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"Homeric Phthia"

By C.J. MACKIE

THIS PAPER DEALS with references in the *Iliad* to the various "homes" of Achilles—his war camp on the shore at Troy, his main homeland of Phthia in Thessaly, and indeed his appointed end in the afterlife itself. The initial focus of attention is the location of Achilles' camp within the Greek army at Troy, but the primary subject of discussion is his Thessalian background. The case is put forward that the clear textual identification for the location of his camp at Troy (8.222-26=11.5-9), runs counter to the comparative obscurity of Phthia within the Greek cultural context. The central argument of the paper is that in later books of the *Iliad* a play on words takes place that associates Phthia with the land of the dead. This association of Phthia with Hades accompanies Achilles' sudden determination to kill Hector, after the death of Patroclus is announced to him (in Book 18). As Achilles' own doom draws closer, so Phthia becomes imbued with a sense of death and descent. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of references to Phthia in Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis* and Plato's *Crito*. In these references the death-associations inherent in the name Phthia help to inform the imminent deaths of Iphigeneia and Socrates.

Homer's *Iliad* rarely seeks to identify precisely where individual landmarks around Troy are located in relation to one another. As readers, we are conscious that the text refers to many different landmarks—trees, waterways, gates, walls, tombs, and so forth—and reference to these helps us to visualise the topography and the physical setting for the war at Troy. But it is virtually impossible to map out these landmarks with any precision, even if one wanted to, in that reference is usually made to them for the sake of the immediate narrative contexts in which they lie.¹ The same is true of the locations of individual Greek camps within the army. Little attention within the poem is paid to identifying precisely where the Greek camps are situated

1. See, for instance, the tomb of Ilus, who is the eponymous founder of Troy, and grandfather of Priam (cf. 20.230-36). The tomb of Ilus is referred to at 10.415; 11.166, 371-72; and 24.349 in very different narrative contexts. Hainsworth (1993) (in his notes to 10.415-17 and 11.166) describes this tomb as one of the "permanent landmarks" of the Iliadic Troy. Despite its prominence however, it is impossible to identify a specific location for it in relation to other landmarks (although it is described as "distant from the surf" [νόσφιν ἀπὸ φλοίσβου, 10.416]).

in relation to each another, and indeed there are some inconsistencies in the references that are to be found.² Given the overall absence of specific detail about the positions of the Greek princes, it seems to be very significant that three of them, Odysseus, Ajax, and Achilles, are identified clearly in relation to one another. Twice we are told that Achilles and Ajax are situated on the flanks of the army, and that Odysseus is right in the middle. The first of these passages (8.222-26) describes Agamemnon's attempt to attract the attention of the Greek army by standing on Odysseus' ship. The second (11.5-9) deals with the figure of Eris, who is intent on stirring up the Achaeans.

στῇ δ' ἐπ' Ὀδυσσεὺς μεγακῆτεϊ νηϊ μελαίνῃ.
 ἢ ῥ' ἐν μεσάτῳ ἔσκε γεγωνέμεν ἀμφοτέρωσσε.
 ἤ μὲν ἐπ' Αἴαντος κλισίας Τελαμωνιάδασο
 ἢ δ' ἐπ' Ἀχιλλῆος, τοί ῥ' ἔσχατα νῆας εἴσας
 εἶρυσαν, ἠνορέῃ πίσυνοι καὶ κάρτεϊ χειρῶν·

(Il. 8.222-26 [=11.5-9])³

He stood on the great-hollowed black ship of Odysseus
 which was in the middle, so that he could shout out to both sides,
 both to the shelters of Telamonian Ajax, and to those of Achilles;
 since these two had drawn up their well-balanced ships
 on the flanks, trusting in their courage and in the strength of their hands.

The significant thing about these passages is the way that the positions of the three within the army help to inform their heroic roles and characters within the poem as a whole. The Odysseus figure of the *Iliad* is a fundamentally gregarious individual, one who draws his power from being at the heart of the community of the princes. He is an integral figure in the various processes of decision-making within the debates and discussions.⁴ It is appropriate in this context that he has his ship right in the centre where important decisions are made. Achilles and Ajax by contrast are located at either end of the line of ships (ἔσχατα, "flanks," 8.225;11.8), and this is testimony to their greatness as warriors. Both of them have faith in their own martial abilities, and this is an integral part of their placement within the line

2. For some of the difficulties involved in reconstructing the order, see Janko (1992), 13.681 n., who discusses Aristarchus' claim to have established the order of Greek camps. See too J. Cuillandre, (1944), 23-34.

