associated – when dysfunctioning. Fr. 221 by the comic poet Eupolis is a good example of reversed sympotic imagery directed at Cimon:

κακὸς μὲν οὐκ ἦν, φιλοπότης δὲ κάμελής
 κἀνίστ' <ἀν> ἀπεκοιμᾶτ' ἂν ἐν Λακεδαιμόνι
 κἂν Ἑλπινίκην τῇδε καταλιπὼν μόνην.

Cimon is portrayed as φιλοπότης and ἀμελής, two defects that very clearly derive from a sympotic rhetoric. Φιλοπότης is transparent and refers to the negative of φιλοσυμπότης found in *TrGF* 84a. Ἀμελής is particularly interesting in connection with the passage from Ion of Chios we referred to, as it serves as an antonym for ἐμμελής. Both words derive from μέλος (a song typically sung at *symposia*), and thus their use by Ion and Eupolis neatly exemplifies the ambivalence of a sympotic association. Given its aristocratic or elitist connotation, this kind of imagery tends to be applied to men who belonged to the conservative *spectrum* of Athenian politics. This means that attaching sympotic imagery to Homeric heroes, figures from whom only members of the elite could claim to descend, would have been a very efficient strategy to refer to the said elite.

²⁴⁶ Power (2007) calls this typically Cimonian trope: 'Cimon μουσικός'.

²⁴⁷ The treatment of Anacreon in Athens provides a good parallel.

²⁴⁸ Ion of Chios, fr. 15 from Plut. *Per.* V 3. See Power 2007: 184-5.

The last fragment comes from the *Frogs*, where it is quoted at line 1294 by Euripides, in the scene in which he tries to demonstrate that Aeschylus is a *κακὸς μελοποιός*.²⁴⁹ Here are Euripides' lines, with the citation from the *Thracian Women* in bold:

ὅπως Ἀχαι-	
ῶν διθρονον κράτος, Ἑλλάδος ἥβας,	1285
φλαττοθραττοφλαττοθρατ,	
Σφίγγα δυσαμεριᾶν πρύτανιν κύνα πέμπει,	
φλαττοθραττοφλαττοθρατ,	
σὺν δορὶ καὶ χερὶ πράκτορι θούριος ὄρνις,	
φλαττοθραττοφλαττοθρατ,	1290
κυρεῖν παρα-	
σχῶν ἰταμαῖς κυσὶν ἀεροφοίτοις,	
φλαττοθραττοφλαττοθρατ,	
τὸ συγκλινές τ' ἐπ' Αἴαντι,	
φλαττοθραττοφλαττοθρατ. ²⁵⁰	1295

This caricature of Aeschylus' poetry is 'based on *Agamemnon* 108-11, with phrases inserted from *Sphinx*, *Thracian Women*, and perhaps *Memnon*.'²⁵¹ It is interesting to note that of the three plays from which the inserted lines are taken, one is certainly a satyr play (*Sphinx*), as is the second (*Thracian Women*), provided that it is correct to consider it so, while the third has not yet been confidently identified. Moreover, at the beginning of the scene, when the chorus answers with scepticism to Euripides' boast about exposing the bad quality of Aeschylus' verses, it calls Aeschylus *τὸν Βακχεῖον ἄνακτα* (l. 1259), which might refer to his renown as a great writer of satyr plays.²⁵²

In terms of content, the line would also be particularly fitting in the context of a satyr play. It is not very clear to what the neutral singular article refers to, but the regular meaning of *συγκλινής* is 'to lay together' or in the passive 'to lie with'. There is a noun made on the same stem, *συγκλίτης*, which means 'one who lies with one' or a 'companion at table'. It is true that we have the nominalised form of the adjective in the neuter, but the line could, nonetheless, potentially be adequate in a sympotic/satyr context.

²⁴⁹ The quotation is identified in Σ *Ran.* 1294. This might only be a coincidence, but the criticism is intriguingly similar to those levelled against populist politicians that are formulated in terms of unsophisticated sympotic behaviour (cf. for instance Ion of Chios' attack on Pericles in *FgrHist* 392 fr. 15 = Plut. *Per.* V 3).

²⁵⁰ *TGF* 84.

²⁵¹ Henderson 2002: 201.

²⁵² Paus. II 13.6.

Thus, we have good reasons to think that the *Thracian Women* was in reality a satyr play, and that the suicide of Ajax was exploited comically by offering a parodic take on the traditional motif of his invulnerability. This is obviously bound to remain speculative to some extent, since so little of the play has come down to us. The cumulative weight, however, of all the oddities found in the fragments of the *Thracian Women*, combined with its hardly veiled allusion to the Philaidae as well as its sympotic imagery, make a strong case for its categorisation as a satyr play; especially, since this hypothesis allows us to solve most of the difficulties pertaining to the play. If this is correct, the Ajax from the *Thracian Women* would be a precursor of the ‘stupid Ajax’ paradigm that develops later in the century, which means that this paradigm was already part of a long tradition before it became crystallised in the works of Antisthenes.²⁵³

Women of Salamis

Nothing is known about the plot of the *Women of Salamis*. Only two small fragments which do not provide much information about the play remain. Consequently, all the conjectures regarding its content rest on its title. Since one would expect to find Salaminian women in Salamis and because the most famous myth that takes place on the island is that of the return and exile of Teucer, it has been suggested by Welcker that the play focuses on this episode.²⁵⁴ This view is generally accepted.²⁵⁵

TrGF 451q, transmitted in P. Oxy. 2256, fr. 71, has been attributed to this play by Mette, but it is still debated whether this is likely or not.²⁵⁶ The fragment, which is from a chorus, reads as follow:

²⁵³ See pp. 220ff.

²⁵⁴ Welcker 1824: 438-40. The title is transmitted by Herodian as *Σαλαμίνισαι*, while we find the masculine form *Σαλαμίνισοι* in the medieval catalogue of plays. The feminine form should be preferred, however, since several instances of the same mistake (*i.e.* transmitting the masculine form instead of the feminine) are found in the catalogue (Sommerstein 2008: 222).

²⁵⁵ Gantz (1980: 140; 2000: 56) shows scepticism, but does not provide any convincing alternative scenario.

²⁵⁶ It is assigned to Aeschylus by Lobel (1952: 57) on the basis that the fragments of P. Oxy. 2256 are written by the same hands and contain lines of plays by the playwright as well as hypotheses (Arata 2004: 51). Mette (1959) first conjectured that the fragment comes from the *Women of Salamis*.

has argued, this could neatly work in the context of the *Women of Salamis*, if the *comparandus* were to be Teucer. Therefore, in the absence of any other candidate for this fragment, attributing it to the *Women of Salamis* is rather convincing, if not irrefutable.²⁶⁰

The text is unfortunately very fragmentary, but we can, nonetheless, tell that the chorus maintains that Ajax's defeat is unfair (ll. 11-2), and implicitly, therefore, that Agamemnon and Menelaus are to blame for what has happened (ll. 7-8).²⁶¹ Their account obviously presents the circumstances that have led Ajax to commit suicide in a particularly favourable light for the hero, as is to be expected from a chorus of Salaminian women. Consequently, it would be misleading to extrapolate anything regarding the plot of *The Award of the Arms* on this basis, especially since there is a parallel for the existence of contradicting accounts regarding the award of the arms. In Sophocles' *Ajax*, the version of the story given by Teucer is completely different than Menelaus'; so much so that it is impossible for the audience to know if Ajax really has lost to Odysseus or if he has been the victim of a fraudulent vote.

The Ajax Tetralogy

If we combine the different observations made about the fragments of Aeschylean plays relating to Ajax – provided that we accept the consideration of the *Thracian Women* as a satyr play – the tetralogy would thus have been composed of:

- 1) unknown play
- 2) *The Award of the Arms*
- 3) *Women of Salamis*
- 4) *Thracian Women*²⁶²

This means that contrary to what has been assumed until now, the suicide of Ajax would have featured in the plot of *The Award of the Arms*, or at least would have strongly been implied by the turn of the events.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ Sommerstein (2008) is cautious and does not print the fragment in the section dedicated to the ones from the play. Nonetheless, he concedes that there is no other known candidate to which the fragment could possibly be attributed.

²⁶¹ I have checked the papyrus and can tell that the restorations proposed by Lobel at these lines are almost certain. My own reading diverges from Lobel's only on one very small detail: at line 12, I read ἰσορ[ρόπ]ω instead of ἰσο[ρ]ρ[όπ]ω.

²⁶² A good candidate for the unknown play might be the *Nereids*, provided one accepts the attribution of fr. 350 to the play (West 2000: 340-3). In this case, we would have a first play focusing on the death of Achilles, which ties in particularly well with *The Award of the Arms*, as Thetis offers Achilles' arms at his funeral games. In fact, Hermann, Mette, and Ferrari have conjectured that it was part of *The Award of the Arms*, which shows that the sequence 'death of Achilles' followed by 'the award of his arms' makes perfect sense. If this were the case, we would thus have a tetralogy about the fate of Aeacus' grand-children (Achilles, Ajax, and Teucer).

²⁶³ This is suggested in *TrGF* 177.

In any case, his death would have been known at the start of the *Women of Salamis*, which might explain why the chorus rehearses rather in detail the whole story in *TrGF* 451q. The *Thracian Women* would have then closed the tetralogy, with a comical take on Ajax's death.²⁶⁴

This solves some difficulties posed by the tetralogy as it is usually conceived of, in particular with regard to the particularly small ambit of both *The Award of the Arms* and *Thracian Women*. This has been noted, for instance, by Gantz who notes that 'several titles seem to dramatise actions which would normally belong to a single play, sometimes to the point where their reconstruction would be distinctly puzzling without the tetralogy form.'²⁶⁵ 'For example, we should surely have assumed that Aias died in the *Hoplōn Krisis* (...); yet our evidence shows that [it] stopped short of the crucial resolution).'²⁶⁶ It turns out that our evidence shows something different, which corresponds more closely to our expectations. As stated above, *The Award of the Arms* would have dramatised in some way or another Ajax's death, which is to be expected, as it constitutes the tragic consequence of the plot, while we do not need to ponder how the *Thracian Women* would have functioned as a tragedy, when its plot is reduced to Ajax's suicide, which covers, even in Sophocles' *Ajax*, only half of the play.

