

# Tyrtaeus and the Cult of Heroes

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IN RECENT YEARS studies of Tyrtaeus have moved beyond the extensive debates about the historical context and authenticity of the fragments that characterized scholarship on the poet in the first part of this century. The 'Tyrtaean question' has for the most part been laid to rest, and it is now generally believed that virtually all the extant poems and fragments are genuine. Since the appearance of such studies as Jaeger's "Tyrtaeus on True *Arete*" and Bowra's *Early Greek Elegy* critics have shown a much greater willingness to accept the poet on his own terms.<sup>1</sup> The recent editions of Prato and West have done much to facilitate this process, and such studies as those by Adkins, Shey, and Tarkow have greatly furthered our understanding of the poet's style and intent.<sup>2</sup> Considerable efforts have been devoted to understanding the relationship of Tyrtaeus and the epic tradition.<sup>3</sup> A consistent interest of these studies has been the manner and extent to which a particular element of diction or content marks a change or advance from epic tradition and technique. This approach has led to the

<sup>1</sup> W. Jaeger, *Five Essays* (Montreal 1966) 101–42. This essay, which has exercised considerable influence on contemporary scholarship, originally appeared under the title "Tyrtaios über die wahre *ἀρετή*," *SitzBerlin* 23 (1932) 537–68. C. M. Bowra, *Early Greek Elegy* (Martin Classical Lectures 7: Cambridge [Mass.] 1938).

<sup>2</sup> C. Prato, *Tyrtaeus* (Rome 1968); M. L. West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci Ante Alexandrum Cantati* II (Oxford 1972); see also B. Gentili and C. Prato's recent Teubner text, *Poetarum elegiacorum testimonia et fragmenta* (Leipzig 1979). All references to the works of Callinus and Solon as well as Tyrtaeus will be to West's edition. A. W. H. Adkins, "Callinus 1 and Tyrtaeus 10 as Poetry," *HSCP* 81 (1977) 59–97 (see also W. J. Verdenius, "Tyrtaeus 6–7D, A Commentary," *Mnemosyne* SER. IV 22 [1969] 337–55). H. J. Shey, "Tyrtaeus and the Art of Propaganda," *Arethusa* 9 (1976) 5–28; T. A. Tarkow, "Tyrtaeus 9D: The Role of Poetry in the New Sparta," forthcoming in *AntCl*. I am very grateful to Professor Tarkow for his kindness in making a copy of his manuscript available to me.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the works of Prato and Adkins (*supra* n.2) see the latter's *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford 1960) and *Moral Values and Political Behavior in Ancient Greece* (New York 1972); P. A. L. Greenhalgh, "Patriotism in the Homeric World," *Historia* 21 (1972) 528–37; T. Hudson-Williams, *Early Greek Elegy* (Cardiff/London 1926); and B. Snell's important monograph *Tyrtaios und die Sprache des Epos* (Hypomnemata 22: Göttingen 1969). For the derivation of Tyrtaeus' language from Ionic vernacular rather than directly from epic diction see K. J. Dover, "The Poetry of Archilochus," *Entretiens Fondation Hardt* X (Vandoeuvres-Genève 1964) 181–222, at 190–94.

most productive advances in our understanding of the poet in recent years.

The purpose of this essay, however, is to examine a particular passage where this approach may not be totally adequate and to suggest the manner in which it should be supplemented. The passage in question, 12.27–34W, deals with the sorrow that the state will feel for the hero who has fallen in defense of his country:

τὸν δ' ὀλοφύρονται μὲν ὁμῶς νέοι ἠδὲ γέροντες,  
 ἀργαλέω δὲ πόθῳ πᾶσα κέκηδε πόλις,  
 καὶ τύμβος καὶ παῖδες ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἀρίσημοι  
 30 καὶ παίδων παῖδες καὶ γένος ἔξοπίσω·  
 οὐδέ ποτε κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἀπόλλυται οὐδ' ὄνομα αὐτοῦ,  
 ἀλλ' ὑπὸ γῆς περ ἔων γίνεται ἀθάνατος,  
 ὄντιν' ἀριστεύοντα μένοντά τε μαρνάμενόν τε  
 γῆς πέρι καὶ παίδων θούρος Ἄρης ὀλέσῃ

