

# Excellence: Tyrtaeus' own View

## A Literary Analysis of Fragment 9<sup>1</sup>

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ABSTRACT – The aim of this article is to undertake a socio-literary reading of the ninth poem of Gentili and Prato's collection of fragments (9 Diehl, 12 West). This fragment can be associated to other poems, which were written in elegiac distichs and have survived under Tyrtaeus' name. In terms of form and content, the so-called ἀρετή-Poem is considered the most perfect work among the preserved elegies attributed to Tyrtaeus. Its special interest lies in the fact that it proposes a canon of values that differs from the Homeric hero ethics, insofar as ἀρετή is exclusively identified with martial achievement and applicable to all citizens. As a consequence, it is necessary to carefully analyse this poem in order to understand the transformation of the value system in the 7<sup>th</sup> century b.C.

KEYWORDS – ἀρετή, πόλις, war, symposium.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that fr. 9 of Gentili and Prato's collection of fragments (= 9 Diehl, 12 West) can be associated to other poems, which were written in elegiac distichs and have survived under Tyrtaeus' name. In terms of form and content, the so-called ἀρετή-Poem is considered the most perfect work among the preserved elegies attributed to Tyrtaeus<sup>2</sup>. But its main characteristic also lies in the fact that it proposes a canon of values that differs from the Homeric hero ethics, insofar as ἀρετή is exclusively identified with martial achievement and applicable to all citizens. As a consequence, a detailed analysis of this poem is necessary to understand the transformation of the value system in the 7<sup>th</sup> century b.C.

To this end, the poem must be contextualized. First of all, we must determine that very little is known about Tyrtaeus. According to both the

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<sup>2</sup> See Prato 1968, 116; Jaeger 1972, 113; Meier 1998, 274.

*Suda* (s.v. Τυρταῖος) and Strabo (*Geographica* VIII 4, 10), he was either an Athenian, a Spartan or a Milesian<sup>3</sup> elegist, who served as a commander for the Spartans against the Messenian rebels in the second Messenian War<sup>4</sup> and whose ἀκμή is dated by Meier in 630/20 b.C.<sup>5</sup>. The sparseness of information not only about the poet, but also about the second Messenian War, led Schwartz<sup>6</sup> in 1899 to reject the existence of both the poet and the war, and also to regard the ninth poem as fake. This thesis found a lively acceptance among scholars, until Jaeger<sup>7</sup> convincingly proved the authenticity of the here commented fragment 9 (G-P) due to its archaic character. Hence the historicity of the author is accepted and scholars believe that Tyrtaeus was a real individual probably belonging to the highly educated Spartan elite<sup>8</sup>.

This Spartan poet and his slightly older contemporary, Callinus of Ephesus, cultivated a military and political elegy. In fact they are considered – together with the still older Archilochus – as the first elegists, although in opposition to the Parian artist they did not radically break with epic poetry, but remain tightly connected with it, mostly on the linguistic level, as the use of the Ionic dialect and the paratactic syntax shows. However, since despite of geographical distance the two poets also present affinities of content, it can be assumed that there was a longer oral tradition of elegiac lyric before Callinus and Tyrtaeus<sup>9</sup>. According to Prato<sup>10</sup>, Tyrtaeus composed an abundant and varied literary production, including military march tunes (ἐμβατήρια) and exhortations to fight or parainesis (ὑποθήκαι), such as fragment 9 (= 12 West), that is, our elegy.

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<sup>3</sup> The assertion of a Milesian origin is based on the similarities of Tyrtaeus' poetry to both Homeric epic and Callinus' elegies and thence can be seen as conditioned by the literary genre. See Prato 1968, 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> It is commonly accepted that the Messenian Wars mark the starting point of Spartan militarism. For Tyrtaeus' role in the Spartan conquest of Messene see Luraghi 2008, 70-74.

<sup>5</sup> See Meier 2003, 157.

<sup>6</sup> See Schwartz 1899, 428-468. He did not find evidence for a second Messenian War in the 7<sup>th</sup> century b.C. (after the conquest in the 8<sup>th</sup> century), and that's why he identified this war with a Messenian rebellion that took place in the 5<sup>th</sup> century b.C.

<sup>7</sup> Previously, Wilamowitz (1900) and Jacoby (1918) doubted the authenticity of the ninth fragment. Jaeger's thesis in Jaeger 1972.

<sup>8</sup> See Meier 1998, 238-239.

<sup>9</sup> See Meier 1998, 241.

<sup>10</sup> See Prato 1968, 5-8.

