PHTHIAN ACHILLES

The name of Homeric Phthia was connected by several scholars with *φθίω* and related words: there are earlier attempts at a somewhat 'ghostly' interpretation, which sees it as part of the empire of death; in that context it was mentioned by some authors that Socrates in Plato's *Crito* quotes a prophecy, made in a dream by a white-clothed woman, *Ὦ Σώκρατες, ἤματί κεν τριτάτῳ Φθίην ἐρίβωλον ἵκοιο.*[1] Subsequently, Gregory Nagy proposed connecting Phthia with *φθί-* and understanding it with a view to Achilles' destiny. For Nagy, there are several points of reference:[2] The *κλέος ἄφθιτον* connected with Achilles' death at Troy is contrasted with the life at *Φθίη* without *κλέος* (*Iliad* 9.412–3); and *φθίσεσθαι* at Troy with coming home to *Φθίη* (*Iliad* 19.329–30). Furthermore Nagy discusses Phthia in its relation to *φθί-* under the aspect of the circle of vegetal life, as Phthia has the epitheton *βωτιανείρη* (*Iliad* 1.155): Phthia 'is the hero's local Earth, offering him the natural cycle of life and death'. Nagy's interpretation brings the famous 'simile of leaves' to mind and makes us think also of the wide-spread use of plants in sepulcral art, inscriptions and poetry.[3]

It is not the aim of this note, to discuss the arguments for a connection of 'Phthia' and *φθί-* and the proposals made for the interpretation of the name. But for any discussion and understanding it may be of interest that the relationship between 'Phthia' and *φθίω* was used by an ancient author, obviously with remarkable effect. This is Strattis, and I allude to a very short fragment in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistai*:[4]

Φθιῶτ' Ἀχιλλεῦ

It would be rather difficult to see a joke (and to understand it), if Athenaeus did not give an explanation of his quotation:

ἦν δ' ὄντως λεπτότατος καὶ μακρότατος ὁ Κινησίας, εἰς ὃν καὶ ὅλον δρᾶμα γέγραφεν Στράττις, Φθιώτην Ἀχιλλέα αὐτὸν καλῶν διὰ τὸ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ ποιήσει συνεχῶς τὸ
Φθιῶτα
λέγειν. παίζων οὖν εἰς τὴν ἰδέαν αὐτοῦ ἔφη· Φθιῶτ' Ἀχιλλεῦ.

* For helpful remarks on this note, I would like to thank M. Griffin, and the anonymous referee for *CQ*.

[1] Cf. *RE* 20.1 (Stuttgart, 1941), 949–51 s.v. Phthia I (E. Bernert), at 950–1 (also for earlier interpretations). Plato, *Crito* 44B1f.; cf. Bernert, at 951.

[2] G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore, 1999[2]), 184–5; cf. now J. Grethlein, *Das Geschichtsbild der Ilias. Eine Untersuchung aus phänomenologischer und narratologischer Perspektive*, Hypomnemata 163 (Göttingen, 2006), 137, with further literature.

[3] 'Simile of leaves': Cf. Grethlein (n. 2), 85–105. Sepulcral art: cf. now J.-C. Decourt, *Inscriptions grecques de la France (IGF)*, Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée 38 (Lyon–Paris, 2004), 158–60, no. 119; F. Hildebrandt, *Die attischen Namenstelen. Untersuchungen zu Stelen des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Berlin, 2006), 63–7, both with further literature.

[4] Ath. *Deipnosoph.* 12.551d. Cf. R. Kassel and C. Austin (edd.), *Poetae Comici Graeci (PCG)*, vol. 7. Menecrates–Xenophon (Berlin–New York, 1989), 633, fr. 17; A. Meriani, 'Il Cinesia di Strattis (fr. 14–22 Kassel–Austin)', in I. Gallo (ed.), *Seconda miscellanea filologica, Quaderni del dipartimento di scienze dell'antichità* 17 (1995), 33–4, fr. 17. I quote text and translation after D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric V: The New School of Poetry and Anonymous Songs and Hymns*, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 144 (Cambridge, MA–London, 1993), 61, no. 775.

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Cinesias really was very thin and very tall. Strattis wrote a play about him, calling him 'Phthian Achilles' since he often used the vocative form

Phthian

in his poetry. So Strattis in mockery of his physical appearance addressed him as 'Phthian Achilles'.

The consumptive appearance of Cinesias, poet of Dithyrambs, is mentioned also by other authors, who called him 'thin' or compared him rather rigorously with a skeleton.[5] As is well known, this was only one of several possibilities in giving a caricature of notorious Cinesias.[6] It is true that it is possible to discuss the real meaning of Strattis' joke on Cinesias, but the main point here is that 'Phthian' could be understood in antiquity as 'mockery of his physical appearance'.[7] Even if this was part of a comedy, I would think that when Cinesias could be a 'Phthian Achilles', this is another reason to see Phthia as a region 'of consumption'.[8]

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[5] For Cinesias cf. A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy* (Oxford–New York, 1927), 59–61. Strattis' jokes on that man: Meriani (n. 4), 21–45; Pickard-Cambridge, 60–1. Thinness: Cf. Meriani (n. 4), 23.33–34.39. Skeleton: Galen, *Hippocr. aphor.* 18.1.149 (Campbell [n. 4], 55, no. 8); scholiast on Ar. *Ran.* 152–3 (Campbell [n. 4], 45, no. 3). For images of poets and philosophers as skeletons in another context cf. K. M. D. Dunbabin, 'Sic erimus cuncti ... the skeleton in Graeco-Roman art', *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 101 (1986), 185–255; K. Schefold, *Die Bildnisse der antiken Dichter, Redner und Denker* (Basel, 1997²), 300–2, figs. 175–8. One should remember that such attention to physical appearance has parallels in art; cf. N. Himmelmann, *Realistische Themen in der griechischen Kunst der archaischen und klassischen Zeit*, Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts 28, suppl. vol. (Berlin–New York, 1994), 19.

[6] Cf. Kassel and Austin (n. 4), at 633, fr. 17; B. Zimmermann, *Dithyrambos. Geschichte einer Gattung*, Hypomnemata 98 (Göttingen, 1992), 119–21.

[7] Cf. Meriani (n. 4), 33–4, with a discussion of proposals.

[8] The question, whether Phthia is a landscape or a city, was treated also in antiquity. Cf. Bernert (n. 1), 949–51; E. Visser, *Homers Katalog der Schiffe* (Stuttgart–Leipzig, 1997), 654–7. For 'phthisis' in medicine cf. K.-H. Leven, *Antike Medizin. Ein Lexikon* (Munich, 2005), 701–2 (M. Stamatu).

EURIPIDES, *ALCESTIS* 320–2: AN OLD CONJECTURE REVIVED

δεῖ γὰρ θανεῖν με· καὶ τόδ' οὐκ ἐς αὔριον
οὐδ' ἐς τρίτην μοι †μηνὸς† ἔρχεται κακόν.
ἀλλ' αὐτίκ' ἐν τοῖς οὐκέτ' οὖσι λέξομαι.

So James Diggle's Oxford Classical Text of 1984. The large majority of scholars since Musgrave's edition of 1778 have suspected or condemned *μηνός*, particularly after Nauck's laconic *vitiosum* in his third edition of 1870; and L. P. E. Parker will do so in her forthcoming edition with commentary of *Alcestis* (Oxford, 2007), from which she kindly showed me her note: see below, at the end. All rightly disregard the scholia's facile explanation '*this* month'; any idea of 'month' is contextually unapt. L. Weber,

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