The language itself is not unusual, displaying the same modifications of Homeric diction and echoes of his own verse that characterize Tyrtaeus' poetry as a whole. We can, for example, observe the modification of the Homeric formula of *Il.* 2.789, 9.36, and 9.258 after the caesura in 27, or the very concise and effective abbreviation *metri causa* of *Il.* 20.308 offered by the pentameter of 30.<sup>4</sup> The parallels to other poems of Tyrtaeus are also manifest; perhaps the most striking is the manner in which 33–34 not only parallel 10.13–14W but also epitomize the theme of that poem as a whole.

Yet, while there are no radical departures from epic diction, the temper of the passage and of the poem in its entirety is significantly different, and nowhere more so than in the couplet that marks the central point of the passage (31–32):

οὐδέ ποτε κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἀπόλλυται οὐδ' ὄνομα αὐτοῦ,  
 ἀλλ' ὑπὸ γῆς περ ἔων γίνεται ἀθάνατος,

The sentiment of the pentameter is without parallel in the epic tradition and, as Jaeger observed with particular elegance, what the poet is proposing is the paradox that it is the warrior who dies fighting on behalf of the state who gains a form of immortality.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> On the manner in which Solon's description of ancestral guilt (13.31–32W) is modeled on this passage see Jaeger (*supra* n.1) 131.

<sup>5</sup> "The Greek Ideas of Immortality," *HTbR* 52 (1959) 135–47, at 138; the irony is intensified by the concessive use of the participle in 32 (*see infra* n.21).

This claim has usually been considered in terms of an extension of the traditional heroic notion of a hero's *repute* (*κλέος*) surviving him. The novelty which many critics have noted is that Tyrtaeus has envisioned that it is the role of the state to insure that this is the case. I should like to suggest that this position may not go far enough and that the full force of the couplet cannot be recognized until it is considered in light of Greek attitudes to heroes and their cults. To understand how and why this is the case, it is necessary to comment on some characteristics of the poem as a whole, on Tyrtaeus' attitude to death, and on certain features of Greek hero cults. Once the significance of all these elements is recognized, I believe that we can understand better how Tyrtaeus stands at the head of a tradition that was to culminate in one form in Pericles' Funeral Oration.

Although assessments of its literary merit vary, the poem is a bold, energetic work which makes a vigorous appeal for service to the state.<sup>6</sup> But while it shares language and themes with Tyrtaeus' other poetry, it lacks the graphic immediacy of such poems as 10W, 11W, or the vivid fragments of the battlefield narrative of the Berlin papyrus (*cf.* 18–23W). Critics have frequently commented upon the abstract tone of 12W, and its authenticity has often been questioned. Fränkel and others, for example, have argued vigorously that the meditative qualities of the work are more likely a product of the age of Xenophanes or the sophistic movement than of seventh-century Sparta.<sup>7</sup> The poem has a clear-cut, well wrought structure which develops a careful sequence of ideas.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Cf.* Shey and Tarkow (*supra* n.2). Many of the characteristics Adkins noted of 10W, (*supra* n.2) 75–95, are true of 12W as well. Tarkow argues in considerable detail that the apparent weaknesses of the poet's style may be a matter of deliberate design, and that, just as the individual warrior is to subordinate his desire for personal glory to service for the state, so also poetry should be a vehicle on the state's behalf and not for the advancement of the individual artist's glory.

<sup>7</sup> H. Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy* (New York/London 1975) 337–39; *cf.* B. A. van Groningen's parallel objections, *La composition littéraire archaïque grecque*<sup>2</sup> (Amsterdam 1960) 79. Although Fränkel denies the authenticity of 12W, his description of Tyrtaeus' war poetry as being "determined by will rather than by thought" (158) would be an appropriate comment on the logical structure of 12W as well. For an important defense of the authenticity of the poem see Jaeger (*supra* n.2) 104–12; *cf.* Snell (*supra* n.2) 27–29 and Prato's general discussion of the *corpus* (*supra* n.2) 8\*–20\*. For my own part I believe it is much more likely that Tyrtaeus would have 'anticipated' later writers than that a later poet would have been able to achieve such a commonality of language and themes with Tyrtaeus' other poetry.