## 2. ANALYSIS

After this concise contextualization, we should proceed to examine the poem, regarding its structure and content. Thus three main thematic blocks can be distinguished in this elegy consisting of 44 verses:

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2.1. Definition of ἀρετή (vv. 1-22)	2.1.1. Negative definition of ἀρετή (vv. 1-12)
	2.1.2. Positive definition of ἀρετή (vv. 13-22)

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2.2. Reward for the άνηρ ἀγαθός (vv. 23-42)	2.2.1. Reward for the άνήρ ἀγαθός killed in battle (vv. 23-34)
	2.2.2. Reward for the surviving άνήρ ἀγαθός (vv. 35-42)

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2.3. Exhortation to ἀρετή (vv. 43-44)	
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### 2.1. Definition of ἀρετή (vv. 1-22)

#### 2.1.1. Negative definition of ἀρετή (vv. 1-12)

The first nine lines form a priamel<sup>11</sup>, where the aristocratic system is exemplified by means of mythical figures, but the poetic narrator takes the resulting reputation for meaningless, if there is no warlike strength (v. 9: οὐδ' εἰ πᾶσαν ἔχοι δόξαν πλὴν θούριδος ἀλκῆς). Thus the poet wishes to praise neither agonistic activities, such as speed and wrestling skills (vv. 1-2: οὐτ' ἄν μνησαίμην οὐτ' ἐν λόγῳ άνδρα τιθείην / οὔτε ποδῶν ἀρετῆς οὔτε παλαιμοσύνης), nor other qualities, such as beauty (v. 5), wealth (v. 6), power (v. 7) or eloquence (v. 8). The mythological examples mentioned are significantly negative, which can be interpreted as a rhetorical device in order to reinforce the difference between the virtues listed above and Tyrtaeus' own definition of ἀρετή (vv. 13-15). The negative connotation is certain in the case of the Cyclopes (v. 3: οὐδ' εἰ Κυκλώπων μὲν ἔχοι μέγεθος

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<sup>11</sup> Syntactically the priamel is reflected by four negative conjunction correlations (οὔτε ... οὔτε in vv. 1-2; οὐδ' εἰ ... δέ in vv. 3-4, 5-6 and 7-8) and three negative conjunction constructions (οὐδ' εἰ in v. 9; οὐ γάρ in v. 10; εἰ μὴ ... καί in vv. 11-12).

τε βίην τε). Most likely the «Sicilian» Cyclopes<sup>12</sup> are meant here, whose barbarism and cruelty – they know no political structure and commit cannibalism – already appear in the *Odyssey*. Their mention at the beginning of the poem can be seen as programmatic, in the sense that they anticipate the idea of the common good of citizens (v. 15), since they represent the paradigm of the uncivilized and therefore are in contrast to the πόλις. The rapid wind god Boreas (v. 4: νικώη δὲ θέων Θρηϊτικὸν Βορέην) shares with the Cyclopes a violent nature and therefore the negative nuance persists. The other names belong to human characters who also present negative traits. The prototype of beauty, Tithonus (v. 5: οὐδ' εἰ Τιθωνοῖο φύην χαριέστερος εἶη), who becomes immortal by the grace of Zeus, loses his handsomeness without eternal youth. Midas and Cinyras (v. 6: πλουτοῖη δὲ Μίδεω καὶ Κινύρεω μάλιον) represent Asian affluence, but both of them end up miserable<sup>13</sup>. King Pelops, son of Tantalus<sup>14</sup> (v. 7: οὐδ' εἰ Τανταλίδεω Πέλοπος βασιλεύτερος εἶη), is the eponymous hero of the Peloponnese and the main ancestor of the Atreidae, but also ultimately responsible for the curse on his descendants<sup>15</sup>. As far as the last personage, mellifluous Adrastus<sup>16</sup> (v. 8: γλῶσσαν δ' Ἀδρήστου μειλχόγηρυν ἔχου), is concerned, his life is marked by misfortune, because he commands the expedition of the Seven against Thebes, where the whole army – except himself – dies. Then, when ten years later he succeeds leading the Epigoni, he loses his son.

The structure of these verses (*i.e.* the priamel), the features enumerated here, as well as the characters that personify them, are clearly Homeric<sup>17</sup>. Examples of priamel can be found, for instance, in Hom. *Od.* XXIV 222-228 or *Il.* IX 378-392. The use of the first-person singular (v. 1: μνησαίμην,

<sup>12</sup> Cyclopes appear as a paradigm in opposition to civic values in Hom. *Od.* IX 106-115. See also Nicolai 2005, 237-261. For Boreas see Hes. *Tb.* 378; Apollod. III 15, 1-2 and Plat. *Phdr.* 229 B. For Tithonus as an immortal but decrepit old man see *e.g.* *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 218-238 and Apollod. III 12, 3.

<sup>13</sup> According to the legend, everything that Midas of Phrygia touched turned into gold and he had donkey ears. See *e.g.* Diod. III 58-59 and Ov. *Met.* XI 85. Regarding Cinyras of Cyprus it was said that he committed incest with his daughter and hence became Adonis' father. See, for instance, Hom. *Il.* XI 20 ff.; Pind. *Pyth.* II 27; Apollod. III 14, 3-4.

