Greece & Rome, Vol. 59, No. 1, © The Classical Association, 2012. All rights reserved
doi:10.1017/S0017383511000210

ATHLETICS IN SATYRIC DRAMA

Satyric drama introduced athletics much more regularly as an activity than either comedy or tragedy. Many of its villains defeated hapless travellers in a boxing or wrestling bout before murdering them. Satyr-plays were often set at athletic contests where the satyrs of the chorus encountered athletes or tried to be competitors themselves. In one of his plays Euripides provided the most detailed critique of athletes in any genre of classical Athenian literature.

Accounting for this striking prominence of athletics in satyric drama and what light it might shed on the standing of this elite activity in classical Athens has not proved easy.[1] Poets probably dramatized the myths of villainous athletes because of their physicality and black-and-white morality, which theatre-goers would have relished after the ethical quandaries of tragedy. But this does not explain why they regularly had satyrs encountering or attempting to be athletes. That appears to have been a consequence of the unusually central role of the chorus of satyrs. The behaviour of these imaginary creatures was the antithesis of popular morality. With their unrestrained appetites for sex and wine, satyrs lacked the important virtue of *sōphrosunē* ('moderation'). Nor did they have *aretē* ('courage'). Poets got theatre-goers to laugh by dropping the chorus into a scenario that required them to display these virtues. They always failed to do so and only regained their carefree lives through the intercession of Dionysus or a hero. Mixing up satyrs and athletics was a sure way to get this positive

* Versions of this article were delivered in seminars at Macquarie University (2011), the University of Sydney (2010), and the University of Queensland (2009). I am grateful for the helpful comments of those who were present. For their discussion of the topic with me thanks go to Alastair Blanshard, Mark Golden, Donald Kyle, François Lissarrague, Thomas Heine Nielsen, Patrick O'Sullivan, Richard Seaford, Bernd Seidensticker, and Peter Wilson. I thank Murray Kane for his research assistance. The article draws on my forthcoming book with Cambridge University Press on sport, democracy, and war in classical Athens. The translations of the Greek are my own.

[1] I discuss elsewhere the evidence for athletics as an elite pursuit in classical Athens: D. M. Pritchard, 'Athletics, Education and Participation in Classical Athens', in D. J. Phillips and D. Pritchard (eds.), *Sport and Festival in the Ancient Greek World* (Swansea, 2003); 'Kleisthenes, Participation, and the Dithyrambic Contests of Late Archaic and Classical Athens', *Phoenix* 58 (2004), 215–17; 'Sport, War and Democracy in Classical Athens', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 26.2 (2009), 216–18; 'Athletic Participation, Training, and Adolescent Education', in T. Scanlon and A. Futrell (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World* (Oxford, 2012).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

response, since athletics and *sōphrosunē* went together and sporting victory required manly courage and the enduring of *ponoi* ('toils'). As satyrs had neither virtue, and knew only the '*ponoi*' of fornicating and carousing, they were very incongruous athletes. Thus the genre employed athletics as a foil for drawing out the pleasing foibles of its chorus. In his *Autolycus*, Euripides deliberately broke with this common use of athletics as a morally normative activity by having his eponymous villain rehearse traditional and new criticisms of athletes. As theatre-goers would have rejected his critique and generally had a dim view of anybody who criticized sportsmen, he clearly introduced this diatribe for the sake of characterization: this wholesale attack against a highly regarded group made Autolycus appear still more villainous in the audience's eyes.

The prominence of athletics

Comedies and tragedies were performed as part of the dramatic contests of the Rural Dionysia, which several Attic demes held in honour of Dionysus (for example, Ar. *Pax* 529–32), and at the two city-based festivals of the Lenaea and the City or Great Dionysia. In the tragic contest of the Great Dionysia, each of the participating poets presented a set of three tragedies, followed by a satyr-play. While written by tragedians, satyr-plays combined characteristics of tragedy and comedy.[2] In their language, structure, and dramatization of mythology they resembled tragedy, but the endings were always happy and there was – because the choristers were boisterous attendants of Dionysus – much obscenity, irreverence, and humour, which were hallmarks of old comedy. The corpus of satyr-plays is poorly preserved, consisting of a solitary extant example (Eur. *Cyc.*), several dozen fragments, and the titles of other plays that are otherwise entirely lost. However, enough has survived to suggest that the genre relied on 'a limited repertoire of situations, themes, characterizations, and narrative elements which recur so frequently that they may be identified as generic stereotypes'.[3]

[2] M. Griffith, 'Satyrs, Citizens, and Self-Presentation', in G. W. M. Harrison (ed.), *Satyr Drama. Tragedy at Play* (Swansea, 2005), 174; R. Seaford, *Euripides.* Cyclops. *With Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford, 1984), 1–3; D. F. Sutton, *The Greek Satyr Play* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1980), 134–45.

