

Time and Ritual in Archaic Greek Poetry: Two Perspectives  
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The presence of ritual is a long established point of discussion in archaic Greek poetry, even if methodological issues remain controversial. While the role of ritual should not be overexaggerated, we might choose to be particularly sensitive when considering the subject of time, the effects of which - positive and negative - have been seen to be central in transcultural studies of rituals (see Gell 1992, *The Anthropology of Time*, passim). Often, what is at stake is the successful symbolic negotiation of key, universal moments of human development, safeguarding against its inherent risks. To this end, Seaford 1988 and Patterson 2005 have yielded provocative results, applying the anthropological models of Van Gennep to Bacchylides 11 and Eliade to the Louvre *Partheneion* of Alcman, respectively. In this paper, I seek to continue this trend, paying close attention to the role of time and ritual in archaic Greek poetry, and offering two contrasting poetic perspectives.

In Bacchylides 17, Theseus is celebrated as the central character undergoing transition from the (specifically sexual) vulnerability of youth to god-ordained hero status, complete with ritual elements, particularly the closing invocation of Apollo (130-2) and the gaze of internal audiences (47-50, 123). The importance of age and ritual transition is brought into greatest focus by the figure of Minos, who himself is effectively being relieved of his hero status, and retired; his failure either to understand properly or abide by the religious significance of Zeus' omen (67-71) excludes him from Theseus' ritualised transition and condemns him to the irrelevance of old age. Where Minos is marginalised, the perspective of old age excluded is adopted as the focus of the new Sappho fragment; the poet's isolation from the ritual of choral performance (χελύωναν, 2; ὄρχησθ', 6) both entails and exacerbates her exposure to the effects of aging. Unlike Minos, however, the poet's position entitles her to see the futility of attempting to elude the inevitable. Where elsewhere poetic performance, like memory (Lardinois 2008), provides consolation and the possibility of transcending temporality, the poet no longer appears to be comforted by this, a reading which is made more poignant if we incorporate the tradition that Tithonus retained his ability to sing even as he aged (Rawles 2006). As Tithonus discovered, humanity can grasp at timelessness, but agelessness remains ever beyond its reach.