<sup>14</sup> The patronymic evokes the sacrilegious banquet, where Tantalus offered his son Pelops as food to the gods. See Hom. *Od.* XI 582; Pind. *Ol.* I 87 ff.; Apollod. III 5, 6 and Paus. X 31, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Pelops killed the charioteer Myrtilus, who cursed him and his family before dying. See Hom. *Il.* II 104 ff.; Pind. *Ol.* I 40 ff. and Eur. *IT* 387 ff.

<sup>16</sup> According to the tradition, Adrastus proves his rhetoric skills by persuading the Thebans to release the dead bodies of his men for burial. See *e.g.* Hom. *Il.* II 572; Pind. *Nem.* IX 9 ff. and Apollod. III 6, 1 ff.

<sup>17</sup> See Jaeger 1972, 119.

τιθείην) is inherent to this literary device<sup>18</sup> and for this reason has been interpreted as a «kollektives Ich»<sup>19</sup>. Thence, Tyrtaeus acts here as a kind of spokesman for his community, bringing into words the ideal of courage prevailing in Sparta during the Archaic period<sup>20</sup>.

In relation to the mythical figures, it must be said that they are not the usual epic (*i.e.* Homeric) representatives of physical vigor, velocity, attractiveness, opulence, kingship or persuasiveness. Tyrtaeus chooses excessive and hubristic paradigms exemplifying the failure of their ἀρεταί, instead of typical Homeric heroes (like Ajax, Achilles, Priam, Agamemnon or Nestor), who are not suitable for his priamel because they excel at θούρις ἀλκή. This is the main idea of the literary device: the true ἀρετή, to which all the other qualities act as a foil. The abrupt formulation πλὴν θούριδος ἀλκῆς (v. 9) almost seems anacoluthic or illogical and has therefore been estimated problematic by some scholars<sup>21</sup>. Nevertheless, it can also be stylistically interpreted. Accordingly, Tyrtaeus could have intentionally used this expression, to transmit the reader or listener a more vivid image of the «warlike strength». These words recall Homer (Hom. *Il.* IV 234), but offer something new in terms of content, marking a departure from the Homeric θούρις ἀλκή as we shall see in detail the next block of verses.

The last three verses of the group introduce an important concept for the entire poem. In the tenth line a negative wording appears: οὐ γὰρ ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γίνεται ἐν πολέμῳ, which is repeated literally, but with an affirmative sense, in v. 20. Its origin goes back to the Homeric use of the locution ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός. In epics it serves as a label of social rank, which is applicable only to the main heroes and refers to concrete figures on account of individual acts of war<sup>22</sup>. Regarding the Spartan elegist, on the contrary, it can be said that these words have already become a set phrase<sup>23</sup>, because they do not imply any connection to specific people and situations, but

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<sup>18</sup> However it must be pointed out that there are no more personal expressions in the rest of the poem. In fact, the text shows practically no parainetic characteristics. There are neither vocatives nor other speech devices directed to the addressees and just one personal pronoun (v. 23: αὐτός). Besides, apart from the two verbs in the first-person singular in the first line, all conjugated verbs present the third-person, including the only imperative form (v. 44: περάσθω).

<sup>19</sup> See Jaeger 1972, 121.

<sup>20</sup> According to Cuartero Iborra 1990, 123, the poet utters ideas for the community to which he addresses and is a member or representative. For the collective self in early Lyric poets see Rösler 1980, 240-255.

<sup>21</sup> See also Prato 1968, 129.

<sup>22</sup> See Mehmel - Hermann 1979, 20-29.

<sup>23</sup> The expression spreads through the elegists. For instance Simonides (fr. 4 B = 5 D) called those who died at Thermopylae ἄνδρες ἀγαθοί (v. 6). See Prato 1968, 129.

designate warriors who can unflinchingly endure bloodshed and also fight against the enemy in close combat (vv. 11-12: εἰ μὴ τετλαίῃ μὲν ὄρων φόνον αἱματόεντα, / καὶ δῆϊων ὀρέγοιτ' ἐγγύθεν ἰστάμενος).