<sup>8</sup> On the structure of the poem see van Groningen (*supra* n.7); D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric Poetry* (London/New York 1967) 176–78; and Shey (*supra* n.2) 6–7, who argues that the poem is a carefully constructed quadripartite argument. Most critics (including

The opening priamel, with its ironic description of the other major aspects of traditional *arete*, leads to a description of *arete* as prowess in war (11–14).<sup>9</sup> This is immediately qualified by a statement to the effect that this service is a *ξυνὸν δ' ἔσθλὸν τοῦτο πόλῃ τε παντί τε δήμῳ* (16).

It makes relatively little difference whether one sides with Bowra, Jaeger, and Snell (that Tyrtaeus in this poem is working towards a new definition of *arete* in the abstract) or with Campbell and Tarkow (that the poet has a more restricted goal, to reshape the traditional heroic ideal to meet the particular needs posed by the Second Messenian War),<sup>10</sup> the aim of heroic endeavor is no longer to be the garnering of private glory but rather success for the state. As Snell has observed, Tyrtaeus has taken the notion of unanimity of action from Homer and developed it as a social virtue that is to serve as the foundation of the state.<sup>11</sup> Tyrtaeus clearly presumes a much greater sense of group solidarity and social pur-

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those who have argued against its authenticity) have seen it as a two-part poem. Bowra (*supra* n.1) 50 believed that Tyrtaeus regularly divided his poems into two major parts, the first of which expressed a general thesis while the second offered detailed advice or strictures.

<sup>9</sup> On the irony of the opening priamel see Shey (*supra* n.2) 7–13 and Tarkow (*supra* n.2).

<sup>10</sup> See Bowra (*supra* n.1) 61–68, Jaeger (*supra* n.1) 120–23, Snell (*supra* n.3) 27–36, Campbell (*supra* n.8) 177–78, Tarkow (*supra* n.2). Campbell stresses the force of *ἐν πολέμῳ* in 10 and 20 and believes it precludes a universal definition of *arete*; the phrase, however, may be understood as giving the context in which a true definition of *arete* is possible. For Tyrtaeus' concept of *arete* and its relation to other elements of archaic thought, see W. F. Otto, "Tyrtaios und die Unsterblichkeit des Ruhmes," *Geistige Überlieferung* 2 (1942) 66–95 (= *Die Gestalt und das Sein* [Dusseldorf Cologne 1955] 365ff), and J. S. Lasso de la Vega, "El guerrero tirteico," *Emerita* (1962) 9–57. On the impact of the Second Messenian War on Spartan values and priorities see Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* (*supra* n.3) 73–74. There can be little doubt that contemporary military tactics and the demands of the hoplite phalanx are reflected in Tyrtaeus' poetry. As Jaeger (*supra* n.1) 119–20, observed, the 'I' of Tyrtaeus' poetry is collective rather than individual. On the confusing evidence about specific equipment and tactics found in Tyrtaeus' poetry, which led to doubts about authenticity, see N. G. L. Hammond's comments, "The Lycurgan Reform at Sparta," *JHS* 70 (1950) 51, on H. L. Lorimer's "The Hoplite Phalanx with Special Reference to Poems of Archilochus and Tyrtaeus," *BSA* 42 (1947) 121–22. Although our knowledge of a number of particulars is quite restricted, I share Hammond's view that some of the confusion may also have arisen because of the need to adopt tactics and terminology from hoplite to guerrilla warfare. See also A. Snodgrass' general discussion of the literary evidence on arms in the period, *Early Greek Armour and Weapons* (Edinburgh 1964) 179–87, 202–03, and his study of the impact of the shift to hoplite warfare, "The Hoplite Reform and History," *JHS* 85 (1965) 110–22.