3. Translations from the Greek in this paper are my own. It is worthy of note that only a minority of mss. retain 8.224-26 (that is, the placement of the camps of Ajax and Achilles on the flanks in the earlier episode). These lines are more appropriate to the later episode involving Eris than the former (on this see Kirk [1990], ad 8.223-26), although they are not entirely inappropriate to Agamemnon's action.

4. For some of the main references, see 1.430ff. (Odysseus takes Chryseis back to her father); 2.246ff. (Odysseus upbraids and beats Thersites); 2.284ff. (Odysseus' speech in the assembly); 4.338ff. (he is rebuked harshly by Agamemnon); 9.168ff. (Odysseus is a prominent member of the embassy to Achilles), and the principal spokesman (9.225ff. and 677ff.); 10.248ff. (he goes out on his spying mission with Diomedes—the "Doloneia"); 14.82ff. (he accuses Agamemnon of cowardice).

(8.226=11.9).⁵ But their positions on the flanks are also appropriate to their marginal roles in the decision-making of the entire Greek army within the *Iliad* itself. Ajax plays no part in counsel at all, apart from his limited involvement in the embassy to Achilles in Book 9.⁶ And Achilles withdraws himself from the Greek army entirely after his dispute with Agamemnon in the first book of the poem. Achilles is characterized by his separation and isolation from the community of warriors in the *Iliad*, and his position on one of the flanks helps to convey this. On the basis of the two references to his position in the army one might think of Achilles within the poem as situated physically somewhere between the Greeks and the marine realm of his mother Thetis. The placement of his encampment within the army is appropriate to his frame of mind and his *modus operandi* after the dispute with Agamemnon.

The unambiguous identification of Achilles' position within the army at Troy should be contrasted with the obscurity of his homeland on the Greek mainland. Unlike many of the Greek princes in the poem who have a clearly discernible quasi-historical provenance, Achilles has a rather more mysterious background. It will not be the task of this paper to consider the Homeric references to Phthia within the context of known Thessalian geography and history.⁷ Scholars from Hellenistic times have explored the Thessalian background of the Iliadic Achilles, not always with great success.⁸ The task in this paper is rather to consider the apparent linguistic connection bound up in the φθι- element, between Homeric Phthia and φθίνω/φθίω/φθινύθω ("waste away," "perish"). This linguistic connection,

5. It is worth noting the references to Ajax as the best warrior after Achilles (2.768-69 and 17.278-80). Such references of course accord well with their respective positions on the flanks.

6. For Ajax's part in the embassy to Achilles (9.168ff.), see 9.223 (he nods to Phoenix), and 624-42 (his speech to Odysseus urging him to quit the mission).

7. Sir Denys Page (1959) 126, expressed concern about the homeland of Achilles, the fact that the greatest warrior of the poem is situated in a comparative backwater: "one thing is clear enough, that the greatest hero of the *Iliad* is being confined to a relatively obscure and insignificant territory. . . ." Page's premise was that Achilles should have a homeland that befits his greatness within the poem because anything less does him a disservice. My own view by contrast is that there are good literary grounds for the "insignificant territory" which is allocated to Achilles; and by no means does his homeland need to have the same kind of political and military importance as that of Agamemnon. Indeed the whole conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon in the *Iliad* is constructed around different kinds of identities and strengths which the two of them possess. This means in practice that there are good literary reasons for ensuring that Achilles does *not* have a powerful political and military background at home like that of Agamemnon behind him. Cf. Kirk (1985) 186: "(Achilles) was a well-known individual fighter in the poetical tradition, but that does not mean that like Agamemnon he had to be a great ruler back on the Greek mainland."