### 2.1.2. Positive definition of ἀρετή (vv. 13-22)

In contrast to the attributes described above (vv. 1-8), in vv. 13-14, the poet insists on his own idea of ἀρετή based on θούρις ἀλκή (ἧδ' ἀρετή, τόδ' ἄεθλον ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἄριστον / κάλλιστόν τε φέρειν γίνεται ἀνδρὶ νέω). Yet this military excellence must be oriented to the common good (v. 15: ξυνὸν δ' ἔσθλον τοῦτο πόλῃ τε παντί τε δήμῳ). In the next verses Tyrtaeus describes how a good man behaves in war (v. 20: οὗτος ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γίνεται ἐν πολέμῳ): a soldier must fight in the vanguard (v. 16: ὅστις ἀνὴρ διαβάς ἐν προμάχοισι μένη), forget the escape (v. 17: νολεμέως, αἰσχροῆς δὲ φυγῆς ἐπὶ πάγχυ λάθηται), risk his own life (v. 18: ψυχὴν καὶ θυμὸν τλήμονα παρθέμενος) and encourage the man who fights next to him (v. 19: θαρσύνῃ δ' ἔπεσιν τὸν πλησίον ἄνδρα παρεστώς), but also force the enemy to flee and keep the battle under control (vv. 21-22: αἶψα δὲ δυσμενέων ἀνδρῶν ἔτρεψε φάλαγγας / τρηχέας· σπουδῇ δ' ἔσχεθε κύμα μάχης).

The poet programmatically begins his definition of virtue with the words ἧδ' ἀρετή (v. 13). Unlike Jaeger<sup>24</sup>, we think that there is indeed an opposition – formally conditioned by the priamel, where some elements must be despised but others commended – between the other ideas of virtue and Tyrtaeus' own. In terms of content moreover, this expression indicates that Tyrtaeus sets forth his own view on excellence, which does not conform to the conventional concept. Besides, also the word order can be seen as evidence of this interpretation, if one compares the position of ἀρετή at the beginning of the thirteenth verse with its location as the third word in the second verse (οὔτε ποδῶν ἀρετῆς οὔτε παλαιμοσύνης), where it stands in an athletic context and means excellent performance when running and in wrestling. At first glance, the presence of agonistic termini (τόδ' ἄεθλον) next to ἀρετή in the thirteenth verse may seem remarkable or even contradictory because of the unquestionable aristocratic connotations of

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<sup>24</sup> See Jaeger 1972, 125: «[dass] die kriegerische ἀρετή, die er [Tyrtaios] dort [im 9. Gedicht] lehrt, in einen größeren Kreis anerkannter ἀρεταί hineinstellt und als deren höchsten Gipfel preist»; and 119: «Die Begründung οὐ γὰρ ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γίνεται ἐν πολέμῳ δηλονότι χωρὶς ἀνδρείας zeigt, dass die anderen ἀρεταί keineswegs geleugnet oder geringgeachtet werden [...]. Sie genügen nur nicht, den, der sie besitzt, auch im Kriege zum ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς zu machen. Dazu bedarf es der ἀλκή».

these sports competitions<sup>25</sup>. But one has to take into account that this prize (v. 13) depends not on the results of the *agones*, but on the *θοῦρις ἀλκή*. At this point a new idea is found in epic terminology.

This also applies to line 15, where Tyrtaeus formulates the key of his ἀρετή conception: the common good (ξυνὸν ἐσθλόν), a wording that, although it mirrors the well-known Homeric wasps-simile (Hom. *Il.* XVI 262: ξυνὸν δὲ κακὸν πολέεσσι τιθεῖσι)<sup>26</sup>, appears here for the first time in Greek literature. The elegist completely defines his notion of martial excellence by alluding to its association to the common good. Individual warriors must subordinate themselves to the interest of the *polis* in order to achieve ἀρετή. Jaeger properly speaks of a «Politisierung des Heroenbegriffs»<sup>27</sup>, to which Hector could be seen as an epic precursor, for he fights toughly for his mother city. However, as an epic hero, he is above all concerned about his personal κλέος (Hom. *Il.* XXII 56-58, 108-109). Precisely here rests the fundamental difference between the epic ἀρετή and our poet's image of it. The ideal fighter in Tyrtaeus is not an epic hero<sup>28</sup>, but an anonymous man, as the utterance ὅστις ἀνὴρ in v. 16 shows. Everyone, that is, every citizen who behaves courageously in war on behalf of the community (vv. 15-19, 21-22), becomes ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός. Here, Tyrtaeus transfers the aristocratic-epic value of the adjective ἀγαθός<sup>29</sup> to every combatant committed to the city, regardless of his social stratum.

In vv. 16-19 and 21-22, warlike strength is displayed in a number of concrete examples, which thematically complement the eleventh and twelfth verses, since in both cases the performance of the ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός is described, initially in a negative wording (vv. 11-12) and then in a positive one (vv. 16-19, 21-22), where Tyrtaeus explains that *θοῦρις ἀλκή* consists not only of an optimal mastery of fighting techniques, but also requires self-

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<sup>25</sup> See Prato 1968 on ἄεθλον, 130: «'il premio', con polemico riferimento a quelli accordati nelle gare atletiche».