<sup>11</sup> See Snell's excellent discussion, (*supra* n.3) 21–26. It is important to bear in mind that, while this emphasis on his 'common good' does show a more positive attitude than 5W or 10W and does seem a deliberate and ironic echo of the Homeric *ξυνὸν δὲ κακόν* (*Il.* 16.262), Homeric ideals are not rejected; rather Tyrtaeus emphasizes elements associated with the 'defensive' position of the Trojans. Cf. Greenhalgh (*supra* n.3) 528–30.

pose than we find in Homer. We can also observe a similar blend of old and new ideals in the second half of the poem. The first part (21–34), which concludes with the selection quoted initially, describes the glory that awaits the fallen warrior. It is balanced by a quite Homeric account of the esteem accorded to the warrior who survives. In very evocative terms Tyrtaeus describes how when they win in battle the warriors will enjoy a “glorious spear-prayer” (Campbell), *αἰχμῆς ἀγλαὸν εὖχος* (36), become the subject of honor and respect by young and old alike, and not be deprived of respect or due portion.<sup>12</sup> The poem then concludes with a ringing cry for all to strive for the “pinnacle of excellence,” *ἀρετῆς εἰς ἄκρον* (43), and not hang back from the fray.

In addition to making this forceful appeal for heroic exertion on behalf of the state, the poem also adopts an attitude to death that has no real analogue in the epic experience. It is, in fact, profoundly shaped by his attitude to the common weal. Our familiarity with such sentiments as Horace’s *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* clouds the novelty of Tyrtaeus’ stance.<sup>13</sup> For, while the glory of death in battle is one of the most common themes of epic poetry, the same cannot be said of the concept of dying for one’s country.<sup>14</sup> In Tyrtaeus, however, the two elements are inextricably interlocked. Mourlon Beernaert has pointed out with particular clarity how, while it is difficult to see how Tyrtaeus’ views about death differ from Homer’s in the abstract, Tyrtaeus asserts the beauty of death in combat by maintaining that the consequences of defeat are worse than death.<sup>15</sup> By emphasizing these elements Tyrtaeus transforms Homeric, heroic acceptance of death into a sense of social purpose and confidence which can improve one’s chances of survival in combat.<sup>16</sup> To bolster this position Tyrtaeus throughout his poetry makes frequent appeals to the heroic shame

<sup>12</sup> The phraseology is quite pregnant: clearly the poet wishes to employ highly emotive language. It is difficult to assess whether the juxtaposition of *αἰδώς* and *δίκη* in 40 represents an advance on Homeric sensibilities. Both here and at 4.7W ‘justice’ appears to denote proper or appropriate behavior more than any abstract principle.

<sup>13</sup> On the manner in which the Horatian theme is modeled on Tyrtaeus see L. I. Lindo, “Tyrtaeus and Horace *Odes* 3.2,” *CP* 66 (1971) 258–60.

<sup>14</sup> See Greenhalgh (*supra* n.3) 535–37 on the notion of patriotic death in Homer and Tyrtaeus. On the ‘naturalness’ of war and the heroic response to it see E. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1979) 83–117, and J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford 1980), who stresses the importance of the element of pathos in accounts of heroic combats and deaths.

<sup>15</sup> P. Mourlon Beernaert, “Tyrée devant la mort,” *EtCl* 29 (1961) 391–99.

<sup>16</sup> Consider, for example, 11.5–6, 11–14W, and the very effective use of the neologism *φιλοψυχέω* at 10.18W (on which see Prato’s comments [*supra* n.2] *ad loc.*).

culture. In 10W, for example, Tyrtaeus both stresses the disgrace that will come to the defeated and then employs a very adroit adaptation of Priam's appeal to Hector in order to support his thesis that it is glorious to fight and die on behalf of one's country.<sup>17</sup> The manner in which Tyrtaeus emphasizes not so much the various boons that will accrue to the state as the disgrace and degradation that will attend the defeated shows clearly the poet's proximity to Homer. While not elegant, the language of 10W is forceful as the poet compels his audience to think of the grim prospect he had so relished when applying it to Sparta's enemies in 6W and 7W. In these passages and many others we can see the poet evoking the full force of the Homeric shame culture to spur the Spartans to lay down their lives, if necessary, on behalf of the state.