[3] Seaford (n. 2), 33–44; Sutton (n. 2), 145–59 (quotation from p. 145).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Interestingly, athletics is one of the genre's commonplaces and is usually portrayed in connection with three of its stereotypical narrative elements.[4] Thus satyric drama gives more prominence to athletics *as an activity* than either comedy or tragedy.[5] Satyr-plays regularly treat the upbringing of a hero or god, with Heracles being a popular subject of such dramas (for example, Soph. *Little Heracles*).[6] As a hero Heracles was, of course, an exemplary athlete (Eur. *HF* 425–6) and the mythical founder of the Olympic Games (see, for instance, Lys. 33.1–2; Pind. *Ol.* 10.24–63), while his sanctuary at Cynosarges, which was just outside the city's walls, served as Athens' third *gymnasion* (Paus. 1.19.3).[7] The most common plot of satyric drama is a hero's slaying of a villain or monster that has been killing or, in the case of Euripides' *Cyclops* (25–6, 125–9), eating travellers whom he should instead have been treating as *xenoi* ('guest friends').[8] In plots of this type, the satyrs are usually enslaved by the ogre, who compels them to perform unfamiliar duties (see, for example, Eur. *Cyc.* 18–26). From what remains of the corpus, the custom-breaking homicides of these malevolent characters often seem to have taken the form of a perverse contest in boxing or wrestling – events in which the vanquishers ultimately prove to be superior. For example, Aeschylus' *Cercyon*, from which a mention of athletes' *amphōtides* ('ear-protectors') has survived (fr. 102 Radt), most probably dramatized the well-known myth of how its eponymous villain killed travellers in a perverted wrestling match until he was outwrestled and slain by Theseus (see Apollod. *Epit.* 1.3; Plut. *Vit. Thes.* 11.1).[9] Likewise, Sophocles' *Amycus*, whose second of two surviving lines most probably refers to boxing (fr. 112 Radt), presumably dealt with the story of the homicidal boxer Amycus (Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.20).[10]

A closely related narrative stereotype is the satyrs' abandonment of their traditional service to Dionysus to take up a new *tekhnē*

[4] For athletics as a generic commonplace, see R. Krumeich, N. Pechstein, and B. Seidensticker (eds.), *Das griechische Satyrspiel* (Darmstadt, 1999), 411; Seaford (n. 2), 39; Sutton (n. 2), 148–9; and especially D. F. Sutton, 'Athletics in the Greek Satyr Play', *Rivisti Studi Classica* 23 (1975).

[5] For the representation of athletics in old comedy, see Pritchard (n. 1), 2009, 214–16; P. Thiercy, 'Sport et comédie au Ve siècle', *Quaderni di Dioniso* 1 (2003), 144–67. For its depiction in tragedy, see D. H. Larmour, *Stage and Stadium: Drama and Athletics in Ancient Greece* (Hildesheim, 1999), especially 93–170.

[6] Seaford (n. 2), 38; Sutton (n. 2), 153.

[7] M. Golden, *Sport and Society in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 1998), 153–4.

[8] Seaford (n. 2), 33–4; Sutton (n. 2), 145–6.

[9] Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker (n. 4), 152–6.

[10] Ibid., 243–9.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

('craft').[11] This change of roles is, as we shall see, not always forced on the satyrs, and can also involve a newly invented object. Again athletics is prominent here as a practice that the satyric chorus picks up or encounters. Thus the fragments of a satyr-play of Aeschylus, called either *Sacred Ambassadors* or *Isthmian Competitors*, has Dionysus fuming at his charges, who, having learnt novel ways (fr. 78a.33 Radt), have voluntarily abandoned his band of attendant revellers (36–72, fr. 78c.37–42). Instead they have taken up the newly invented discipline of athletics and are apparently training hard to be competitors at the Isthmian Games (fr. 78a.30–5, 78c.39).