<sup>26</sup> The second half of the line (πόλην τε παντί τε δήμοι) partially reproduces Hector's reproach to Paris in Hom. *Il.* III 50: πατρί τε σὺ μέγα πῆμα πόλην τε παντί τε δήμῳ. It must be taken into consideration that Homeric influence is not limited to the lexical level, but also appears on the stylistic one. In this regard the ring composition is worth mentioning. It starts in the tenth verse and concludes in the twentieth. It connects Tyrtaeus' vision of ἀρετή, based on *θοῦρις ἀλκή*, indissolubly with the common good, the position of which in the middle of the ring (v. 15) emphasizes its significance.

<sup>27</sup> See Jaeger 1972, 122.

<sup>28</sup> With regard to that, Vela Tejada 2004, 133, points out: «Tyrtaeus' poetry, as Homer's, is based on an agonal ideal of the search of victory: the man ἀγαθός, ἐσθλός, with that value, ἀρετή, receives glory – κλέος – as a prize. But he places it within the context of society as a whole, subordinating the desire for glory to, and making it conditional on, the interest of the state».

<sup>29</sup> See n. 21.

control, initiative and courage, as the termini τετλαίη (v. 11) and τλήμονα<sup>30</sup> (v. 18) reflect.

## 2.2. Reward for the ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός (vv. 23-42)

### 2.2.1. Reward for the ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός killed in battle (vv. 23-34)

In connection to the previous part, in this section the performance of the ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός is further described. We are specifically told of the brave behaviour of the warrior who loses his life in the forefront (v. 23: αὐτὸς δ' ἐν προμάχοισι πεσὼν φίλον ὤλεσε θυμόν), his breast wounded many times through shield and cuirass (vv. 25-26: πολλὰ διὰ στέρνοιο καὶ ἀσπίδος ὀμφαλοέσσης / καὶ διὰ θώρηκος πρόσθεν ἐληλάμενος), and this way he bestows glory on his kinsfolk and community (v. 24: ἄστν τε καὶ λαοὺς καὶ πατέρ' εὐκλειῖσας). So he and his descendants will be esteemed by all his fellow citizens (vv. 27-30: τὸν δ' ὀλοφύρονται μὲν ὁμῶς νέοι ἢ δὲ γέροντες, / ἀργαλέωι δὲ πόθωι πᾶσα κέκηδε πόλις, / καὶ τύμβος καὶ παῖδες ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἀρίσημοι / καὶ παίδων παῖδες καὶ γένος ἐξοπίσω) and his name will never fall into oblivion (vv. 31-32: οὐδέ ποτε κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἀπόλλυται οὐδ' ὄνομ' αὐτοῦ, / ἀλλ' ὑπὸ γῆς περ ἐὼν γίνεται ἀθάνατος), since he met his death battling for his motherland and children (vv. 33-34: ὄντιν' ἀριστεύοντα μένοντά τε μαρνάμενον / τε γῆς πέρι καὶ παίδων θοῦρος Ἄρης ὀλέσει).

In this place Tyrtaeus depicts two death images. The first one (vv. 23-26) shows many Homeric stylistic traits, such as epic formulas like φίλον ὤλεσε θυμόν (Hom. *Il.* XI 342) or ἀσπίδος ὀμφαλοέσσης (Hom. *Il.* VI 118). With regard to content, these lines present a very technical perspective on the time of death, because the military aspects are emphasized. The way the fighter dies here seems interesting in that it portrays the prototype of heroic death in Ancient Greece: a man must endure many blows and always be hit at the front (vv. 25-26), which is considered a sign of not trying to flee.

As a result of his death in battle for the *polis*, the hoplite is mourned by all its members who long for him in tears (vv. 27-28: ὀλοφύρονται ... κέκηδε). Though these lamentations for the dead go formally back to Homer (Hom. *Il.* XXIV 720 ff.), they are different in terms of content, for here it is not about private sorrow, but about the grief of a whole citizenry. Besides, the people not only lament the loss of a good man, but also pre-

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<sup>30</sup> Tyrtaeus provides here the passive Homeric word τλήμων («patient») with an active meaning: «(he), (who) puts at risk». See Snell 1969, 14.



serve his memory and respect his descent (vv. 29-30)<sup>31</sup>. Thus he achieves the highest honour in his community.

Therefore, the elegist combines in this passage the traditional epic aspiration to everlasting personal fame with his own idea of the good warrior at the service of his fellow citizens<sup>32</sup>. So can Tyrtaeus' prototype of «good man in war», while fighting for the common benefit (v. 15: ξυνὸν ἐσθλόν), gain his own κλέος, like a Homeric hero (vv. 31-32). However, the poet displays a new concept of κλέος, which is distant from the individually-oriented epic one, inasmuch as the bravery of the warrior serves to honour his city, combat comrades and father (v. 24). Hence the prestige acquired by a single man is not only for him, but is transferred to the entire politic body. At the same time, the *polis* is represented as the guaranteeing instance of the fighter's immortal reputation (vv. 29-32). Consequently the community and the warrior form a symbiotic relationship, in which their mutual interests flock together and complete each other<sup>33</sup>. On the one hand, by means of his military ἀρετή, the ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός protects the existence of his city, increases its credit and even its power, if it is involved in a war of conquest. On the other hand, the *polis* takes care of the good man's κλέος in return, by remembering him.