As important as this motif is in Tyrtaeus' work, it is important to recognize that it is a negative constraint, and, as I have tried to indicate by my paraphrase of 12W, this poem places a much stronger emphasis on the advantages that will come to the individual for his service to the state. The poet devotes the second half of the work to constructing a series of positive inducements for action. In so doing Tyrtaeus has moved beyond the simple calculus of results that characterizes such epic statements as Hector's appeal to the Trojans in *Il.* 15.486–99; he has also gone beyond Callinus' view that a warrior can become a contemporary analogue to a Homeric hero.<sup>18</sup> Tyrtaeus employs two principal arguments to do this and both are reflected in the couplet (12.31–32W) which is the focus of this essay. The first, noted above, is his modification of the traditional heroic desire for personal glory. Tyrtaeus does not deny the validity of this appeal but rather extends it to propose a new relationship between individual and the state that is based upon a recognition of the reciprocity of their interests. This concept has no real counterpart in the Homeric epics. As Jaeger observed, Tyrtaeus envisions the state taking on a

<sup>17</sup> 10.23–27W, cf. *Il.* 22.71–76. Adkins (*supra* n.2) 91–93, Prato (*supra* n.2) *ad loc.*, and Tarkow (*supra* n.2) offer a number of significant observations on this vignette. See also J. M. Borovskij, "Ad Tyrt. 7.21–28," *Eos* 53 (1963) 31–34, and C. M. Dawson, "ΣΠΟΥΔΑΙΟΓΕΛΟΙΟΝ: Random Thoughts on Occasional Poems," *YCS* 19 (1966) 37–76, at 50–58.

<sup>18</sup> There can be little doubt that Callinus' model hero is an epic rather than cult hero and his closest affinities are to the epic tradition; see Adkins' detailed commentary on the poem, (*supra* n.2) 61–75, and, on the implications of Callinus' use of *ἀνὴρ* at the start of 1.13W and in 1.18W to underscore the analogy with epic heroes, see S. Benardete, "Achilles and the *Iliad*," *Hermes* 91 (1963) 1–5.

responsibility to insure the warrior's honor which corresponds to the soldier's efforts on its behalf:

Unlike what happens in the epic, the keeping alive of his memory is now made to depend on the continuity of life in a polis. The political reinterpretation of the heroic ideal is closely followed by a similar re-analysis of fame. With this the polis reaches the highest peak of spiritual authority. For by venerating him as a hero, it bestows immortality, in the true sense of the word, on the fallen man.<sup>19</sup>

Tyrtaeus has adapted in language that reflects the political realities of his own day the view that heroic κλέος ensures a form of immortality in the only terms that most Greeks considered this prospect.<sup>20</sup> The effect of this bold assertion (12.31W) is intensified by juxtaposition with the following pentameter, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ γῆς περ ἔων γίνεταί ἀθάνατος. Here the paradox receives its most express statement: through death the fallen will find immortality.<sup>21</sup> This sentiment, I would argue, goes beyond epic tradition to the point of contradiction and is best understood in light of the historical hero cults themselves. To understand how this may be the case, and how Tyrtaeus combined this appeal with his adaptation of the argument based on the prospect of glory, it is appropriate to consider some basic characteristics of hero cults.

Hero worship occupied a broad and shifting spectrum of Greek religious belief and practice, and the question, what is a hero, is

<sup>19</sup> Jaeger (*supra* n.1) 122; see also Bowra (*supra* n.1) 65–66.

<sup>20</sup> See Jaeger (*supra* n.5) 138, Adkins, *Moral Values* (*supra* n.3) 36.

<sup>21</sup> The positioning and strongly adversative force of ἀλλά in 32 in conjunction with the familiar epic concessive formula περ + participle suggests that Tyrtaeus was in fact deliberately drawing attention to the novelty of his position. There is no need to assume that the force of the participle is other than concessive, and the sense of the line can be approximated in the English rendering: "But, even though he is beneath the ground, he becomes immortal." The irony of the line stems not from any unusual language or syntax but the implied equation of death and life. In this assertion Tyrtaeus is clearly going beyond Callinus, who, while he states that the fallen warrior becomes ζώων δ' ἄξιος ἡμιθέων (1.19W), is more interested in the analogy with epic heroes, Ajax in particular (see 1.20W and Adkins [*supra* n.2] 74–75). The more difficult question in assessing Tyrtaeus' novelty is whether or to what degree Homer was aware of heroes and their cults. On this question, despite the excellent arguments of M. L. West, *Hesiod, Works and Days* (Oxford 1978) 370–73, I concur with the position of T. H. Price, "Hero-cult and Homer," *Historia* 23 (1973) 129–44, who expands upon the thesis of R. K. Hack, "Homer and the Cult of Heroes," *TAPA* 60 (1929) 57–74, that Homer was aware of these cults and that the cult practices themselves are reflected in the epics. O. Tsagarakis, "Homer and the Cult of the Dead in Helladic Times," *Emerita* 48 (1980) 229–40, discusses *Od.* 11.517ff (Circe's instructions on the proper rites to the dead) in light of archaeological evidence and argues for the importance of these cults in the Mycenaean era.