8. See Hainsworth (1993) 115, ad 9.395; and Janko (1992) 133, ad 13.685-88. Strabo in particular goes into great detail in order to resurrect the original homeland of Achilles (*Geographia*, 9.5.5-14). Strabo begins with the Homeric references to the homelands of Achilles, and then considers them in a much wider mythical, historical, and geographical context. There is no real doubt in Strabo's mind about the historicity of the places from where Achilles is supposed to have come. The historian's task as he sees it is to try where possible to clarify the various obscurities that lie in Homer's text in the matter of Thessalian geography, of which he admits there are many.

whether real or imagined, is played upon by the poet in later books (Books 18 and 19), after the death of Patroclus, and thus the name of Achilles' home region in Thessaly becomes associated with the notion of death and descent. This is appropriate in one sense because by this stage of the poem events have created their own momentum; the message to Achilles of Patroclus' death, and the subsequent determination of vengeance against Hector (both described in Book 18), mean that Achilles will never return home, but rather he will die at Troy at the hands of Paris and Apollo. Within the later books of the *Iliad* Achilles has to confront his imminent death (cf. 18.95ff.; 19.408ff.; 22.358ff.; 24.131-32; and also *Od.* 11.465ff. and 24.15ff.); and a play on words takes place that links together his fate and his homeland.

In order to examine this it is worth listing the references to Phthia (and Hellas) within the *Iliad* itself. This will reveal a significant distinction in the way that the name is used before the commencement of Book 18, and after it. Prior to Antilochus' message to Achilles of the death of Patroclus (18.18ff.) Phthia functions as the name of a specific homeland in the normal fashion, without any particular resonance beyond the name itself. Thus it functions much as the name Argos does for Diomedes, Ithaca for Odysseus, Sparta for Menelaus, and so forth. After the death of Patroclus however, when the fact of Achilles' own doom becomes clearer and much more immediate (as it does at 18.95ff.), Phthia becomes more closely associated with notions of death. This change in the nuances of the language in the latter part of the poem parallels the fundamental transformation that takes place within Achilles himself. In response to the death of Patroclus Achilles enters into a state of extreme grief (18.22ff.), and separates himself from those around him by rejecting the basic elements of life (especially food and drink).⁹ By deciding in no uncertain terms that he will kill Hector, Achilles confronts the fact that his next journey is to Hades, not to Thessalian Phthia.

Altogether the name Phthia is cited eleven times in the first sixteen books of the *Iliad* before the death of Patroclus, and three times afterwards. Worthy of note is the fact that the name of the region appears only in speeches, apart from the reference to it in the narrative of the Catalogue (2.683).¹⁰ Of the eight speeches in which the name occurs in the *Iliad*, four are uttered by Achilles himself. There are six references to Phthia in quick

9. For Achilles' rejection of food and drink, see especially Book 19 where the subject is a very prominent one (155ff.; 216-37; 303-08; 319-21; 342ff.). In the later books of the *Iliad* Achilles also denies himself a bath, sleep and sex, until Thetis convinces him (24.128ff.) that he should change his *modus operandi*. The final book of the poem therefore deals with his "restoration" into life prior to his imminent physical death (cf. 24.132).

10. *Il.* 1.155 (Achilles); 1.169 (Achilles); 2.683 (Catalogue narrative); 9.253 (Odysseus); 9.363 (Achilles); 9.395 (Achilles); 9.439 (Phoenix); 9.479 (Phoenix); 9.484 (Phoenix); 11.766 (Nestor); 16.13 (Achilles); 19.299 (Briseis); 19.323 (Achilles); 19.330 (Achilles). *Od.* 11.496 (Achilles).

succession in Book 9, which goes some way to underlining the past relationship at home between Achilles and Phoenix. Achilles threatens to return to Phthia (9.356ff.) despite pressure from Odysseus and Phoenix, who both recall the day when Peleus sent him to Agamemnon (9.253=9.439; cf. 11.766, when the same formula is used of Menoetius/Patroclus). As it turns out, any prospect of Achilles returning home is ended when Patroclus, under no small pressure from Nestor (11.645ff.), decides to reenter the fray even without his master (16.21ff.), and is duly killed by Hector. Our first task therefore is to consider references to Phthia in the first sixteen books of the *Iliad*, which are cited as follows:

1: 1.155-56: "Never in deep-soiled fertile Phthia did (the Trojans) lay waste my crops" (οὐδέ ποτ' ἐν Φθίῃ ἐριβώλακι βωτιανείρῃ | καρπὸν ἐδηλήσαντ'). Achilles says this to Agamemnon in the context of the dispute between the two of them, insisting that he has no personal animosity towards the Trojans.