Regarding the Aeschylean treatment of Ajax, we can draw the following conclusions. Firstly, given that remaining evidence suggests that Aeschylus does not choose to fully exploit the tragic potential of Ajax's suicide, it follows that the entire tetralogy probably focuses less intensely on the hero than is usually assumed.²⁶⁷ In fact, as far as we can tell, Aeschylus dramatises what was the traditional version of the myth at the time. Accordingly, Ajax is driven mad by the awarding of Achilles' arms to Odysseus, which leads him to commit suicide. This is the version found in epic poetry, as I have argued, as well as the one given by Pindar.²⁶⁸ As we shall see in the following section, Sophocles modifies the mythological *datum*, by changing the nature of Ajax's madness: it is sent by Athena and leads him to massacre the Greeks' cattle, not to kill himself. In allowing Ajax to regain composure shortly after the start of the play, Sophocles has been able to portray him as he reasons about and decides on his fate, thereby casting him as

²⁶⁴ It must be noted that we know that Polemaeus (1st BC) wrote a satyric *Ajax* (*Syll.*³ 1079).

²⁶⁵ Gantz 1980: 164.

²⁶⁶ Gantz (1980: 164, n° 110). For a slightly different formulation, see Gantz 2007: 70.

²⁶⁷ Or perhaps did he not think of exploiting it, as there probably was no precedent before Sophocles' *Ajax*.

²⁶⁸ *Nem.* 7 and 8. The cause for Ajax's suicide is not revealed in *Isthm.* 4.

a sublime tragic figure. Consequently, Aeschylus appears to have given less prominence to Ajax, and to have instead framed the mythological episode around an opposition between the individual (Ajax) and the collective of the Greek army (represented by Agamemnon, Menelaus, or Odysseus).²⁶⁹ This antagonism would work particularly well if the judges were members of the Greek army, but it is unfortunately not possible to identify with certainty who voted.

Secondly, it must be noted that no evidence suggests that Aeschylus attributed a child to Ajax, unlike Sophocles (Eurysaces), or Herodotus (Philaïos). If I am right to believe that the *Thracian Women* is a satyr play, it is possible that the Thracian custom of polygamy may have been exploited for comic ends.²⁷⁰ At any rate a childless Ajax, or an Ajax fathering a child from an obscure Thracian woman would have had strong political implications,²⁷¹ for it would implicitly either undermine the claim made by aristocrats such as Cimon and later Alcibiades that they had Ajax as an ancestor, or possibly suggest that they descended from a line of bastard children.²⁷²

Conclusion

It turns out that the episode of the ὅπλων κρίσις undergoes a shift of paradigm in the first part of the fifth century, which can be witnessed not only in Athens through its depiction on Attic vases, and in Aeschylus' work (his *The Award of the Arms*, and TrGF 451q possibly from the *Women of Salamis*), but also in Aegina (Pindar's *Nemean* 7 and 8) as well as in Thebes (Pindar's *Isthmian* 4). It is not clear what the relationship between these different works is; I would be inclined to consider that this is the product of the *Zeitgeist* which sees some unprecedented political changes in the Greek world with the establishment of *isonomia* in Athens. This means that, rather than attempting to determine which manifestation of this paradigm change precedes and influences all the others, it might be more sensible to consider them as independent, but stemming, nonetheless, from the same (and very particular) historical context that constitutes the early fifth century.

²⁶⁹ This is also what he seems to do in the *Myrmidons* in which he has adapted the main plot of the *Iliad*: Achilles' and Agamemnon's quarrel. See Michelakis 2002: 22-54.

²⁷⁰ Hdt. V 5. See Sears 2013: 67.

²⁷¹ Being the son of a nameless Thracian woman 'was a stock slander in Athenian political history' (Sears 2013: 55).

²⁷² The question of legitimacy is an important theme in the play (*Aj.*: 1228-34; 1259-63; 1291-307).

At any rate, it appears that this period marks a crucial turn in the development of the figure of Ajax. The emergence of the vote of the Greeks, in the story, opens up new possibilities in the narrative. Ajax thus becomes either a noble martyr or a sore loser. If Pindar systematically presents him as a victim (of Odysseus' guile or of the blindness of his peers), his reception in Athens is ambivalent. As we can see on the series of *κύλικες* representing the scene, the Athenian version actualises the episode and transposes it in a typically democratic setting, for instance, by arraying the characters in civic robes. This does not necessarily aim at expressing a democratic ideology, but rather enables the myth to be used in a way that engages with contemporary circumstances. Accordingly, it can be interpreted in a manner that is either hostile or favourable to democracy. In the first scenario in which Ajax is a victim, the validity of the voting procedure is repeatedly questioned, thereby exposing the shortcomings of the democratic system. In the second scenario, Ajax is cast in the role of the outrageous (and slightly stupid) aristocrat who fails to accept his defeat (perhaps as he refuses to accept that his high birth does not guarantee his superiority to everyone else).

We do not have enough information about Aeschylus' plays to know what he chooses to do with the myth. Nevertheless, it seems more likely than not that Aeschylus would have given a pro-Odyssean treatment of the myth. If the reconstruction of the 'Ajax' tetralogy is correct, we would in reality have a tetralogy on the grand children of Aeacus rather than on Ajax specifically. The quasi-complete absence of Ajax from Aeschylus' *Persae* would provide a parallel for the playwright's lack of interest (or sympathy?) for the hero.²⁷³ The possible satyric treatment of Ajax's suicide in the *Thracian Women*, and consequently the lesser emphasis it receives in *The Award of the Arms* (at least in comparison with Sophocles' *Ajax*) also lead to this conclusion, although the validity of both arguments rests on speculative assumptions. This does not, however, undermine the main argument of this section: the emergence at the beginning of the fifth century of an ambivalent Ajax.

²⁷³ Ajax is only named three times in the expression *νήσος Αἰάντος* (397; 367; 596), which is a periphrasis for Salamis. This is surprising, given that he had been summoned directly from the island for support (Hdt. VIII 64), and that a trireme had been consecrated to him after the battle for his help (Hdt. VIII 121).

AJAX IN ATHENS FROM THE 450S TO THE END OF THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

As mentioned in the introduction to Part III, the discussion about the Athenian reception of Ajax is divided into three periods which reflect different phases of its development. After being first introduced as a friend and an ally of the Athenians in the sixth century, he becomes a contested figure in the first part of the fifth century. He is related to the old aristocracy through Miltiades and Cimon by claims of ancestry,²⁷⁴ to Aegina mythologically,²⁷⁵ and then to the Athenian δῆμος, as he becomes one of the official *eponymoi*, thereby receiving a civic cult.²⁷⁶ The parallels that are systematically drawn between the Trojan and Persian Wars,²⁷⁷ his Aeacid lineage,²⁷⁸ and his Salaminian origin all contribute to heightening his pertinence in the historical context of the fifth century, as he consequently becomes an ideal figure to be associated with in order to capitalise on the victory against the Persians, and increase influence.

This appears to change from the second part of the fifth century onwards. The particular pertinence he had in Athens in the past decades seems to wane, as the political significance his figure had

²⁷⁴ Part III: 170ff.

²⁷⁵ Part II: 79-80.

²⁷⁶ Part III: 164ff.

²⁷⁷ Part II: 92.

²⁷⁸ Part I: 29ff.

been imbued with becomes less and less relevant.²⁷⁹ This can be clearly witnessed in Attic painters' disinterest for Ajax as a subject to represent.²⁸⁰ From *c.* 450 BCE onwards, he simply stops appearing on vases, from what we can tell from our extant sources. This strikingly contrasts with the over 150 vases, spanning from 540/30 to 490/79 BCE, on which he is depicted playing dice with Achilles.²⁸¹ There is a series of factors, linked to the historical context, which can provide the beginnings of an explanation for this sudden disappearance.

From an internal perspective, I link this development with the decrease of Cimon's influence, marked by his ostracism in 461, and ultimately by his death in 449 BCE.²⁸² The Philaidae (the family of Miltiades and his son Cimon) claimed to descend from Ajax through his son Philaios.²⁸³ Consequently, no one other than Cimon in Athens could claim Miltiades' heritage, and capitalise on his Aeacid ancestry for personal ends. Furthermore, the reform of the Areopagus by Ephialtes is a clear sign that the Athenian *πολιτεία* was taking a more and more democratic turn, and that consequently the 'old symbols of aristocratic and class power' were becoming increasingly obsolete in order to acquire or maintain political influence in the *πόλις*.²⁸⁴

From an external point of view, Athens has succeeded in representing itself as the great victor of the Persian Wars, and its recent subjugation of Aegina strengthened its claim even more so. The island's traditional primacy over the Aeacidae, widely recognised by the Panhellenic community, therefore, does

²⁷⁹ The latest extant Attic vases on which Ajax is portrayed are (i) *LIMC* Aias I 105, representing Ajax's suicide (from *c.* 460 BCE), (ii) *LIMC* Aias I 144, representing Ajax in Hades in company of Elpenor and Palamedes (from *c.* 450-40 BCE), and perhaps (iii) *LIMC* Aias I 42. Apart from some Etruscan artefacts (gems, mirrors), we have no later representation of Ajax before the Hellenistic period (*LIMC* Aias I 91, 97). Surprisingly, his status as cultic hero does not appear to have been influential in artistic developments.

²⁸⁰ Ajax is exceptional with respect to the abruptness with which his popularity as a subject to represent on pots drops. There is a general shift in the iconography of sympotic vessels, which start displaying 'more democratic and *polis*-based themes' (Swift 2010: 53). See Boardman (1989: 216–34). This does not mean, however, that aristocratic values disappear; rather that the modes through which they are expressed, or claimed, seem to change. In the case of Ajax, it is interesting to note that his position of eponym hero did not maintain the popularity of his depictions.

²⁸¹ See the discussion about these vases in Part III: 152ff.

²⁸² It is not clear how long Cimon remained in exile. He is known to have negotiated a truce with the members of the Peloponnesian league *c.* 451, which would have happened upon his return, given that ostracism was for ten years (Thuc. I 112). However, Plutarch reports that he was called back to Athens by Pericles before the end of his period of exile (Plut. *Cim.* 17.5-6). No matter how much – if at all – earlier he came back, the influence he may possibly have exerted during those years was short-lived, since he left on an expedition against Cyprus *c.* 450, and died there in 449 (Plut. *Cim.* XIX; Thuc. I 112.4). On this question, see Sealy (1976: 272-3).