one that no Greek of any period could have answered with much surety or precision.<sup>22</sup> Hero cults combined veneration for the dead with a belief in their continued power for good and ill in human affairs. The dead, or at least some of them, were believed to have some continued potency and, as Vermeule observes, “no living person has the power of even a minor nameless hero.”<sup>23</sup> Guthrie describes hero worship as “the elevation of ancestors or other dead men to semi-divine status with all the apparatus of prayer and cult.”<sup>24</sup> Although there were broad divergences, rites in honor of heroes generally paralleled worship of chthonic deities, and often the distinction between them appears to have been very unclear.<sup>25</sup> The most important distinction between a hero and chthonic spirit, as well as that between a hero and an Olympian, is that a hero was believed to have been originally a man and not a god.<sup>26</sup> The Greeks entertained a strong conviction about the historicity of their heroes and their continued interest in human affairs. The awe with which the heroes were regarded was based on fear as well as respect. Heroes were not just positive figures commanding human respect but also harsh, severe presences who made peremptory and unpredictable demands for propitiation. So it is that while the Greeks believed that heroes were interested in

<sup>22</sup> Although many areas of uncertainty remain, our understanding of heroes, their cults, and the relationship of these rituals to the general fabric of Greek religious practice has advanced considerably in the current century. Some of the most important studies are A. Brelich, *Gli Eroi Greci* (Rome 1958), M. Delcourt, *Légendes et cultes de héros en Grèce* (Paris 1942), L. R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford 1921), M. P. Foucart, *Le culte des héros chez les Grecs* (Paris 1918), and A. D. Nock, “The Cult of Heroes,” *HTHR* 37 (1944) 141–74; cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods*<sup>2</sup> (Boston 1956).

<sup>23</sup> Vermeule (*supra* n.14) 7.

<sup>24</sup> Guthrie (*supra* n.22) 220; cf. Nock (*supra* n.22) 142–43: “. . . the category of heroes in general represents no more than an aggregate of individuals each having his own story, habitat, or function, and neither, like the Olympians, constituting a divine society, nor, like the Christian saints, attaching themselves to it.” The tempting analogy between heroes and Christian saints should be employed with caution since, as Foucart (*supra* n.22) 77–78 remarked, the Greeks did not consider heroes as intercessors for men to the divine but as powers in their own right.

<sup>25</sup> See Nock (*supra* n.22) on how confusion over the origin and status of heroes carried over into the variety of practices associated with these cults. While analogies to chthonic cults are the most common, not infrequently rites for heroes paralleled those for the Olympians. This confusion was true of new cults as well as older ones and a hero who was revered in a number of locales might well be honored in a variety of ways.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Foucart (*supra* n.22) 67, whose notion that all heroes evolved from human figures was a reaction against the then current view that heroes were decayed gods. The first chapter of Griffin’s recent study (*supra* n.14) offers a number of sensitive comments on how, while the mortality of the heroes is a major theme of the epic, certain characters and objects were once seen as vested with supernatural powers.



human affairs because of their own ultimately human nature, they were also keenly conscious of their harsh and violent side as well. Many of the traditional tales dealt with very violent events in which the heroes' conduct cannot be reconciled with normal expectations of what is right and proper. Heroes were often seen as creatures of excess; their potential for excess, in fact, was often regarded as a significant factor behind their ultimate heroization.<sup>27</sup>