2: 1.169-70: "Now I shall go to Phthia, since it is better by far to go back home with my curved ships. . . ." (νῦν δ' εἴμι Φθίηνδ', ἐπεὶ ἡ πολὺ φέρτερόν ἐστιν | οἴκαδ' ἵμεν σὺν νηυσὶ κορωνίσιν). Achilles utters this at the end of the same speech as above, no. 1. Like most threats to go home this proves to be no more than rhetorical posturing; but it is significant that twice in the heat of the dispute with Agamemnon Achilles refers by name to his homeland.

3: 2.681-85: "Now those again that inhabited Pelasgian Argos, and dwelt in Alus, and Alope, and Trachis, and that held Phthia and Hellas, land of beautiful women, were called Myrmidons and Hellenes and Achaeans, of the fifty ships of these the commander was Achilles." (Νῦν αὖ τοὺς ὅσσοι τὸ Πελασγικὸν Ἄργος ἔναιον, | οἳ τ' Ἄλον οἳ τ' Ἀλόπην οἳ τε Τρηχῖνα νέμοντο, | οἳ τ' εἶχον Φθίην ἡδ' Ἑλλάδα καλλιγύναικα, | Μυρμιδόνες δὲ καλεῦντο καὶ Ἕλληνες καὶ Ἀχαιοί, | τῶν αὖ πεντήκοντα νεῶν ἦν ἀρχὸς Ἀχιλλεύς). This is the account in the Catalogue of Ships. The entry is characterized by the relative obscurity of many of the references.¹¹

4-9: There are six references to Phthia in Book 9 which occur in quick succession as follows:

11. For the historicity of the places cited, see Kirk's notes, (Kirk [1985]) ad 2.681, 682, 683-84.

- 9.252-53: “Surely thus your father Peleus advised you on the day when he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon” (ἤ μὲν σοί γε πατήρ ἐπετέλλετο Πηλεὺς | ἤματι τῷ ὅτε σ’ ἐκ Φθίης Ἀγαμέμνονι πέμπε). Odysseus utters this as part of the embassy sent by Agamemnon to try to get Achilles to return to the fighting. Similar sentiments are referred to elsewhere in the poem (cf. 7.124-28; 11.786-89; 18.324-27; and note that 9.253=9.439=11.766).
- 9.363: “On the third day I would come to deep-soiled Phthia” (ἤματί κε τριτάτῳ Φθίην ἐρίβωλον ἰκοίμην). This is part of Achilles’ threat to go home which he utters to the embassy of the Greeks; although of course he never acts on it. In an important post-Homeric reference to Phthia, this line is quoted, with the appropriate adaptation, by Socrates in Plato’s *Crito* (on which see below).
- 9.395-96: “There are many Achaean maidens throughout Hellas and Phthia, daughters of great men. . . .” (whom Achilles could marry) (πολλαὶ Ἀχαιῖδες εἰσὶν ἅν’ Ἑλλάδα τε Φθίην τε, | κοῦραι ἄριστήων). This statement is part of Achilles’ rejection of Agamemnon’s offer to give him one of his three daughters in marriage with a full and generous dowry if he will only return to the fighting.
- 9.439 (=9.253): “On the day when he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon” (ἤματι τῷ ὅτε σ’ ἐκ Φθίης Ἀγαμέμνονι πέμπε). This time the line referring to the day of Achilles’ departure from Peleus at Phthia is uttered by Phoenix as part of his attempt to pressure Achilles back into the fighting.
- 9.478-80: “Then I fled away through spacious Hellas and came to deep-soiled Phthia, mother of flocks, to lord Peleus” (φεῦγον ἔπειτ’ ἀπάνευθε δι’ Ἑλλάδος εὐρυχόροιο, | Φθίην δ’ ἐξικόμην ἐριβώλακα μητέρα μῆλων | ἐς Πηλῆα ἄναχθ’). The speaker is Phoenix, who tells the story of how he came to live in Phthia after a serious dispute with his father Amyntor (9.444ff.).
- 9.483-84: “He made me rich, and gave me many people, and I lived in a remote part of Phthia” (καί μ’ ἀφνειὸν ἔθηκε, πολὺν δέ μοι ὥπασε λαόν· | ναῖον δ’ ἐσχατιὴν Φθίης). This is part of the same speech of Phoenix as the above in which he explains how he came to rule over the Dolopians.