²⁸³ Alcibiades, through his father Clinias, also claimed to descend from Ajax through Eurysaces (and not Philaios). However, the connection of his family to the hero may have been of a different nature, given that it is not called 'Eurysacidae', but Eupatridae. See L'Homme-Wéry 2000: par. 20.

²⁸⁴ As Ober (1989: 86) notes: 'by the third quarter of the century, however, the developing ideology of the Athenian masses was making the established road to a political career more problematic. The Athenians became increasingly suspicious of old symbols of aristocratic and class power, and they began to look askance at elites who seemed to prefer the company of their social peers to that of ordinary citizens.'

not pose a threat anymore to the representation of Athens as the great victor of Salamis that the Athenians had been insistently constructing after the Persian wars.²⁸⁵

It thus turns out that Ajax's status becomes somehow normalised in Athens, as he ceases to incarnate a *locus* of political struggle between, on the one hand, the propagators of conflicting ideologies and, on the other hand, rival πόλεις stressing the importance of the role they played in the Greeks' victory against the Persians. From now on, Ajax is primarily a hero like any other. It is true that he still is a well-established Athenian civic figure, but, somehow, it seems that the national symbol, he could potentially have become, of the victory of the Athenian δῆμος against the Persians is never fully actualised.²⁸⁶ In this section, we shall examine how these circumstances influenced the way Ajax has been portrayed in Sophocles' *Ajax*.

Sophoclean Ajax

*The Greeks upon advice did bury Ajax
That slew himself; and wise Laertes' son
Did graciously plead for his funerals.*

– Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* 379-81

Sophocles' *Ajax* constitutes a crucial point in the history of the hero's reception,²⁸⁷ particularly with regard to the influence it had on both his subsequent representations and the way earlier representations have been and still are interpreted.²⁸⁸ The play had a lasting impact. As Finglass notes, 'it is quoted more than any other Sophoclean play'.²⁸⁹ This is not surprising, as its visually striking scenes appear to have left a memorable impression on its audience. For instance, we know from the *hypothesis* of the *Ajax* that the play

²⁸⁵ It is telling, for instance, that the Αἶάκειον built by the Athenians in order to win against Aegina (Hdt. V 89.2) was turned into a granary at the end of the first quarter of the fourth century. See p. 131n169.

²⁸⁶ We know that the Athenians were holding the Αἶάντεια, a festival celebrating the victory at Salamis, but we do not know when it was established. However, his association with the famous battle does not seem to have been particularly exploited in art or literature; at any rate, it does not seem to directly influence his representation. Perhaps, this could be explained by the fact that Ajax's appropriation by the Athenians never fully severed his connection to Aegina. His Aeacid lineage remained the norm, despite the island's defeat and Cimon's probable attempt to make him a son of Theseus (see p. 31n119). On the Αἶάντεια, see Giudice 2000.

²⁸⁷ The play is usually considered to be amongst the playwright's earliest plays, and accordingly thought to have been performed in the 440s BCE (Finglass 2011: 1-11; Svenbro 2001: 113-27). This, however, only rests on stylistic ground and cannot be definitely proven (Garvie 1998: 8). For instance, Lloyd-Jones (1990: 9) argues for a date between 430 and 420 BCE, while Vickers believes that the play was written in the 410s (2008: 48).

²⁸⁸ I used the word 'hero' as Gill (1996: 98-9) defines it. Finglass (2011: 42-4) is right, however, to warn against the ambiguity of the word which can be morally neutral or imply moral approbation. This is particularly relevant in context of the *Ajax*, as the question of its protagonist's assessment is central to the play.

²⁸⁹ Finglass 2011: 68.

was also called *Αἴας Μαστιγοφόρος* because of the first scene,²⁹⁰ in which Ajax comes out from his hut, possibly with a whip in hand,²⁹¹ after Athena has graphically described how he has been torturing the cattle he has taken to be his enemies.²⁹² Moreover, whether or not the massacre of the Greeks' cattle is an innovation introduced by Sophocles to the story,²⁹³ the scene had such a great impact that it became an essential part of the story, which is almost always mentioned in subsequent retelling of the myth.²⁹⁴ Sophocles' *Ajax* has also often conditioned the way scholars from the Renaissance onwards have interpreted earlier representations of Ajax,²⁹⁵ since the play is the earliest extant text focusing on the hero that is complete. As we have seen, although he is a central figure in the *Iliad*, his character is not particularly developed, and even less so his own *gesta*.²⁹⁶ Pindar gives us precious pieces of information, but only in the very condensed format that is typical of lyric poetry.

I will now proceed to analyse the aspects of Ajax's story Sophocles chose to emphasise, to merely hint at, or to ignore with a view to showing how he negotiates the different (and often opposite) interpretations of the myth that were current when he wrote his play. It emerges from the material examined so far, that three distinct paradigms of Ajax co-existed by the end of the first half of the fifth century:

(i) The self-sufficient hero

This is the traditional figure of Ajax from early Greek hexameter poetry, discussed in Part I. He is characterised by his refusal to be determined by anything but himself, which perhaps is to be narratively connected to the gift of invulnerability he is reported to have received from Heracles. This leads Ajax to reject Athena's assistance on the battlefield, which is an act of ὕβρις against the goddess, for, in so doing, Ajax negates one of her functions (τιμᾶι), thus

²⁹⁰ Lines 9-12. This title would distinguish the play from Sophocles' *Locrian Ajax*. On the visual emphasis given by this epithet, see West 1979: 131 [= Lloyd 2007: 361-2].

²⁹¹ Line 110.

²⁹² Lines 51-65.

²⁹³ See Part I: 67. Although Proclus inserts the motif in his summary of the *Ilias Parva*, I argue that this is probably due to the great influence Sophocles' *Ajax* has had.

²⁹⁴ As, for instance, in Apollod. *Epit.* V 6-7, and Quint. Smyrn. V 352-498. The mention of the massacre of the Greeks' cattle by Proclus in his summary of the *Ilias Parva* is possibly due to a Sophoclean influence (see pp. 62n255, 67).

²⁹⁵ Sophocles' *Ajax* had less influence in Medieval literature, as the works of Dictys and Dares, who both unequivocally portray Ajax in a good light, constituted the main source materials for Trojan Cycle. On the use of Dictys and Dares in Romance literature, see Beschorner 1992: 2-5; Diop 2009: 121-44; Clark 2010: 205-08.

²⁹⁶ Part I: 72ff.

leaving her ἄτιμος. Consequently, Athena takes revenge on the hero by preventing him from winning Achilles' arms, his expected γέρας and the symbol of his own τιμή.²⁹⁷

(ii) The blameless hero

This paradigm is first attested in the odes of Pindar and Bacchylides that we have examined in Part II. The myth takes a new turn, as it is cleared from its divine component. It now engages with the concept of ἀτιμία in the realm of mortals, by exemplifying unfair distribution of spoils, and failure to acknowledge true ἀριστεία through the episode of the ὅπλων κρίσις.²⁹⁸ Accordingly, Athena is taken out of the picture, as Achilles' arms are awarded to Odysseus after a vote by the Greeks. The circumstances which lead the vote to be unfair vary. It can be due to cheating, to the blindness of the voters, or to Odysseus' manipulations.

(iii) The failed hero

This forms a counterpart to paradigm (ii). It is first attested on attic vases dating from the first half of the fifth century, and may also have been exploited by Aeschylus in *The Award of the Arms* and/or *Thracian Women*. As we shall see, it is also the version followed by Antisthenes in his *Antilogiai*. Structurally, it is very similar to (ii), but shows a radically different interpretation of the events. There is nothing unfair in Ajax's defeat: he simply turns out to be inferior to Odysseus.²⁹⁹ The extent to which Odysseus can be considered as superior varies. What is systematically implied, however, is the fact that Ajax is a hero lacking at least one essential quality (usually, eloquence).

I will make two main claims in the following discussion. First I will trace the presence of these paradigms in the play, in order to argue that Sophocles purposely chose to exploit all of them,³⁰⁰ by concomitantly representing them through the discordant voices of the characters in the play, instead of giving preference to one or the other. Discussion of paradigm (i) will be more extensive than the

²⁹⁷ Part I: 63-5.

²⁹⁸ Part II: 109ff. and 132ff.

²⁹⁹ This can be interpreted as a thematisation of the failure of the old aristocratic value system to prevent στάσις in the πόλις (especially when Ajax is represented with his sword unsheathed, ready to attack Odysseus, as he is held back by two companions).

³⁰⁰ Apparently, Sophocles innovates in doing so, as earlier extant treatments never exploited all of them.

discussions of paradigms (ii) and (iii) because it requires an examination of how Sophocles reshaped the paradigm by adding Achillean resonances. Secondly, I will show how the rendering of the myth, as well as the manner in which the play unfolds, maximises its ambivalence; this will finally lead to some observations about the tensions that are at work in the tragedy.

(i) Epic Subtext

It is an understatement to say that the epic dimension of *Ajax* has often been noted. This has led many scholars to interpret the play in terms of the transition from the old heroic world, with its individualistic values based on honour through the pursuit of the Iliadic αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν (Z 208) to the new value system brought about by Athenian democracy, which is more centred on collectivity.³⁰¹ In this interpretative model, Ajax gives voice to the ethos of the old aristocracy, as he incarnates the last great epic hero. Accordingly, his dilemma is therefore understood as mirroring that of fifth century Athenian aristocrats: to adapt and survive in the new world order at the cost of losing one's identity, or to perish and disappear with the old system, but remain unchanged, and thus true to one's nature.³⁰² There is some appeal to this reading, but it has two major flaws: it presupposes that the values promoted by epic poetry are altogether a thing of the past in the fifth century, and that Ajax is portrayed in the play as a character that would seamlessly fit in the world of the Homeric poems. I very much doubt the validity of both these assumptions. Although I equally draw attention to the main elements that contribute to set the first part of the play in the world of the Homeric poems, and to construct the distinctively epic identity of Ajax, I reach different, although not necessarily incompatible, conclusions. I argue that Sophocles invokes the world of epic in order to present a subverted version of paradigm (i) so as to emphasise the inherently problematic nature of the values Ajax embodies – values that would equally be problematic in the world of the epic.³⁰³

³⁰¹ See, for instance, Knox 1961: 20-1; Burton 1980: 11; Gardiner 1987: 50; Segal 1995: 17; Konstan 1998: 297. *Pace* Minadeo: 1987: 23; Morwood 2008: 16; Finglass 2011: 45.