Although these cults may have sprung originally from relatively crude beginnings in ancestor worship or 'tendance' to the dead,<sup>28</sup> they came to occupy an important role in Greek religious life. Their role did not diminish but rather increased from the archaic through the classical periods; the great era of the Greek city-states was also the period when these cults were most popular. Heroization became more and not less frequent in the sixth and fifth centuries and heroic status was granted to increasingly diverse recipients. What may at first have been an honor extended to select mythological figures might now be accorded for a broad variety of human accomplishments. Heroes and hero-cults in classical Greece were not just survivors from a dim and less civilized past but a source of active concern to the states themselves. Each state had its own heroes and felt a strong duty to their cults. Although the propaganda and political value of heroes was recognized early on, these cults were not just expressions of local pride or the desire to glorify conspicuous examples of human accomplishment; it was firmly believed that continuance of the state itself rested on the goodwill of these figures, and success or failure of civic enterprises was often correlated with proper observance of their rites.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Brelich (*supra* n.22) 233–48 notes that heroes regularly possess abnormal appetites, qualities, and characteristics that ally them to the sub- or super-human forces against which they were often seen to contend on man's behalf.

<sup>28</sup> Farnell (*supra* n.22) 3. Opinions about the date of origin are quite varied and often parallel the author's convictions about the formative period of Greek mythology. M. P. Nilsson, for example, thought many of the cults could be traced back to the Mycenaean era: *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology* (Berkeley 1932). In recent years, however, the conviction has grown that, while many of the heroes may have had Bronze Age prototypes, the actual cults did not emerge until the dark ages and were thus a comparatively late phenomenon which commemorated much older practices and beliefs: see E. Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age* (Chicago 1964) 280–312.

<sup>29</sup> Because heroes were generally believed to be the most potent at the site of their burials, considerable effort was devoted to gaining or maintaining control of these sites or their relics: thus the Spartans' efforts to recover Orestes' bones (Hdt. 1.66–68) and Cimon's retrieval of Theseus' remains (Plut. *Thes.* 36.1, *Cim.* 8.3–6). However conspicuous their worship of the Olympians, the archaeological as well as literary evidence suggests that the Greeks had stronger emotional ties to hero worship. The honors paid to the now nameless

Tyrtaeus was writing in an era when these cults were enjoying rapid growth and becoming a significant element in the social and religious life of the Greeks. An important impetus for this development appears to have been the popularity of epic poetry in the period. As Farnell showed, a broad variety of relationships developed between cult and literary figures in this period.<sup>30</sup> The cults and the poetry reflected a common desire to understand and explain the relics of a dimly remembered past. Older sites and practices were identified with characters drawn from the epics, and the popularity of the epics did much in turn to foster the growth of these cults. There can in fact be little doubt that the cults and the epic cycle reinforced and, to a certain extent, ‘justified’ one another.

We can, I suggest, see such a combination of elements in the passage under discussion: Tyrtaeus in 12.31–32W is not only suggesting an analogy between the fallen Spartans and epic heroes but also proposing that they deserve veneration parallel to that accorded in the historical hero cults themselves.<sup>31</sup> The prospect that Tyrtaeus offers them thus stems not just from their assurance by the state of continued heroic *κλέος*, but from their association with state-endorsed cults as well. Such a prospect, which goes far beyond drawing analogies to figures of heroic epic, could serve as a powerful and highly emotive incentive to heroic conduct. Although we cannot identify Tyrtaeus’ proposal with any specific cult, there is enough evidence to suggest that the idea itself is not untoward. We can observe the poet’s awareness of the emotional power of such appeals to heroes and their cults in his address to the Spartans as “the race of unconquered Heracles” at the start of

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‘Hero 72–4’ of Corinth (Vermeule [*supra* n.14] 206–07) gives eloquent testimony to the continued hold of these practices on the Greek consciousness; see also G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton 1961) 60–63, on the respect shown for Mycenaean burial sites at Eleusis, which later became identified with hero cults.

<sup>30</sup> See Farnell (*supra* n.22) 280–342; on specific cults in Sparta see S. Wide, *Lakonische Kulte* (Leipzig 1893).