10: 11.766 (=9.253=9.439): “On the day when he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon” (ἤματι τῷ ὅτε σ’ ἐκ Φθίης Ἀγαμέμνονι πέμπε). Nestor is the third of the Greeks to refer to the day of their departure from Phthia to Agamemnon, although this time the reference is to Menoetius arranging the despatch of his son Patroclus to Agamemnon. This particular reference to

Phthia is part of the strong pressure that Nestor brings to bear upon Patroclus to get him and Achilles back into the fighting.

11: 16.13: "Have you alone heard some message from Phthia?" (ἤέ τιν' ἀγγελίην Φθίης ἐξ ἔκλυες οἶος;). In this reference Achilles investigates the reason for the tears of Patroclus, who has just been among the wounded Greek warriors (as described in Book 11), and is greatly affected by their suffering at the hands of the Trojans.

The emphasis given to Phthia, especially in Books 9, 11 and 16, reflects the strong pressure that Achilles and Patroclus are under from their Greek allies to return to the fighting. The name of Achilles' homeland arises again and again as a direct consequence of the nature of the dispute with Agamemnon. For the most part the name Phthia in the above passages is devoid of any particular linguistic associations beyond the name itself. That is to say, as far as I can see, the name of the region does not have any particular association with death or the afterlife through a wordplay on Phthia/φθίω. Nevertheless, such a sense is never very far away even in the earlier books. In the exchange between Achilles and the embassy in the ninth book, the notion of Achilles' return home is envisaged as a kind of "death" to his heroic aspirations. Thetis has spelt out for him a fairly stark heroic choice which Achilles now reconsiders. He informs the embassy that Thetis had told him of a twofold destiny; first, if he stays at Troy and fights about the city, his "return home is lost" (ὤλετο μὲν μοι νόστος, 9.413), but he will have an "unfailing renown" (κλέος ἀφθιτον, 9.413). But if he goes home to his dear native land his "glorious renown is lost" (ὤλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν), but his life will be longer (9.414-16). That is to say the bare choice for Achilles is between *a*) a return home (Phthia) with a long life, or *b*) death at Troy with imperishable renown (κλέος ἀφθιτον). Going home to Phthia will ensure the "withering away" of his reputation as a warrior. Both options presented to Achilles by his mother involve gain and loss, and the φθι- root plays a critical part in conveying these.¹² At this stage of the poem in Book 9 Achilles can claim to have a real choice available to him, and so Phthia does not represent death in the physical sense, but rather a possible death to his κλέος ("renown"). But this all changes with the news (in Book 18) of

12. Nagy (1979) 174ff., has an important discussion of the φθι- root, including the diction used in Homer and other poets. Worthy of particular note is his discussion of the notion of vegetal decay embodied in the φθι- root. In his discussion, Nagy points out, p.185, that "the overt Iliadic contrast of κλέος ἀφθιτον with the negation of κλέος in the context of Phthíē is remarkable in view of the element phthi- contained by the place name. From the wording of *Iliad* IX 412-416, we are led to suspect that this element phthi- is either a genuine formant of Phthíē or is at least perceived as such in the process of Homeric composition."

Patroclus' death. Achilles can now foresee his own death, and, appropriately, at this point Phthia acquires its death-associations. Below are the principal references within the latter part of the poem:

1: 18.79-100: In the first part of *Iliad* 18, Thetis in the depths of the sea hears the terrible grief that has enveloped Achilles after news of Patroclus' death has been conveyed to him by Antilochus. Upon her arrival in his presence Thetis asks Achilles (73ff.) why he weeps and what grief has come upon him? Achilles replies (79ff.) that Patroclus has died and that Hector his killer holds his armour. He laments the fact that his mother had not stayed among the immortals in the sea where she would never have married Peleus. But now, he says, she will have a boundless grief for her "dead son" (παίδος ἀποφθιμένοιο, 89) whom she will not be welcoming home; for at this point he announces his determination to kill Hector (91-93). Thetis (95-96) confirms Achilles' sense of his own doom by stating that his death will soon follow Hector's. Achilles responds that this is the way it should be, seeing that he was not there when Patroclus "perished far from his own land" (τηλόθι πάτρης | ἔφθιτ', 99-100). In this particular exchange the recurring focus of their attention is that death robs them both, Patroclus and Achilles, of their return home. In both cases the notion of death, first that of Achilles (ἀποφθιμένοιο, 89), and then that of Patroclus (ἔφθιτ', 100), is expressed by the φθι- root. These references to death are juxtaposed with references to home (τὸν . . . οἶκαδε νοστήσαντ', 89-90 and πάτρης, 99). As with 9.412-16 (above) the name Phthia is not mentioned *per se*, but there certainly seems to be an implicit play on the name in the juxtaposition of death and home.

2: 19.295-337: Two speeches in which Phthia is closely associated with physical death are uttered by Briseis and Achilles to the dead Patroclus. Briseis has just returned from her time in the possession of Agamemnon, only to find Patroclus dead. She then utters a lament for Patroclus and recounts how he used to give her solace at critical moments. In this context she refers specifically to Patroclus' statement that Achilles would one day take her in his ships to Phthia, and have a marriage feast there among the Myrmidons. In this context there is a juxtaposition between Phthia and the dead Patroclus (Φθίην, 299/ τεθνηότα, 300), which is amplified in the following lines. For after Briseis utters her lament, the Greek princes urge Achilles to eat something, but he will do nothing of the sort (301ff.). In the company of the inner circle of the princes he then addresses the dead Patroclus himself (315ff.), and states that he could not suffer anything worse "not even if I should hear of the death of my own father (οὐδ' εἴ κεν τοῦ πατρὸς ἀποφθιμένοιο πυθοίμην, 322) who now perhaps in Phthia (ὅς

που νῦν Φθίῃφι, 323) sheds tears for the lack of such a son as me." Slightly later in this speech to the dead Patroclus Achilles conveys the same stark association between death and Phthia. He states (328-30) that until now the heart in his breast had hope that he alone "would perish" (φθίσεσθαι, 329) far from horse-nourishing Argos, but that Patroclus would "go back home to Phthia" (Φθίηνδε νέεσθαι, 330).¹³

In light of this brief survey of the various textual references within the *Iliad* we can probably come to two basic conclusions about Homeric Phthia. First is its comparative insignificance and obscurity in the physical setting of the Greek homeland as referred to in the *Iliad*. Achilles may be clearly identifiable on the flank of the Greek army at Troy, but his homeland is rather more obscure. As many scholars have found, including Strabo, the *Iliad* is not the place to find a detailed and accurate account of the landscape of the archaic Greek world, and this is undoubtedly true of Achilles' homeland in Thessaly. Phthia itself is little more than a name throughout most of the poem, whether it be in the narrative of the Catalogue in Book 2, or in the various speeches in which it is mentioned. We can respond to this by trying to recover, or uncover, the "real" world of Phthia by analysing later references to it. But this approach tends to miss the point of what is going on in the *Iliad*. The obscurity of Achilles' background goes some way to enhancing the sense of separateness and mystery that characterizes him, and the task of trying to fit him into a neat geographical landscape has an inherent danger of missing an essential aspect of his Iliadic persona. The second point, one which has been identified for a long time now, is that the name Phthia is used within the *Iliad* to enhance Achilles' association with death and the afterlife.¹⁴ But what is less well recognised is the rather significant change in the use of the name of the region within the poem itself, one that accompanies the transformation in Achilles' destiny. That is to say, before he hears about Patroclus, Achilles can at least claim the right and the freedom to go back to his home in Thessaly. It may be all bluff (as the threat to go home usually is in the *Iliad*), but Phthia is a real option for Achilles early in the poem, if he is prepared to pay the price (i.e. the loss of his "imperishable renown," κλέος ἄφθιτον, 9.410-16).¹⁵ Hence the name Phthia

13. Cf. the juxtaposition in the *Odyssey* (in the speech of Achilles in Hades) of death and Phthia (πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν, "to lord over all the perished dead" [*Od.* 11.491] and Φθίην, "Phthia" [*Od.* 11.496]). Note too that at *Il.* 18.446 Thetis tells Hephaestus that when Agamemnon took Briseis, Achilles "in grief" (ἀχέων) was "wasting his heart" (φρένας ἐφθίεν).