Tyrtaeus finishes his characterization of the reward for the ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός fallen in battle, with the second death image (vv. 33-34). Despite the tense gap the syntactic cohesion between the two passages is kept by the relative pronoun ὄντιν' (v. 33) and its antecedent αὐτός (v. 23)<sup>34</sup>. Just as the first, the second death picture goes back stylistically to Homer, as shown by the form ἀριστεύοντα (v. 33) and the war god's epic epithet θούρος Ἄρης (v. 34). In terms of content, this death description can be related to the first one, because the three participles in v. 33 correspond to the courageous warlike attitude of vv. 25 and 26. But in comparison, the participles seem

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<sup>31</sup> Some scholars have understood these lines as an allusion to the heroic worship of the killed fighter. See Jaeger 1972, 124. The terminus τύμβος and also vv. 31-32, where the glory and fame of the good soldier are described as immortal, could support this interpretation. From our point of view, no indication of regular heroization can be seen in the poem.

<sup>32</sup> This combination has been aptly defined as «Politisierung der Ruhmesidee» complementary to the aforementioned «Politisierung des Heroenbegriffs». See Jaeger 1972, 124.

<sup>33</sup> See Meier 1998, 285.

<sup>34</sup> These personal and relative pronouns refer to ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός. We believe this sentence structure to be parallel to the ὅστις ἀνὴρ-sentence (v. 16), see page 113. Through the structure αὐτός ... ὄντιν' the poet stresses in the second half of the elegy also the anonymous character of the ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός *i.e.*, that every citizen can achieve this ideal, and not just an epic hero.

schematic and undetailed. Furthermore, we think that not the military perspective prevails in this section, but the idea of a man fighting for the common good (vv. 33-34: μαρνάμενόν / τε γῆς πέρι καὶ παίδων). The poet uses a formulation that seems to have a very direct and close effect. We consider it to be direct, because the expression «to fight for (something)» – μάρναμαι περὶ – *expressis verbis* appears here for the first time in the poem. That a good man in war, fighting for the collectivity, constitutes the main idea of this elegy it can be deduced from the context without difficulty by any reader or listener, but it is expressly said only in v. 34. Strictly speaking, we are here told not of the community, but of land and children, which, as already said, creates an impression of closeness. The collectivity, up to now embodied by political terms (v. 15: πόλιτ' ... δήμοι; v. 24: ἄστρ' ... αὐός; v. 28: πόλις), is in v. 33, however, exemplified by the words γῆς und παίδων, which rather evoke its emotive aspects. In two verses Tyrtaeus summarizes the honorable attitude of a «good man in war» who dies combating for his homeland and family.

#### 2.2.2. Reward for the surviving ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός (vv. 35-42)

In this group of verses the poet draws a picture, which is complementary to the preceding topic and related to it through the death motif, since κῆρα τανηλεγέος θανάτιο (v. 35) resumes θοῦρος Ἄρης (v. 34). Thereby a new situation is introduced: the warrior who survives and triumphs (vv. 35-36: εἰ δὲ φύγη μὲν κῆρα τανηλεγέος θανάτιο, / νικῆσας δ' αἰχμῆς ἀγλαὸν εὖχος ἔλι) and whose victory earns him military glory and admiration from the *polis* (v. 37: πάντες μιν τιμῶσιν, ὁμῶς νέοι ἠδὲ παλαιοί). Then he dies at an old age after many happy experiences (v. 38: πολλὰ δὲ τερπνὰ παθὼν ἔρχεται εἰς Αἰδῆν), because as an old man he is respected, nobody wishes to harm him (vv. 39-40: γηράσκων δ' ἄστοισι μεταπρέπει, οὐδέ τις αὐτὸν / βλέπτειν οὔτ' αἰδοῦς οὔτε δίκης ἐθέλει) and all his fellow citizens show him their recognition giving up the seats of honour to him (vv. 41-42: πάντες δ' ἐν θώκοισιν ὁμῶς νέοι οἱ τε κατ' αὐτὸν / εἴκουσ' ἐκ χώρης οἱ τε παλαιότεροι).

As usual the elegist uses epic phrases here, for instance κῆρα τανηλεγέος θανάτιο or αἰχμῆς ἀγλαὸν εὖχος (vv. 35-36)<sup>35</sup>. The latter («splendid glory of his spear») is particularly relevant for the elegy as a whole, because although this metaphor for military renown comes out explicitly in v. 36 for the first time in the poem<sup>36</sup>, Tyrtaeus' notion of glory depends on

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<sup>35</sup> See, respectively, Hom. *Il.* VIII 70 and VII 203.