<sup>31</sup> This position is not totally novel. In commenting upon 12.32W B. Lavagnini, *Nuova antologia dei frammenti della lirica greca* (Turin 1932), observed: “la espressione allude agli onori eroici, riservati ai caduti in guerra, per cui si riteneva che essi godessero una sorte diversa da quella degli altri defunti. Il culto eroico assicurava loro una esistenza immortale e perpetuava il loro nome oltre la tomba. In onore di Leonida e dei suoi ebbe luogo a Sparta per molti secoli un agone, e gli efebi attici celebravano col rituale del culto eroico il tumulo (*πολυάνδριον*) dei caduti di Maratona.” I concur with Lavagnini’s position, which he maintained virtually without change in the subsequent editions of his later anthology, *Aglaia* (Turin 1937 *et seq.*); the aim of the present essay is to explain how Tyrtaeus accomplished this goal.

11W. We know of the important and parallel role of the heroization of Lycurgus and the Spartan kings.<sup>32</sup> Hymns or paeans were sung at the Gymnopaïdai in honor of the fallen at the 'Battle of the Champions' at Thyrea in which the disgrace of Hysiai was removed.<sup>33</sup> Although the chronology is uncertain, Tyrtaeus was most likely active at this time, and the practices at the Gymnopaïdai suggest that a formal cult of the dead was not unknown in Tyrtaeus' day. The prospect of heroization would not only offer a powerful motive for heroic conduct: it also helps explain Tyrtaeus' attitude to death. By offering his life for the state the individual is not surrendering to the prospect of blind oblivion but ensuring that he will be remembered by posterity and enjoy some continued powers after death.

I would conclude by suggesting that the democratic nature of Tyrtaeus' proposal was possibly as important as the actual prospect of heroization itself. Although Tyrtaeus is commonly seen as a reactionary figure,<sup>34</sup> the poet here extends the possibility of veneration not only to the leaders but to each and every member of the hoplite phalanx. And, while the term is not entirely appropriate, this amounts to nothing more and nothing less than the 'canonization' of the individual as a result of his own efforts. The appeal of this position to the Spartan soldiery should not be underestimated; it is as important as his restriction of *arete* to martial courage. Not only are the acts of the individual fighting on behalf of the state defined as the pinnacle of human excellence, but, should he fall in battle, the individual may well enjoy quasi-divine

<sup>32</sup> As Farnell remarks (*supra* n.22) 361, the honors accorded to Lycurgus are perhaps the earliest examples of posthumous worship of a real person, and I concur that this was not "a sign of a later decadence in the Greek religious intellect." Wide (*supra* n.30) 281–84, 357–58, offers a convenient collection and short discussion of the ancient evidence. The Spartan kings manifestly were regarded as avatars of national ideals as well as objects of cult worship (see Hdt. 1.65, 6.58; Xen. *Lac.* 15.8–9; Plut. *Lyc.* 31.3). As Foucart observed (*supra* n.22) 15, Lycurgus was honored primarily for his wisdom.

<sup>33</sup> See H. T. Wade-Gery, "A Note on the Origins of the Spartan Gymnopaïdai," *CQ* 43 (1949) 79–81: the Gymnopaïdai was founded not to celebrate the triumph of Spartan expansionist policy with the victory of Thyrea but to rebuild Spartan morale after their earlier failure at Hysiai. See also F. Bölte, "Zu lakonischen Festen," *RhM* 78 (1929) 124–43, at 124–32. The descriptions of the Gymnopaïdai, especially the allusions to hymns for the dead at Thyrea, suggest strong affinities with the practices of hero cults.

<sup>34</sup> Tyrtaeus' reputation as a political conservative is based in large part on his support (in the *Eunomia*, 1–5W) of the kings instead of the assembly during the political crises that followed Hysiai. On the contents of that work see A. Andrewes, "Eunomia," *CQ* 32 (1938) 89–102. For Tyrtaeus and the shaping of the 'Spartan myth' see E. Rawson, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (Oxford 1969).

status. In extending this prospect, Tyrtaeus has adroitly combined elements from epic poetry and contemporary religious practice to bolster his appeal, and one reason for Tyrtaeus' continuing hold on the Spartan and subsequent Greek imagination may have been his evocation of the possibility of heroization for the individual.<sup>35</sup>

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