³⁰² For instance, Golder (1990: 9) states that 'the story of the Homeric warrior Ajax, whose betrayal and tragic suicide embodies the final eclipse of ancient honor itself'.

³⁰³ Although I insist on Ajax's epic dimension, I do not wish to imply that he is the only character of the play that displays epic features.

The epic tone is immediately established at the beginning of the play, with a prologue putting the audience in *medias res*. It opens on Athena conversing with Odysseus, her protégé, and it is through their dialogue that we hear of the events that are taking place. The plots of several plays are initiated by a god, but it is usually through a monologue in which he or she stands alone on the *σκηνή*, and reveals to the audience the plan he or she has devised, usually in order to punish a mortal. In this case, the plan has yet to be carried out, and prompts the drama.³⁰⁴ Moreover, the familiarity of the tone with which first Odysseus and Athena, and shortly thereafter Ajax and Athena, address each other is also reminiscent of divine epiphanies in Homeric poems, while it is rather uncommon in the spectrum of the tragic genre.³⁰⁵ The dynamic of the conversation between Athena and Odysseus reflects the closeness of their relationship in the *Odyssey*. In the case of Ajax and Athena, their interaction appears to parallel – but in a perverted manner – that of Diomedes and the goddess in book E of the *Iliad*.³⁰⁶ In both cases, Athena stands by the hero and acts as a *σύμμαχος*.³⁰⁷ However, Athena's sincere affection for Diomedes contrasts with the feigned amiability she shows to Ajax, and under which her real disposition towards him, hatred, is hidden. Moreover, if the goddess takes from Diomedes' eyes the *ἄλγυς* that prevents mortals from discerning gods from human,³⁰⁸ in the case of Ajax, on the contrary, she impairs his vision in order to manipulate him.³⁰⁹ Diomedes becomes thus temporarily able to fight even against gods, while Ajax, blinded, is led to attack defenceless animals.

³⁰⁴ We mostly find these beginnings in plays by Euripides. It happens in *Bacchae*, *Hippolytus*, and *Trojan Women* (although here we have a dialogue between Athena and Poseidon instead of a monologue). Similarly, the prologue of *Alceste* and of *Ion* opens on a god's monologue, but in both cases the god is benevolent and, accordingly, does not prompt himself the events that are about to unfold. Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 2003: 459ff.

³⁰⁵ Dialogues between a god and a mortal do exist but are rather rare. There is Apollo and Orestes (as well as Athena and the Erinyes) in the *Eumenides*, Artemis and Hippolytus, in *Hippolytus*, and Philoctetes and Heracles (if Heracles qualifies as a god) in *Philoctetes*.

³⁰⁶ It is equally reminiscent of the race between Odysseus and the Lesser Ajax, as the former asks Athena to stand by him, and be his *ἐπίτροπος*. Furthermore, the goddess not only makes Odysseus win instead of (swift) Ajax, but she also purposefully humiliates him by making him trip and fall into filth (Ψ: 769-84).

³⁰⁷ Athena calls herself Ajax's *σύμμαχος* (I. 90), while the hero notes that she has been standing by him (Il. 91-2). Similarly, in the *Iliad*, Athena tells Diomedes that she is his *ἐπίταρροθος* (E 808, 828). She also stands by him, as she used to do for his father Tydeus (E 115-20, 802-10), and even becomes Diomedes' charioteer for a short while (E 835-45). One may object that the words *σύμμαχος* and *ἐπίταρροθος* (or *ἐπίτροπος*) describe different kinds of relationships with *σύμμαχος* implying equality between subject and object, and *ἐπίταρροθος* suggesting a hierarchy between them. However, the first instances of the former noun are only found in lyric poetry (for instance, Archil. fr. 108; Sappho fr. 1:28), and I have not been able to find a contrasting use, when these words refer to divine assistance.

³⁰⁸ E 126-7.

³⁰⁹ δυσφόρους ἐπ' ὀμμασι γνῶμας βαλοῦσα (Il. 51-2); ἐγὼ γὰρ ὀμμάτων ἀποστροφῶς αὐγὰς ἀπείρξω σὴν πρόσσῃν εἰσδεῖν. (Il. 69-70) ΑΘ. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ νῦν σε μὴ παρόντ' ἰδὴ πέλας. ΟΔ.: πῶς, εἴπερ ὀφθαλμοῖς γε τοῖς αὐτοῖς ὄρᾳ; ΑΘ.: ἐγὼ σκοτώσω βλέφαρα καὶ δεδορκότα. (Il. 82-4).

The presence of Athena in a play about Ajax immediately activates paradigm (i), and the first lines she addresses to Odysseus appear to be designed to confirm this impression, for the manner in which she recounts Ajax's actions is purposely ambiguous:

ἐνδον γὰρ ἀνὴρ ἄρτι τυγχάνει, κάρα
στάζων ἰδρῶτι καὶ χέρας ξιφοκτόνους. 10
καὶ σ' οὐδὲν εἴσω τῇσδε παπταίνειν πύλης
ἔτ' ἔργον ἐστίν, (...)

The fact that the audience's horizon of expectations is based on paradigm (i) at this point implies that these lines would naturally be understood to refer to Ajax's suicide. As a matter of fact, Athena tells Odysseus that Ajax has finished his deed, and thus that he needs not looking for him anymore. Moreover, Athena's use of the adjective ξιφοκτόνος is particularly revealing. Apart from this passage, this word is only attested twice and refers, in each case, to the action of killing oneself. The first one, most likely anterior to the *Ajax*, is found in Aeschylus' *TrGF* 451q15, and incidentally also qualifies Ajax's suicide, while the second is uttered by Helen, in Euripides' play of the same name, when she announces that she is going to kill herself, if it is true that Menelaus has perished.³¹⁰ Odysseus' answer, however, violates these expectations, as it introduces some elements to the plot that are innovative. We are indeed viewing Athena's vengeance against Ajax, but it takes a different form from that of paradigm (i), thereby setting a wholly new and complex tone from the beginning, and taking the audience away from the comfort of its expectations.

The prologue, with its distinctively Homeric interactions between gods and heroes, mobilises from the very beginning the world of epic poetry, and thus brings to the audience's attention a value system fundamental (although not exclusive) to its functioning, through which we are invited to interpret the play. This system, which both Athena's and Ajax's behaviour presuppose, is articulated through the notion of τιμή, and satellite concepts such as these of ὕβρις, γέρας, μῆνις, or τιμωρία. Τιμή is far more than a question of honour.³¹¹ It touches on the essence of one's identity, for the τιμαί are 'the prerogatives and functions which define the place or status of everyone in the universe, man or god.'³¹² The example of

³¹⁰ Eur. *Hel.* 354.

³¹¹ Conversely, ὕβρις is far more than a question of dishonour.

³¹² Jaillard 2011: 136. See also Detienne and Sissa (1989: 161–2), Jaillard (2005: 49–62).

Achilles at the start of the *Iliad* illustrates well the mechanisms at play. When Agamemnon takes Briseis away from Achilles, he robs the hero of his γέρας (A 185; 276). This is considered to be an act of ὕβρις (A 214; 504) perpetrated by Agamemnon against Achilles, because it undermines Achilles' τιμή and leaves him ἄτιμος. This, therefore, triggers his μῆνις (or χόλος: A 1; 217; 224; 422; 429) as well as his desire to avenge himself; that is to say, to reassert the power through which he acquired his τιμή, thereby deserving his γέρας (in his case his exceptional strength). This is the only means to re-establish (and to force everyone else to acknowledge) his identity as the best of the Achaeans, from which his status and privileges derive, and which has been implicitly challenged by Agamemnon's behaviour. Although the exact word is not used in the play, I shall call this type of compensatory vengeance τιμωρία,³¹³ for the manner in which both Athena and Ajax enact their vengeance clearly reflects the nature of the act of ὕβρις that has been committed against them.

As argued in Part I, paradigm (i) revolves around a conflict of τιμή. It problematises the relationship between gods and heroes on the battlefield, by questioning its nature and articulation. Ajax rejects Athena's help, and, thus, commits an act of ὕβρις by undermining her τιμή, as a victory-granting goddess. This, in turn, leads her to punish him accordingly. We find the same pattern in the play. Athena indicates, just before exiting the stage, that her aim is to punish Ajax's impiety:³¹⁴

τοιαῦτα τοίνυν εἰσορῶν ὑπέρκοπον
μηδέν ποτ' εἶπης αὐτὸς ἐς θεοὺς ἔπος,
μηδ' ὄγκον ἄρη μηδέν, εἴ τινος πλέον
ἢ χειρὶ βριθείς ἢ μακροῦ πλούτου βάθει. 130

This is well understood by the scholiast at Σ *Aj.* 127a who mentions three occasions on which Ajax is traditionally thought to have shown impiety towards Athena. This interpretation is confirmed later in the play by Calchas' prophecy (756-79), which frames what happens to Ajax in those terms. The issue at hand is Athena's μῆνις (757 or ὀργή 777) which the hero has provoked by his arrogance (760-1, 766, 770), as he

³¹³ Interestingly, τιμωρέω is a compound of τιμή and of the verb ὀρομαι (or ὀράω). It etymologically means 'to look after one's τιμή' thereby indicating how deeply connected these two concepts originally are in Ancient Greek. (Chantraine 1120). Another expression used to qualify this kind of vengeance, which implies similar reciprocity or retribution is λῶβην τίνεσθαι: take revenge for an outrage.

³¹⁴ That is to say, an act of ὕβρις against a god.

has boasted that he would earn κλέος without the assistance of anyone (767-9), and then, accordingly, has rejected the help of the goddess (776-7).³¹⁵

Sophocles, however, gives a new twist to paradigm (i). He introduces Ajax's concerted attempt at achieving τιμωρία, which confers to the hero some distinctively Achillean features.³¹⁶ All of the hero's actions and preoccupations in the play reflect values that are constitutive of the worldview illustrated by Achilles in the *Iliad*, and to which he appears to wholly subscribe, as he characterises himself in these terms. His main concerns revolve around the assertion of his τιμή (426-7; 440),³¹⁷ and the preservation of his κλέος (405-9; 439).³¹⁸ By being denied Achilles' arms, Ajax has been deprived of what he considers to be his due γέρας.³¹⁹ From his point of view, this is a grave insult (ὑβρις),³²⁰ since it leaves him ἄτιμος, and, therefore, challenges his identity, his sense of selfhood, which in turn provokes his anger.³²¹

But this is not all. Sophocles takes a step further, by making his Achillean Ajax even more problematic than Achilles already is in the *Iliad*. Since the play begins just as Ajax is failing to enact his vengeance, we are prevented from knowing the exact circumstances of the ὅπλων κρίσις, and thus unable

³¹⁵ The play presents a slightly different version from the one the scholiast, at Σ *Aj.* 127a, alludes to. He lists three occasions instead of two. First, it was told that Ajax cast Athena out of his chariot when she wanted to act as an ally, secondly, that he erased the owl that was painted on the shield he inherited from his father, and finally that he did not follow his father's advice to obey the gods.