<sup>36</sup> This metaphor for military glory often shows up in both poetry and prose. See for example: Anac. 109; Pind. *Pyth.* I 66; Her. VII 152, 3. See Prato 1968, 135.

martial excellence and therefore cannot be imagined without weapons. Besides, this expression is the clearest literal connection between reputation and fight that is found in the text. It is also positively connoted, as the adjective *ἀγλαός* points out. The same significance can be attributed to v. 38: *πολλὰ ... τερπνά*. This nuance can thus be interpreted as a sign of the satisfaction felt by the *ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός* who escaped death and won a battle, accomplishing his duty towards the city (vv. 35-36), and whose glory (*τιμή*) is recognized on this ground by all the members of the community (v. 37).

It is noteworthy that almost exactly the same words come forth in vv. 27 and 37, namely: *ὁμῶς νέοι ἢ δὲ παλαιοί*, which partially recur in vv. 41 and 42: *ὁμῶς νέοι οἷ τε ... οἷ τε παλαιότεροι*. Through this stylistic device, which recalls a typical epic repetition, the poet portrays two age groups: the young men (*νέοι*) and the old (*γέροντες, παλαιοί*). But he also sets the soldier himself as a benchmark, by adding his contemporaries (*οἷ τε κατ' αὐτόν*) and those older than him (*παλαιότεροι*). So he represents all segments of society, as underlined by the triple appearance of *πάντες*.

Vv. 27 and 37 can easily be related because of their parallel structure: in the first one, young and old men mourn the dead combatant and, in the second, they honour the survivor. Meier interprets this correspondence as an indication that both the killed and the returning warrior enjoy equal prestige, since Tyrtaeus does not require death on the battlefield, but «lediglich eine innere Haltung gegenüber dem Gemeinwesen, die diesen Fall [den Tod] als ihre äußerste Ausdrucksform fest einkalkuliert»<sup>37</sup>. But if the killed *ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός* sacrificed his own life at the service of the collectivity, it is possible to ask whether he and the survivor really receive equal prestige.

One could in fact give a negative answer to that question for two reasons. Firstly, the description of the reward for the deceased (12 lines) is longer than that of the surviving soldier (8 lines). Secondly, the homecoming fighter's military performance and his consequent fame are depicted by *νικήσας* and *αἰχμῆς ἀγλᾶν εὖχος* (v. 36), which in contrast to the foregoing account (vv. 23-26 and 33-34) seems much less detailed. Moreover, this section, concretely vv. 35-42, only includes the tributes granted to the returned warrior by the city during his lifetime (vv. 38-39: *πολλὰ ... τερπνά, γηράσκων*). Thus the immortality of his name is not literally guaranteed here, opposing to vv. 29-32 of the passage discussed before. Therefore we do not think that both *ἄνδρες ἀγαθοί* enjoy an identical level of social consideration.

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<sup>37</sup> Meier 1998, 286, distances himself from those scholars who interpret Tyrtaeus' work as a form of contempt for life and death mysticism.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the entire community appreciates the surviving good man in war very much, as shown by the fact that the older men yield their seats to him in assemblies and public occasions (v. 41), as the elderly Ithacians did for Telemachus in Hom. *Od.* II 14. This very concrete display of deference corresponds to the less specific exposition in vv. 39-40, where it is simply said that his fellow citizens regard the grown old fighter and respect his honour (αἰδῶς) and right (δίκη)<sup>38</sup>.

### 2.3. *Exhortation to ἀρετή* (vv. 43-44)

In the two final verses every man is urged to bravely reach the highest level of military excellence, without relaxing from war (vv. 43-44: ταύτης νῦν τις ἀνὴρ ἀρετῆς εἰς ἄκρον ἰκέσθαι / πειράσθω θυμῶι μὴ μεθίεις πολέμου).

As usual in this elegist's work, epic forms are found here, such as ἄκρον ἰκέσθαι (v. 43) and μεθίεις πολέμου (v. 44)<sup>39</sup>, though the ἀρετή meant in this section does not correspond to the traditional concept, but refers to Tyrtaeus' definition at the beginning of the elegy (v. 13), as the expression ταύτης νῦν ... ἀρετῆς (v. 43) denotes. These words possess a strong deictic character and emphasize not only a particular type of ἀρετή (ταύτης, that is, Tyrtaeus' type), but also a concrete time (νῦν). According to Meier<sup>40</sup>, the adverb implies here a war situation dangerous to the community (v. 44: πολέμου), which demands absolute commitment to the *polis*. So in his view the poet calls for an immediate battle.

Since the elegy gives no clue of specific fighters, enemies or a certain battle site, νῦν can also be explained as a stylistic device, which should, as Bowie puts it, «bring the audience from the reflections of the song, which are broadly applicable to any martial situation, to the particular occasion of the song's performance – an occasion, no doubt, when the audience was a part of a *polis* at war, but not necessarily one where fighting was imminent»<sup>41</sup>.