Indeed, sporting contests or venues appear to be one of the genre's popular settings. A clear example is *Games* by Achaeus; for, in addition to the title, one of its characters describes the beauty of athletes (fr. 4 Snell), while two others converse about *theōroi* (sacred ambassadors sent to Panhellenic games), athletic competitors, and the hearty diets of athletes and Boeotians (fr. 3 Snell). Another satyr-play, possibly by Sophocles, in which the satyrs claim to be athletics experts ([Soph.] fr. 1130.6–9 Radt), probably had them competing in athletics against Heracles, among others, for the right to marry a heroic bride (cf. 4, 15–16).[12] Likewise, Sophocles' *Amphiareos* (fr. 113–20 Radt) may have dramatized the story of this eponymous hero's foundation of the Nemean Games (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.4). While we lack evidence on what roles the satyric choruses played in most of these dramas, it is most likely that tried to be athletes (as they certainly did in Aeschylus' *Isthmian Competitors*) or, at the very least, encountered others practising athletics.

The reason for the prominence of athletics in satyric drama is not clear. Richard Seaford suggests that the genre's stereotypes have never been explained, as they are not 'purely theatrical' but also relate to 'the ambiguous nature of the satyr in ritual and popular belief'.[13] In this vein, he argues that the satyric chorus's association with athletics was a result of 'the participation in the athletic contests at the Anthesteria of men or boys dressed as satyrs'.[14] Although he rightly reminds us of the profound connection between satyr-plays and Dionysian worship, his explanation of satyric athletics faces problems; apart from the question as to whether an event at one festival of Dionysus can really account

[11] Seaford (n. 2), 35; Sutton (n. 2), 135.
[12] Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker (n. 4), 368–74.
[13] Seaford (n. 2), 39.
[14] Ibid., 40.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for a generic stereotype at another, the holding of sporting contests at the Anthesteria is far from certain. The purported evidence for such *agōnes* consists of red-figure images of *palaestra* scenes, wrestling, torch races (including one of satyrs as runners), and apobatic, cart, and chariot contests on trefoil *oinokhoai*.[15] Pots of this shape were used by children to mark their third birthdays at the wine-drinking day of the Anthesteria. However, such images might be read less literally as prospective depictions of some of the normative activities that a boy or *meirakion* should pursue, while the existence of athletic *agōnes* at this festival is not corroborated by epigraphical or literary evidence.[16] Likewise, the picture of satyrs as torch-racers on a wine jug now in Berlin does not have to be read as reductively as Seaford implies; for it serves as a fine example of the practice of pottery-painters to depict satyrs taking up incongruous and unlikely practices.[17]

Dana Sutton, by contrast, sticks to theatrical issues in his 'partial conclusion' on the prominence of athletics in satyr-plays, which he relates specifically to the genre's physical *agōnes* between heroes and villains. He suggests that, 'whatever the reason for this agonic quality, athletic competitions are one subspecies of *agon*, and so this frequent use of athletic subjects may be related to the more generalized tendency of presenting agonic situations'.[18] This is a plausible if somewhat underdeveloped suggestion. The popularity of such dramas presumably lay in their physicality and black-and-white morality, which audiences would have found more straightforward and reassuring than the regularly ethically complex scenarios of tragedy. Choosing myths of villainous sportsmen made for even simpler theatre. Whereas tragedies had to employ sporting metaphors to try to articulate complex and disturbing scenarios, satyr-plays time and again presented *agōnes* that were not only physical but comparable to a well-known sporting bout.[19] Moreover, a villain's perversion of athletics helped to simplify a play's morality still further: he was breaking not only the *nomoi* or customs of guest friendship but also those of sport, which never countenanced the deliberate killing of the defeated (see, for example, Dem. 23.54). However, as Sutton concedes, this is only a 'partial' explanation, as it does not account for why some other satyr-plays were set at games or

[15] D. G. Kyle, *Athletics in Ancient Athens* (Leiden, 1987), 45–6.
[16] Ibid., 45–6.
[17] Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. no. 1962.33. Seaford (n. 2), 40 n. 114.
[18] Sutton (n. 4), 209.
[19] Larmour (n. 5), 92–133, thoroughly surveys the sporting imagery of classical Athenian plays.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

had choruses attempting to be athletes. Explaining these requires us to turn to the popular beliefs and religious rituals concerning satyrs in classical Athens and to their theatrical role in producing what has been called satyric drama's 'comedy of incongruity'.[20]