³¹⁶ Violence is similarly the instinctive response of Achilles when he is victim of Agamemnon's ὑβρις towards him in *Il.* A 188-215. This is to be expected, since the τιμή held by the Aeacidae, of which both Achilles and Ajax are part, pertains to the concept of δαίς (which is about 'cutting, dividing' and thus entails ideas about fair-distribution and martial prowess, see Part II: 112n90). Accordingly, the most direct manner for them to reassert their τιμή is to demonstrate their force. Agamemnon's τιμή, for instance, belongs to a different realm; it is connected to political power, and, consequently, when he feels challenged in his prerogatives by Achilles in A, he retaliates by using his authority as king. The situations of Achilles and Ajax are therefore very similar, except that Athena stops Achilles, but diverts Ajax against the cattle. See Hesk 2003: 33, although I am not convinced that Ajax's insistence on 'maintaining proximity to Achilles actually creates a distance between the two figures.' There is certainly a difference in that Ajax has angered Athena, but for the rest the mechanism of their respective behaviour is very similar.

³¹⁷ These concerns are obviously not restricted to the world of epic poetry. It is their close combination and the priority Ajax gives to them that are typically epic.

³¹⁸ To some extent, κλέος is the *raison d'être* of epic heroes, for a hero's memory is perpetuated – and thus only existing – because of the κλέος that he has earned, as it becomes poems. Accordingly, κλέος is the very fabric of the medium; it is the necessary condition for epic poetry itself to exist, as it is for heroes. Κλέος is also important in epinician poetry, but this is because it claims to offer to a living person (the victor) the same 'transient immortality', as Hornblower (2004: 92) calls it, as that of dead epic heroes. See Nagy 1986: 89-90; Grethlein 2010: 35-7.

³¹⁹ A γέρας is the prize one receives for holding a certain τιμή. Therefore, it constitutes a signal that someone's τιμή is acknowledged by those who offer this γέρας.

³²⁰ Cairns (1996) convincingly shows that the main problem of the definitions of ὑβρις, successively proposed by MacDowell (1976:14-31), Dickie (1984), and Fisher (1992) stems from 'a view on dishonour which is too narrowly focused on the perpetration of acts of physical or verbal affront.' He is absolutely right to stress that ὑβρις is a 'social phenomena' which 'must be construed in terms of τιμή' and that τιμή 'is the concept with reference to which are balanced the claims of the individual and the right of the others.' However, Jaillard's definition of τιμή is more complete and gives us the key to the comprehension of what is really at stake in situations involving conflicts of τιμαί. Ὑβρις, therefore, refers to the act of violating the order (or the laws) of the world in both human and divine realms. Hence, its association with ἀτιμία: disavowing the τιμή of a god or of a man is precisely an act of ὑβρις in that it is an attack on the equilibrium between the different powers of the universe. Cf. one of the *apophthegmata* attributed to Chilon: ἀδικούμενος διαλλάσσου, ὑβριζόμενος τιμωροῦ.

³²¹ Ajax is also very Achillean in that he prioritises his τιμή over his φίλοι. However, unlike Achilles, he has a 'wife' and a son who depend on him. Moreover, Tecmessa's appeal is reminiscent of Andromache's one to Hector in book Z 407-39.

to tell whether his acts are justified or not (even in a logic where the disavowal of one's *τιμή* is bound to lead to *τιμωρία*). This is why the play is not so much about Athena's revenge on Ajax for his *ὑβρις*, that is to say paradigm (i), than it is about the question of Ajax's place in the world.³²² In other words the play focuses on the assessment of his *τιμή*, or to put it in simpler terms, on what it means to be an *ἄριστος ἀνὴρ*. This takes the form of a negotiation between the three paradigms his figure has developed into by the second half of the fifth-century, stated above.³²³

Athena not only prevents Ajax from re-establishing his *τιμή* after he has been denied Achilles' arms (ll. 426-7; 440), but she even leads him to negate it himself, through the killing of the Greeks' cattle:

ὄρᾱς τὸν θρασύν, τὸν εὐκάρδιον,
τὸν ἐν δαΐοις ἄτρεστον μάχας, 365
ἐν ἀφόβοις με θηρσὶ δεινὸν χέρας;
οἴμοι γέλωτος· οἶον ὑβρίσθην ἄρα.

Ajax makes it absolutely clear: he defines what he has just done as an act of *ὑβρις* towards himself (l. 367: οἶον ὑβρίσθην ἄρα). Furthermore, in the preceding lines, he explicitly states how this act of *ὑβρις* contradicts – and thus impairs – his identity, which he characterises by his prowess ἐν δαΐοις, conforming to his Aeacid lineage.³²⁴ Accordingly, Ajax can only repair this *ὑβρις*, and restore his former identity, by

³²² With Rutherford 2012: 391. Garvie (1998: 136-7) does not believe that Ajax's behaviour should be explained in terms of *ὑβρις* and that we should not take Athena's interpretation of the question at face value. He is right to note that the word is not used by Calchas, when he explains the reason of Athena's *μῆνις*, but the prophet's insistence on the fact that Ajax is being punished for his *τὸ μὴ κατ' ἀνθρώπων φρονεῖν* (ll. 761, 777) clearly indicates that Ajax's attitude towards Athena is to be understood in terms of *ὑβρις*. Acknowledging Ajax's hubristic tendencies, however, does not necessarily lead to a negative assessment of the hero, nor does it undermine his grandeur (do we like Oedipus less for the over-confidence he shows in his intelligence?). Furthermore, the question remains in the background of the play, for the issue of Athena's *μῆνις* has already been solved by the time the play starts. The goddess has re-established her *τιμή* of victory-granting (and spoil-driving: *ἀγελείη*) goddess, by driving Ajax to negate himself. For she has pushed him to kill – and thus cancel – the *λεία* that he is meant, as a warrior, to bring. Hence, the limited scope of her anger: she is happy for Ajax to keep on living now that he is *ἄτιμος*. The question of Ajax's appraisal is, nonetheless, central, and remains pending.

³²³ Hence the centrality of the question 'what sort of man was/is Ajax?', a question first posed by Athena and which persists throughout the play' (Hesk 2003: 123).

³²⁴ Ajax's Aeacid ancestry is noted by himself at l. 387, and by the chorus at l. 645.

exacting τιμωρία against himself: that is, suicide.³²⁵ Although necessary to the preservation of his κλέος,³²⁶ what Ajax achieves through this exemplary gesture, as Gill calls it,³²⁷ is, nonetheless, limited in scope.³²⁸ It does not resolve the supposed ἄτιμία he endured, when he was denied Achilles' arms, since his attempt at responding to this act of ὕβρις (from his point of view at least) with τιμωρία has failed. He is himself aware of it.³²⁹ Since he knows that he cannot obtain reparation himself anymore for the γέρας he has been deprived of, he summons the Erinyes, just before falling on his sword, so that they may take care of his vengeance on his behalf (835-44).

Consequently, the second part of the play turns out to be dedicated to the resolution of the identity crisis triggered by the ὀπλων κρίσις. The appraisal of Ajax's τιμή comes in full focus, even though he is himself already dead.³³⁰ This takes the form of a negotiation between the paradigms outlined above.

³²⁵ One's τιμωρία is determined by on the nature of the τιμή one is trying to preserve, for τιμωρία consists in the demonstration of the power in virtue of which one holds one's τιμή so as to re-establish it. Therefore, in the case of Ajax, physical violence – no matter how shocking it may appear to us or to the fifth-century Athenian audience – is the manner in which he is expected to behave in the world in which he lives.

³²⁶ See Il. 405-7. The lines are almost hopelessly corrupt but the general meaning is rather clear (Kamerbeek 1953: 92). 'The most obvious supplement would involve a reference to Ajax's reputation, or his glorious deeds' (Finglass 2011: 258). In view of the context, the word κλέα seems to be the naturally expected referent of τὰ (and thus subject of φθίνει), echoing the famous Homeric expression κλέος ἄφθιτον (*contra* Σ *Aj* 405 which takes it to imply the judgement of the arms; Hermann (1827: 351) understands τὰ as referring to Ajax's revenge (*vindicta*). They fail to see the opposition between τὰ μέν and τοῖσδε. The scholiast of Σ *Aj* 405 understands the referent of τὰ as εὐτυχία, which is not satisfactory, since it disagrees both in gender and number. Nonetheless, it conveys a similar idea, broadly speaking, to what we have with τὰ κλέα). Finglass is right to note that it would be surprising to have Ajax mention his κλέος in a vague manner. Moreover, using the plural to refer to the κλέος of only one man is infelicitous. Therefore, given the level of corruption of the text, it is legitimate to emend τὰ into τό, as Finglass suggests in his commentary, although he does not go as far as to print it in the text. Accordingly, I follow his *exempli gratia* restoration of Il. 405a-6: εἰ μὲν κλέος | νῦν φθίνει, φίλοι, | τοῖσδε ὁμοῦ βοτοῖς. In this case, the killing of the cattle appears to be a threat to the κλέος that Ajax has acquired so far, as it could make it whither and, thus, fall into oblivion.

³²⁷ Gill 1996: 378.