The British scholar understands the imminent combat as a mere possibility and proposes a sympotic context for this elegy. Therefore, he refers to a passage in Athenaeus (*Deipnosophistae* XIV 29, 640 F), in which Spartan soldiers on campaign sing some pieces of Tyrtaeus' work after the meal. He

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<sup>38</sup> From our point of view, an understanding of both termini in an epic sense is possible. Therefore αἰδῶς means here «that which causes respect», «dignity»; and δίκη means «right». See *LSJ* 36 and 430, respectively.

<sup>39</sup> See Hom. *Il.* XXIII 339; *Od.* IX 483 and Hes. *Op.* 289 ff.

<sup>40</sup> See Meier 1998, 287.

<sup>41</sup> See Bowie 1990, 223.

alludes as well to an extract of Lycurgus' speech against Leocrates (*Leoc.* 107), where Spartan soldiers are summoned to the King's tent to hear some of Tyrtaeus' poems. Moreover, Bowie considers fragment 9 as easily transferable from military sympotic settings to peaceful symposia, due to its popularity. Likewise the poetic subject of the elegy, the warlike ἀρετή, could facilitate this process, because this composition would fit every symposium where other ἀρεταί were praised. In this regard, the philologist adds that all citizens of the *poleis* were at same time soldiers and therefore the behaviour of a good warrior would become a suitable elegiac theme throughout Greece.

Thus it must be underscored that fr. 9 does not require to be recited under military circumstances. On the contrary, it could be also destined to pacific banquets<sup>42</sup>.

But it is remarkable too that, regardless of its performance frame, the ninth fragment is still an exhortation to fight. Therein lies the importance of this last distich. It allows the reception of the entire poem as a martial parainesis, by including the imperative form *πειράσθω* (v. 44). If the preceding verses give at first glance the impression of a pure reflection on ἀρετή, this perception turns out to be deceptive, through the vocabulary used in the elegy as a whole but especially in the closing lines, which make it clear that Tyrtaeus created this poem about his own idea of excellence, ἀρετή based on *θοῦρις ἀλκή*, in order to stimulate his readers or listeners to prove themselves worthy of this ἀρετή.

### 3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Finally we shall concisely recapitulate the content of the elegy in order to establish a definitive interpretation. Tyrtaeus offers here his own definition of ἀρετή (v. 13), dealing with military excellence (v. 9), oriented to the common good (v. 15), achievable by every citizen who proves his courage (vv. 11-12, 16-19, 21-22, 25-26), while fighting for his *polis* (vv. 33-34). This man becomes ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός (vv. 10, 20). If he dies in battle (vv. 23, 34), he brings glory to his community (v. 24) that mourns for him (vv. 27-28) and preserves his memory (vv. 29-32). Also, if he comes back as a victor

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<sup>42</sup> With regard to that, Cuartero Iborra 1990, 140, suggests that hortatory elegies of Tyrtaeus are sung before select groups of ἀνδρες and νέοι during *συσσιτία*. For the relationships between symposium and poetry see Vetta 1983, 20-26.

(vv. 35-36), his fellow citizens honour him during his lifetime (vv. 37-42). The poem culminates in an exhortation to fight (vv. 43-44).

As already seen, Tyrtaeus presents many affinities with epics from the lexical point of view. This is due to the fact that the elegist presents in these verses a canon of values on the basis of Homeric concepts. For this reason, we could speak of a reformulation of Homeric ethics. Tyrtaeus' ideal man, described with the epic expression ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός, is not comparable to an epic hero, though he also aspires to ἀρετή and immortal κλέος, because he does not fight for his own glory only, but for the sake of his community. In depicting this value system Tyrtaeus echoes a development, which takes place at this time not only in the Spartan, but also in the Greek society in general, and signifies the birth of the *poleis*. This means that the earlier, aristocratic, eminently Homeric, code of values, focused on personal distinction, is gradually changing to a social organisation based on collective interests<sup>43</sup>. Therefore, Tyrtaeus' composition on ἀρετή is fascinating, not only for its high literary merit, but also as a reflection of the process of social transformation that took place in the 7<sup>th</sup> century b.C.<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> See Meier 1998, 289; Musti 1986, 21-48, and Musti 2000, 87 ff.

<sup>44</sup> In relation to this poem Vela Tejada 2004, 132, comments that elegies of Tyrtaeus «permit us to have a more complex knowledge of the hoplites' spirit, as they fight together in a phalanx (cf. West 11). We receive an unusually vivid, fresh view of battle, unlike that found earlier in the Homeric poems or even later within the narratives of the historians. The warrior must even be willing to sacrifice his life (cf. West 10, 1-2); no honour can equal the glory which the hero wins in the battle for his country».

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