14. For the formative work on the subject, see Kretschmer, (1913) 307-08; see too Hommel (1980) *passim*, and Hooker (1988)1-7.

15. Contrast Frame (1978) 116-24 who argues that "Achilles is more emphatically barred from a 'return home' than any other hero" (117).

need not, and does not, have any particular association with physical death while it remains an option for Achilles. But with the death of Patroclus, and in the context of the planned vengeance against Hector, Achilles receives a clear statement of where he is headed (18.95ff.), and the fact that his doom is upon him. The focus on his imminent fate at this point is accompanied by an important verbal association between death and his homeland.

To conclude, it is worth considering some important postscripts to Homeric Phthia in classical Athenian literature. In Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis* Phthia has a similar association with death to that which we have found in Homer's *Iliad*. At 98ff. Agamemnon describes how he convinced Clytemnestra to despatch Iphigeneia to Aulis (to be sacrificed) by stating that she would marry Achilles. As a part of the ploy, Agamemnon claimed that Achilles would not set sail with the Achaeans "unless a bride from our family went to Phthia" (εἰ μὴ παρ' ἡμῶν εἴσιν ἐς Φθίαν λέχος, 103). The deceit perpetrated by Agamemnon on Clytemnestra and Iphigeneia is enhanced by the death-association inherent in the name Phthia. In one sense Agamemnon is not "lying" at all about where Iphigeneia is headed. Later in the play Agamemnon uses similar duplicity in response to Clytemnestra's question of whether Achilles will take Iphigeneia to Phthia for their marriage (714). His reply is that "that will be the concern of him who has won her" (κεῖνῳ μελήσει ταῦτα τῷ κεκτημένῳ, 715), referring presumably to Hades.¹⁶ In both these cases Phthia (103, 713) takes on the same sort of strong death association that we find in the later books of the *Iliad*. In his knowledge of Iphigeneia's real destiny Agamemnon plays on the inherent meaning of death bound up in the name of Achilles' homeland. Likewise in Plato's *Crito* (43c5-44b4) Crito tells Socrates, who is in jail awaiting his death, that, on the basis of reliable evidence that he has received, he thinks the boat from Delos will arrive on that day; which will mean that Socrates will have to die the next day. Socrates says that he does not think so, but that the boat will arrive on the next day, which will postpone his death till the day after that. Crito, who is rather perplexed at his confidence, asks him why he thinks so; and Socrates tells him in reply that a beautiful woman in white garb came to him in a dream and said "Oh Socrates on the third day you would come to deep-soiled Phthia" (ὦ Σώκρατες, ἥματί κεν τριτάτῳ Φθίην ἐρίβωλον ἴκοιο). Socrates here quotes *Il.* 9.363, with the appropriate adaptation (ἴκοιο for ἴκοιμην). The line in the *Iliad* is part of the long speech of Achilles to the embassy (9.308-429) in which he rejects the offer made to him and even

16. Cf. Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris* (369), in which Iphigeneia states that at Aulis "Achilles proved to be Hades, not the son of Peleus."

threatens to go home to Phthia (as we have seen above). The reference to Phthia made by Socrates here is obviously a very striking one in the context of the associations argued for in this paper. As Adam pointed out in his 1896 commentary on the *Crito*, "it is possible (as Cron suggests) that the meaning of the line for Socrates lay partly in the fact that Phthia was the *home* (his italics) of Achilles: but I feel sure that (rightly or wrongly) Socrates associated Φθίη with φθίω and φθίσις, and derived comfort from the epithet ἐρίβωλον."¹⁷ Socrates' reference to Phthia makes much more sense in the context of this play on words than simply as the home of Achilles, because he is about to confront death (even if Achilles when he utters this in the *Iliad* is not about to do so). On the basis of these later references in Euripides and Plato it seems likely that Phthia is understood in the classical period to have the sorts of associations with death that are evident in the later books of the *Iliad*. It is very significant that Plato's Socrates thinks naturally of Achilles and Homeric Phthia as he awaits death and prepares for his own passage into the world beyond.

17. Adam (1896) 27; cf. his comparison of Euripides' *Electra*, 836.