³²⁸ At Il. 635-45, the chorus connects the imperatives linked to Ajax's πατρώα γενεὰ ἀρίστα to the desirable outcome that death has now become for him. This indicates that we are meant to understand that Ajax's suicide is necessary to the preservation of his κλέος, and thus to the fulfilment of his existence (no matter how δυστυχής) as an epic hero. By killing the Greeks' cattle (λεία), Ajax symbolically nullifies his καλὰ ἔργα – and thus his κλέος. Similarly, at the end of the deception speech, Ajax has come to realise that he can at least reverse his present fallen condition of κακὸς ἀνὴρ (as implied by Athena according to Winnington-Ingram (1980: 55-6)). Through the exemplary gesture of his suicide, he can become an ἐσθλὸς ἀνὴρ again, thereby preserving his κλέος. Ajax mentions that everything might turn out well in the end (685-6), and that he may even be saved (690-1), because he can at least respond to the imperative of an epic hero, even though he has been left ἄτιμος. The chorus and Tecmessa interpret this as the sign of a sudden reversal, as they equate his σεσωμένος (692) to the preservation of his life, while he means the preservation of the memory of who he was. One of the reasons that explains the inherent contradictions in the deception speech, is the fact that Ajax is deepening his new insight on the world, just as he speaks. This means that his state of mind changes during his speech, and, accordingly, so does his decision. He starts his monologue by expressing the new perspective on the world that the pity he feels for Tecmessa and his son has revealed to him. That is, its fundamentally transient nature. From this, he understands that he must yield. However, from line 668, he starts exploring the deeper meaning of his new insight (τί μὴν; why not? does he wonder) which triggers in him a second revelation: that of the cyclical nature of the world, which lies behind transience. He mentions winter yielding to summer, night to day, the stormy sea that calms, and finally sleep from which one always awakes. Through this last example, he finally understands the cyclical nature of all these phenomena, as he declares: οὐδ' αἰ λαβῶν ἔχει (676), and thus that things can be restored to how they were, given the cyclical pattern of the world.

³²⁹ It must be noted that ἄτιμος can mean dishonoured as well as unavenged for; the logical consequence of a failed τιμωρία is to remain ἄτιμος.

³³⁰ Odysseus makes it very clear at Il. 1342-5 that the question of Ajax's burial is deeply connected to that of the assessment of his τιμή, which in turn depends on what it means to be an ἐσθλὸς ἀνὴρ.

(ii) + (iii) The Blameless Hero or the Sore Loser

This is where one of the innovations Sophocles has introduced to the plot takes its fullest form. As was argued in Part I, in the epic paradigm of the myth of Ajax, Achilles' arms are not awarded following a vote by the Greeks; instead, the decision, supposedly taken on the basis of the Trojans' opinion on the matter, is determined by Athena.³³¹ In this case, therefore, Ajax does not lose after a vote, but because of Athena's *πρόνοια*.³³² Ajax is so angered by his defeat that he becomes mad, and as a consequence ends up killing himself. In this model, there is no doubt that his merit is superior to that of Odysseus: his failure to secure Achilles' arms is the repercussion of his act of *ὑβρις* against the goddess. It is a punishment, and, accordingly, he loses the *γέρας* he would logically have obtained.

By changing the nature of Athena's vengeance on Ajax, and displacing her action after the *ὅπλων κρίσις* has taken place, Sophocles opens up the realm of the possible. Similarly to its epic model, Ajax's suicide is a direct consequence of his failure to acknowledge the power of the goddess,³³³ but here we cannot be sure whether or not Ajax deserved in the first place the *γέρας* he was denied. These events are kept out of the audience's reach, since they take place outside of the limits of the play.³³⁴ Consequently, we are forced to reconstruct them from the subjective perspectives of the characters who witnessed them.³³⁵ If it appears fairly certain that the decision was taken after a vote was cast by the Greeks, the exact circumstances of this vote escape us, for what we hear from the different characters in the play does not fully cohere. It is nonetheless possible to recognise, in each case, a strand of paradigm (ii) or (iii).

Ajax refers to the events in a slightly ambiguous manner, but nonetheless his version of the *ὅπλων κρίσις* clearly falls into the paradigm (ii) category.³³⁶ He so strongly believes himself to be entitled to Achilles' arms that he does not even feel the need to justify himself and explain why he lost. The very fact that he was not awarded the first prize is, in his view, the very proof that the *ὅπλων κρίσις* was unfair

³³¹ See Part I: 63-5. Apparently, the *Aethiopis* had the Greeks spy on what Trojan women spontaneously say, while in the *Ilias Parva*, some Trojan prisoners were asked whether Ajax or Odysseus harmed them the most. The decision was taken in this manner lest the decision created havoc in the army.

³³² Σ *Eq.* 1056a. As for Proclus (summary of the *Ilias Parva*), he writes that Odysseus obtains the arms *κατὰ βούλησιν Ἀθηνᾶς*.

³³³ In epic poetry, Ajax commits suicide because he has become mad. Consequently, his death does not serve to repair an act of *ὑβρις* against himself, but is still the effect of Athena's punishment.

³³⁴ Accordingly, Athena remains vague when she explains Ajax's behaviour to Odysseus. She only says that it has been provoked *χόλῳ τῶν Ἀχιλλείων ὁπλῶν* (l. 41).

³³⁵ This is also observed by Hesk 2003: 123.

³³⁶ That is Ajax as 'noble martyr' in the words of Stanford 1963: xxii.

(442-6). Consequently, the picture of the events we can reconstruct from what Ajax relates is ambivalent. He never explicitly mentions the vote, nor does he ever imply that cheating occurred in it. In fact, although he is above all angry at the Atreidae and Odysseus, he also attacks men from the army in his rage, which suggests that he also holds them responsible for his defeat.³³⁷ This insinuates that they did choose to vote for Odysseus. Furthermore, at line 440, he even declares that he is ἄτιμος Ἀργείοισι. This version is interestingly reminiscent of Pindar's one, except for the role of the Atreidae. Ajax is angry at the Atreidae for organising the competition in the first place, at Odysseus for having manipulated the audience (like in *Nemean* 7.20-7, 8.24-5, 32-4), and at the Greeks for having voted against him (like in *Isthmian* 4.35-6, *Nemean* 8.26-7). Some of the remarks uttered by the chorus make the Pindaric echoes even more present.³³⁸ They describe Odysseus as very persuasive (150: σφόδρα πείθει) and insist on how φθόνος never fails to target αἱ μεγάλαι ψυχαί (154-7).

Teucer's account also draws on paradigm (ii). The main difference with Ajax's version consists in the claim that the vote was fraudulent (1135; 1137; 1239-41), which similarly has Pindaric undertones: from *Nemean* 8.26 (ἐν κρυφαῖσι ψάφοις) this time. There are further points of convergence: in both cases, Ajax's most important deeds are enumerated in order to stress how unfair his defeat has been.

As for Agamemnon, he gives voice to paradigm (iii). He accuses Teucer (and implicitly Ajax) of rejecting a decision that has been taken by a majority of judges, simply because he is a sore loser (1239-52). The language he uses is strong, and would probably have made a deep impression on a fifth century audience. He presents Ajax as someone who is ready to oppose decisions that have been democratically – and thus justly – taken by using violence and conceit, provided the decision in question is in his disfavour. Menelaus also echoes paradigm (iii), but his exchange with Teucer further blurs the picture. Like Agamemnon, he states that Ajax's defeat (ἐσφάλη) is to be imputed to the judges. However, he does so just after Teucer has accused him of having been caught in the act of forging votes (κλέπτῃς ψηφοποιός). Consequently, Menelaus fails to deny Teucer's claim, in virtue of which he even seems to be tacitly validating it (1136).

³³⁷ Il. 9.4-100; 298-300.

³³⁸ Cairns 2006: 103-111. Finglass (2011: 179) is right to point out that he 'is too quick to see epinician (or Pindaric) significance in expressions which, while found in epinician, are not distinctively such'. However, some Pindaric undertones are nonetheless present, given that Ajax, who often features in Pindar's odes, is used as example (to illustrate these gnomic observations). See Stanford 1963: 79.

Thus, we never get to know whether Ajax's motives for *τιμωρία* were justified, even in terms of the reparation of *τιμή* only. This means that even from the point of view of the value system he claims to adhere to, Ajax is problematic, and this strongly contributes to creating an aura of ambivalence in the play. Even the closure provided by Odysseus is not satisfactory in regard to this question. It is true that he unambiguously acknowledges Ajax's valour, and even re-establishes himself the *τιμή* of his old enemy:

ἀλλ' αὐτὸν ἔμπας ὄντ' ἐγὼ τοιόνδ' ἐμοὶ
οὐ τὰν ἀτιμάσαιμ' ἄν, ὥστε μὴ λέγειν
ἐν' ἄνδρ' ἰδεῖν ἄριστον Ἀργείων, ὅσοι
Τροίαν ἀφικόμεσθα, πλὴν Ἀχιλλέως.

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However, he never comes back to the circumstances of the *ὅπλων κρίσις*. Ajax can be buried and the play ends, but we are left in the dark concerning crucial questions: why did Odysseus claim Achilles' arms in the first place? What were the circumstances of the judgement? How did Odysseus win?

Conclusion

La pluralité des interprétations, voire le conflit, ne constitue pas un défaut, un vice, mais un apanage de la compréhension en tant que telle au coeur de l'interprétation.

– Paul Ricoeur

In the *Ajax*, therefore, Sophocles exploits the tension between conflicting actualisations of Ajax, each of which present different sets of identities, of ways to appraise the hero for dramatic ends. However, he lets them co-exist, thereby creating a plurality of manners in which to envision the hero.³³⁹ Correspondingly, Ajax's own tragedy consists in realising that he cannot be defined solely by himself. *Τιμή* is a social phenomenon, and as such it is always granted by external actors, be they mortals, or immortals. The plot of the play, consequently, is inherently ironic (in a typically Sophoclean manner), for it focuses on a character who strongly desires to be defined only by his own actions (so much so that he ends up breaking with the society he belongs to, and kill himself), while the play precisely revolves around the question of how we are to judge, and thus categorise, others.

³³⁹ As Finglass rightly notes: 'Sophocles brings his audience to a complex view of his protagonist, which ignores neither his virtues nor his vices' (2011: 52).

In his treatment of Ajax's *gesta*, Sophocles has taken into account and combined the different developments of Ajax's character and his story by the fifth century. He has strikingly managed to juxtapose all paradigms, without giving preference to any of them. Furthermore, first-hand knowledge is purposely limited so that it is impossible to tell whether or not Ajax was the victim of an injustice (no matter how disturbing his reaction is afterwards). This results in a complex and ambivalent portrayal of the hero which confronts us with the difficulty of definition: the play encourages us to form an opinion, while at the same time restricting access to the information needed to judge with full knowledge of the facts. In so doing, Sophocles keeps open what Ricoeur calls *le conflit des interprétations*. Like so many tragedies, the play does not provide any simple answer, but instead allows us to experience the position of the judges, since, ultimately, assessing Ajax's τιμή is our responsibility as members of the audience.

It has often been observed that the play creates a sense that the world somehow changes after Ajax's death. There is indeed a time before and a time after his suicide. However, Sophocles does not oppose nor isolate these two moments from one another. Rather, he invites his audience to think about continuity, by putting on stage a negotiation of epic values in all its complexity: an assessment of the old in the new.³⁴⁰ By obtaining from the Atreidae a concession that Ajax's body should be buried, Odysseus leads them to acknowledge, albeit reluctantly, that the past cannot be fully discarded, and thus that it necessarily needs to be *incorporated* into the present. Likewise, Sophocles does not privilege one paradigm of Ajax at the expense of the others. All three co-exist in the play, and remain in perpetual negotiation.

³⁴⁰ '[T]he heroic and contemporary worlds exist as part of a *continuum* rather than a dichotomy' (Allan and Kelly 2013: 101).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Single-minded Hero

*noctes atque dies patet atri ianua Ditis;
sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras,
hoc opus, hic labor est.*

– Virgil, *Aeneid* VI 126-9

I have chosen to limit the scope of this thesis to the end of the fifth century for the simple reason that all the actualisations of the hero subsequent to Sophocles' Ajax, whilst interesting in their own right, follow one of the three paradigms that were by now established.¹ Even his portrayal in the works of authors from the Second Sophistic, no matter how divergently they aim to position themselves in relation to Homer, are essentially composed from elements that one can already detect, at least *in potentia*, in works from the archaic and the classical period. His myth ceases to renew itself, and, by the same token, to acquire new layers of meaning, reflecting contemporary preoccupations. In this regard it is telling, for instance, that Virgil leaves Ajax out of the *Aeneid*.² The hero also naturally continues to appear in art (vases, paintings, mosaics, etc.), but here too is recognisably Homer's, Pindar's or Sophocles' Ajax.³ A partial exception is Ovid, who appears to have popularised in his *Metamorphosis* an Ajax that could arguably be considered as a new paradigm: that of the simple-minded hero.⁴ But this figure of the stupid, Ajax, too, has its roots in the fifth century, in the work of Antisthenes. Since he is an author from the classical period, we shall now explore his treatment of Ajax, before concluding this study by retracing our steps.

¹ For instance, we know of three fourth-century plays revolving around the hero: Carcinus' *Ajax* (c. 375), Astydama's *Ajax Mainomenos* (c. 360), and Theodectas' *Ajax* (c. 330). Furthermore, Timotheus composed a dithyramb named *Ajax Mainomenos*, while Polemaeus' apparently wrote a satyric *Ajax* (c. 100). In Latin literature, we can list Livius Andronicus' *Ajax Mastigophorus* (240/204), Quintus Ennius' *Ajax* (204/169), Pacuvius' *Armorum Iudicium* (190/140), Accius' *Armorum Iudicium* (140/86). In addition to these, Lucan (*Salt.* 83-4) mentions the performance of the episode of Ajax's madness by a pantomime artist. (This list is not exhaustive). Classical authors who mention the hero in their works usually refer to epic Ajax. Philoctetes considers him as someone close to Achilles and Neoptolemus, but hostile towards Odysseus (*Phil.* 410-3). In Euripides' *Helen* (94-101), Teucer talks about his suicide, as he explains to Helen why he Telamon has exiled him. Finally, in the myth of Er (*Pl. Resp.* 620B), Ajax's soul chooses to be reincarnated into a lion, *μεμνημένη τῆς τῶν ὀπλῶν κρίσεως*.

² Even worse perhaps, he seems to have been transformed into Dido. At any rate, the scene of the encounter of Aeneas and Dido in the *Aeneid* (VI 440-76) is moulded on that of Odysseus and Ajax in the *Odyssey* (λ 543-564). See, for instance, Monti 1981, Tatum 1984, or Panoussi 2002 who also cites previous studies that broach this question.

³ For instance, LIMC Aias I 6, 8-9 (non anecdotal representation), 18-21 (Ajax attending war council amongst other Iliadic heroes), 44 (duel between Ajax and Hector in book H), 47 (Ajax and Hector fighting over a corpse), 51-4, 7 (Battle at the Ships), 59-60 (Ajax retrieving Patroclus' body?), 62 (Hector fleeing before Ajax), 65-6 (Ajax and the Trojans sacrificed to Patroclus), 68-9 (Ajax participating at the funeral in honour of Patroclus), 79 (νεῖκος between Ajax and Odysseus), 87-90 (ὀπλῶν κρίσις), 91-6 (Αἶας μαίνομενος), 98-102 (Ajax prostrate with grief), 107-9, 114, 116-7, 135-8, 141 (Ajax's death).

⁴ *Met.* XIII 1-398.

Antisthenes has written an antilogic pair of speeches (one in the voice of Ajax, the other in that of Odysseus) set in the context of the *ῥπλων κρίσις*.⁵ It is usually dated *c.* 415-410 BCE.⁶ Antisthenes, mainly known to us as a disciple of Socrates and the founder of the Cynic ‘school’ of philosophy, first was a follower of Gorgias, and was thus a writer interested in ethics. Diogenes Laertius credits him with 64 titles in total.⁷ However, his *Ajax* (Αἴας ἢ Αἴαντος λόγος), and his *Odysseus* (Ὀδυσσεὺς ἢ περὶ Ὀδυσσέως),⁸ which are only preserved in *codex Palatinus* 88, are his only surviving works.⁹ Antisthenes’ treatment of the Ajax’s myth fits the new paradigms (ii + iii) that emerged in the fifth century: Achilles’ arms are awarded following a vote, the judges are Greek men, and Athena does not interfere in the *κρίσις*.¹⁰ Antisthenes may possibly have introduced the innovation of the official verbal *ἄγων* which forms the basis on which Achilles’ arms are awarded. In this case, the introduction of the *ἄγων* would have probably stemmed from the conventions of the literary *genre* to which he chose to transpose the myth. Accordingly, there is no doubt that rhetorical preoccupations deeply affected the way Antisthenes’ rendering of Ajax has been shaped.

It is not very clear what Antisthenes sets out to do with these two discourses nor how they are meant to relate to one another, especially since neither hero is explicitly granted victory.¹¹ According to the mythological *datum*, Odysseus is meant to win. His speech is clearly designed to respond to Ajax’s,¹² which is a decisive advantage, for it provides him with the occasion to counter all of his opponent’s attacks.

In his speech, Ajax’s line of arguments is the following:

⁵ The authenticity of the text has been debated, but the most recent studies on the question all conclude that it is genuine. See Declava Caizzi 1966: 89-90; Patzer 1970: 192-3; Focardi 1987: 147-73.

⁶ Worman 2002: 185

⁷ Diog. Laert. VI 15-8.

⁸ The manuscript does not give the titles of the work. They have been inferred from the list transmitted by Diogenes Laertius. He puts them one after the other, in the first volume of Antisthenes’ works (VI 15: 5-8).

⁹ The manuscript contains several rhetoric works: discourses by Antiphon, Lysias’ *Helen* and *Palamedes*, as well as Alcidas’ *Odysseus* (Goulet-Cazé 1992: 6).

¹⁰ In all fifth-century treatments of the *ῥπλων κρίσις*, the decision is no longer based on what some Trojans say (in particular the one Athena takes the appearance of), as it occurs in epic poetry, but there is a vote. Therefore, Athena’s role changes. If she is systematically present on pictorial representations of the episode (with different roles from one vase to the other), she is completely absent from Pindar’s *Nem.* 7, 8 and *Isthm.* 4. In *The Award of the Arms* by Aeschylus, she might have influenced Agamemnon’s decision to have a vote, but probably did not interfere with the vote itself, while she only becomes active after the vote in Sophocles’ *Ajax*.

¹¹ Scholars have been divided over whether or not the dispute has a winner, that is, whether we see just two incompatible views of virtue, or whether the eminently more appealing Odysseus is shown to be the better man’ (Prince 2006: 83).

¹² For instance, *Odysseus*: 15 responds to *Ajax*: 30.

- (i) The judges cannot arbitrate the matter well because their decision will be based on reported words, not on actions they have witnessed themselves (1-5; 18; 31-42).
- (ii) He brought back Achilles' body which was what the Trojans were after (6-12).
- (iii) Odysseus is δειλός, and, therefore, does not deserve the arms (14-6; 21-30)
- (iv) There is no doubt that Ajax himself would win if the matter was judged on the basis of Ajax's actions rather than on conjectures (42-6).

What has often puzzled scholars is how bad Ajax's defence is: he spends more than a third of his speech insisting on the inability of judgement, and this being aimed at the very men he is supposed to convince. It is even longer than the portion of the speech allocated to the critique of Odysseus. It is no wonder, thus, that the consensus among scholars is to assume that Odysseus magisterially wins the argument, while Ajax exposes his gaucherie, and lack of rhetorical aptitude.¹³

As for Odysseus, whose speech is twice as long, his arguments go along these lines:

- (i) He has been more useful to the army than any other Greek, even Achilles. He has been fighting alongside Ajax on the battlefield, while also taking considerable risks on his own, by night, so that Troy may be taken (1-21).
- (ii) Ajax is stupid (ἄμαθής; ἡλίθιος), choleric, and thus unable to understand that he, Odysseus, is braver.
- (iii) The Trojans wanted to have the arms, not Achilles' body.
- (iv) Ajax mistakes force for courage. It is easy and risk-free to fight behind a rampart-like shield. Odysseus takes considerable risk by going inside the enemy's camp.

As expected from him, his discourse is a genuine *tour de force*, as he successfully turns Ajax's own arguments against him. He not only manages to convincingly portray himself as the best of all the Greeks (even before Achilles), but even finds a way to completely undermine Ajax's worth. Odysseus strips his opponent of his best attributes and make them his own. He achieves this thanks to his verbal mastery, which allows him to alter the meaning of key concepts in the debate to his own advantage. For instance, right at the beginning (l. 2), he says that he has done πλείω ἀγαθὰ τὸ στρατόπεδον than anyone else. The debate is supposed to revolve around ἀρετή, and, accordingly, his introduction of the notion of ἀγαθὰ (instead of ἔργα used by Ajax) fits the context. However, by qualifying his ἀγαθὰ in relation to τὸ στρατόπεδον (accusative of relation), he changes the terms of the debate. Ἀρετή is no longer about the deeds one perform, but rather about how useful one's actions are.

¹³ Stanford 1968 [= 1954]: 97; Rankin 1986: 96; Hesk 2000: 119; Worman 2002: 185; Prince 2006: 84; Kennedy 2011: 61-3.

These texts 'have generally been considered epideictic or display speeches, that is, model examples of speeches presenting an ideal version of an argument guaranteed to sway the jury and win the case.'¹⁴ However, this view poses some difficulties. First of all, none of them seem to be designed to persuade a jury.¹⁵ This suggests that the forensic setting of the *ὄπλων κρίσις* serves to portray Ajax and Odysseus in a plausible situation (from a mythological point of view) rather than establishing the *genre* of these two pieces. Even more problematic is the fact that some of the values Ajax incarnates are much closer to Antisthenes' own than are those displayed by Odysseus. In particular, his central idea that virtue (*ἀρετή*) is illustrated through actions (*ἔργα*), not through words (*λόγοι*):

αὐτάρκη δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν, μηδενὸς προσδεομένην ὅτι μὴ
Σωκρατικῆς ἰσχύος. τὴν τ' ἀρετὴν τῶν ἔργων εἶναι, μήτε λόγων πλείστων
δεομένην μήτε μαθημάτων.¹⁶

This is difficult to reconcile with the widespread view that Antisthenes favours Odysseus and, thus, presents a caricatural and awkward Ajax for whom he has little sympathy.¹⁷ Thus, Kennedy's suggestion that these speeches should be understood as examples of *ἡθοποιία* is very attractive;¹⁸ especially since the only work that precedes them in the first volume of Antisthenes' works, according to Diogenes' list, appears to be a treatise on characterisation through speech, if one may trust the cue from its title; that is *Περὶ λέξεως ἢ περὶ χαρακτήρων*. If this supposition is correct, the *Ajax* and the *Odysseus* are perhaps meant to exemplify the theories of the treatise. They would then constitute two ideal cases of *ἡθοποιία*.

It is quite certain that these two speeches had a lasting effect on the way the figure of Ajax has subsequently been rendered and perceived.¹⁹ The main reason for this finds its root in the very nature of *ἡθοποιία*. In order to be able to represent a character through *λέξεις* alone (*i.e.* without action involved) that can be recognisable to the audience/reader, one necessarily has to turn it into an archetype, and thus to reduce considerably his complexity, so that he may be defined by only a few main concepts. Ajax

¹⁴ Kennedy 2011: 22. Jebb qualifies them as such in a footnote (1907, xlviii, n1).

¹⁵ Kennedy 2011: 32-45.

¹⁶ Fr. 70 (transmitted in Diog. Laert. VII 11.2).

¹⁷ Clearly this is not an attempt to put forward an ideal argument for Ajax's defence, but is rather an attempt to put forward an argument for the defence of Ajax's ideals. (Kennedy 2011: 28)

¹⁸ Kennedy 2011: 33, 37-44. He shows that even Odysseus' discourse does not appear to aim at winning the judges over, as he is also dismissive of them at line 3.

¹⁹ Antisthenes is not very much read these days, however, it seems rather certain that Ovid based his own rendering of the *ὄπλων κρίσις* (*Met.* XIII 1-381) on his *Ajax* and *Odysseus*, thereby widely popularising the paradigm of the 'stupid Ajax'.

represents the man of action, Odysseus that of discourses. But this is not all. Their representation is even further simplified in virtue of the fact that they work in binary opposition: they define one another negatively, and, as a consequence, find themselves further polarised.²⁰

Consequently, the paradigm of the stupid Ajax does not emerge from the manner in which he characterises himself through his own speech, but rather it originates from Odysseus' antagonism, and the specific attacks the latter makes against Ajax in his speech. Furthermore, Odysseus' persuasiveness is reinforced by the fact that these two texts induce us to conceive of Ajax in Odysseus' terms because of the manner in which they are set up.²¹

* * *

The Ajax Theme

And so ends the journey. Telamonian Ajax has guided us through the realms of archaic and classical Greek culture. *Ritroviam l'orme nostre insieme ratto*;²² not for fear of the new territories we might tread upon, were we to continue down our path, but in order to reflect for a while on the route taken so far. As we have seen, the myth of Ajax may be organised into three different paradigms, which were shaped both by the contexts in which they were created and by earlier iterations of the hero. In retrospect, when examining the evolution of his character as a whole, three distinct factors appear to have been critical to its development. These are: (i) the audience to which the works we have analysed was addressed to, (ii) the *genre* to which they belong, and (iii) the intensity of the focus put on the hero in them.

As the title of this last section indicates, I would like to conclude this study in the spirit of Stanford's seminal work on Odysseus, and briefly examine the most prominent themes that run through the myth of Ajax:

²⁰ We find a similar opposition in the *Hippias Minor*. Socrates discusses with Hippias of Elis who is the best among the Greeks: Odysseus the πολυτροπώτατος (364c) or Achilles, the ἀπλούστατος (364e).

²¹ This obviously works both ways, and the figure of the coward and treacherous Odysseus finds itself strengthened.

²² Dante, *Inferno* VIII: 102.

The Homeric poems mark the first step in the literary reception of Ajax. I have argued that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* at times reveal an acute awareness of the constitutive features that characterise Ajax's identity in early Greek hexameter poetry. I suggest that the nub of the pre-Iliadic *gesta* of the hero is the over-confidence he draws from his invulnerable body, resulting in Athena's hostility towards him, as it leads him to deny her τιμή to Athena ἀγέλειη and to reject her.²³ Accordingly, I think that his pre-Homeric myth was articulated along these lines: (i) Ajax becomes invulnerable thanks to Heracles' intervention; (ii) he goes to Troy like his father before him; (iii) he wants to be self-determined and to owe his deeds to nobody but himself; (iv) he accordingly refuses Athena's assistance; (v) he retrieves Achilles' body; (vi) Athena gets her revenge on Ajax, by depriving him of the arms; (vii) this leads to his committing suicide.

ἈΛΚΗ AND ΔΑΙΣ

Ajax appears to have already belonged to the Aeacidae in pre-Homeric traditions. As such, Ajax is a hero closely connected to the concepts of ἀλκή, and of δαίς, like Achilles. There are two sides to the concept of δαίς: fair distribution and prowess at war. Accordingly, the critical moment of their respective *gesta* (by this I mean the episode that determines the end of both heroes) is caused by a dysfunctional distribution of τιμαί (Agamemnon taking Briseis away in the case of Achilles, Odysseus taking away the arms in the case of Ajax). The main difference between the two heroes, however, pertains to the nature of the conflicts they face. The figure of Achilles exemplifies, in a war context, the issue of ἀτιμία at a human level, while that of Ajax operates, also in a war context, on the plane of the divine. Consequently, the epic paradigm of Ajax probably explored the tension between gods and heroes, as it interrogated their relationship, and the consequences of their relationship.

²³ This motif may either stem from the famous 'tower-shield' that he wields, or underlie his attribution, amongst all other heroes, of this unique weapon in early Greek epic poetry.

By the start of the fifth century, Ajax's myth takes a new turn, as it is now the Greeks who award Achilles' arms, casting a vote. As a result Athena's agency recedes into the background.. The change is fundamental, and generates two antithetical paradigms: one in which Ajax is a noble martyr, the other in which he is a sore loser. The goddess's decreasing importance is probably to be explained by the ever-growing authority of the *Iliad*, since the invulnerability motif is absent from the poem, and thus a vulnerable Ajax becomes the norm. As a matter of fact, without this motif, there is no longer a reason for a conflict between Athena and Ajax. This paradigm shift may also have been influenced by the popularity of Pindar's version, in which Athena is equally absent so that Ajax may be represented as victim. Whatever reason lies behind this shift, a new set of tensions is generated, this time around the vote itself, and between all parties (the contenders, those who set the contest, and the judges).

ἈΨΑΘΗΣ

Aeschylus' treatment of Ajax (whether in *The Award of the Arms* or the *Thracian Women*) appears to lay the foundation of a slow and stupid Ajax, which is then crystallised in Antisthenes' adaptation of the episode of the ὀπλῶν κρίσις, a paradigm that still accompanies him now, and through the lens of which his representation in the *Iliad*, in Pindar's poems, or in Sophocles' *Ajax* is regularly (although wrongly) interpreted. It must be noted that even though Antisthenes is our earliest extant source for this model of Ajax, it is through Ovid that that this model has been popularised. This explains its overwhelming success, for Ovid was still read throughout the Middle Ages, when Greek literature was mostly forgotten. Furthermore, from the Renaissance onwards, students' first contact with antiquity was made, more often than not, through Latin literature; even mythology textbooks today tend to follow Ovid rather than the patchy accounts scattered in Greek literature.

* * *

– τίς τὰρ ὁδ' ἄλλος Ἀχαιὸς ἀνὴρ ἦϋς τε μέγας τε
ἔξοχος Ἀργείων κεφαλὴν τε καὶ εὐρέας ὤμους;
– οὗτος δ' Αἴας ἐστὶ πελώριος ἔρκος Ἀχαιῶν.

Let us revisit the quote with which we started.²⁴ Helen's judgement, in spite of its abruptness, is accurate. It resonates in all subsequent representations of Ajax: from the eighth century solitary bronze figure on the cover picture of this thesis, to Bacchylides' *Ode* 13, or Antisthenes' *Ajax*;²⁵ and even in more modern treatments of Ajax, such as Ugo Foscolo's tragedy about him, or, on a more humorous note, John Harington's *Metamorphosis of Ajax* (into a toilet).²⁶ Helen's reply also reflects a general tendency towards simplification in regard with Ajax's *gesta* throughout the history of its reception (with the notable exception of Sophocles): Ajax is hulking and efficient, he is the ultimate cleanser, but do not expect more details about him. I hope to have shown in this thesis that Ajax deserved a more thorough study.

²⁴ P. 2.

²⁵ This is perhaps the oldest representation of the hero. On the identification of the figurine as Ajax, see Jenkins 2002.

²⁶ This surprising transformation is based on the pun 'a jakes', jakes being a slang word for toilet in the Renaissance.

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