Satyrs as incongruous athletes

The classical Athenians saw the satyrs primarily as the mythical servants of Dionysus.[21] As such they were part of his *thiasos* ('band of revellers') on Mount Nysa, where they were obliged to be perpetually drunk, chase nymphs, with whom they sired children, and, carrying the distinctive wand of Dionysus, sing and dance in his honour (see Eur. *Cyc.* 63–82; Soph. *Searchers*, 221–30, Lloyd-Jones). Serving a god could be a form of slavery and involve many *ponoi* (Eur. *Ion* 82–184). But descriptions of the satyrs' service to Dionysus in such terms – given the hedonism and ease of their obligations – is surely tongue-in-cheek and another example of their fondness for hyperbole.[22] While born of the nymphs ([Soph.] fr. 1130.5 Radt), satyrs were also imagined to be partially wild beasts (Soph. *Searchers*, 127–8, 147, 153, Lloyd-Jones) – a characteristic that comes to the fore in visual representations.[23] On thousands of black- and red-figure pots they are depicted as prancing and balding human figures who are equipped with beards, engorged penises, horsy tails, snub noses, and pointy ears.[24] The costumes of satyric choruses approximate this depiction. For example, on a late fifth-century Attic *kratēr*, which depicts the actors and chorus of a satyr-play, the otherwise naked choristers sport furry breeches with phalluses and tails, and hold or wear masks with beards, receding hairlines, pug noises, and pointy ears.[25] They are similarly attired on

[20] Sutton (n. 2), 159.

[21] E.g. Eur. *Cyc.* 79, 590; Soph. *Searchers*, 224, Lloyd-Jones; [Soph.] fr. 1130.5 Radt. For the general characteristics of satyrs, see Seaford (n. 2), 5–10; Sutton (n. 2), 138–9; F. Lissarrague 'Why Satyrs Are Good to Represent', in J. J. Winkler and F. I. Zeitlin (eds.), *Nothing to Do with Dionysos: Athenian Drama and its Social Context* (Princeton, NJ, 1990), 234–5.

[22] See, for example, Aesch. fr. 78a.36–72 Radt; Eur. *Cyc.* 708–9; Soph. *Searchers*, 63, 162–5, 224, Lloyd-Jones.

[23] Lissarrague (n. 21), 228–31; Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker (n. 4), 41–73; Sutton (n. 2), 134.

[24] See, for example, J. R. Green, F. Muecke, K. N. Sowada, M. Turner, and E. Bachmann, *Ancient Voices, Modern Echoes. Theatre in the Greek World. Exhibition Catalogue* (Sydney, 2003), cat. nos. 3–4, 6, 9–10.

[25] This is the so-called Pronomos Vase (Naples, Mansell Collection, inv. no. 3240; see also Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker [n. 4], fig. 8).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

an early fourth-century jug, now in Sydney, which was probably from Tarentum.[26] Manifestly these physical attributes of the satyrs are the antithesis of the youthful ideal of masculine beauty, which requires the penis, for example, to be thin, tapering, and short rather than thick and erect (compare Aesch. fr. 78a.19, 29 Radt).[27]

Likewise, the satyrs of Athenian theatre and finely painted pottery behave as 'antitypes of the Athenian male citizenry and present us with an inverted anthropology (or andrology) of the ancient city-state'.[28] With unrestrained appetites for wine (Eur. *Cyc.* 67, 140, 146, 161, 432–4) and sex (Eur. *Cyc.* 68–72, 179–82), they clearly lack the cardinal personal virtue of *sōphrosunē*.[29] Notwithstanding their bravado when out of harm's way (Aesch. fr. 78a.13–21 Radt), satyrs do not exhibit martial courage either.[30] For example, in Euripides' *Cyclops* Odysseus asks the satyrs to be 'men' in his audacious scheme for escaping from Polyphemus (595). They solemnly promise to be courageous and trusty comrades but, when the time comes for them to plunge the stake into their tormentor's solitary eye (596–8), they give lame, transparently false reasons for their inability to do so (635–41), causing Odysseus to decry his 'allies' as 'wicked men' and 'worthless' (642).

Somewhat contradictorily, while satyrs may have been the antithesis of the normative male citizen they were still viewed by classical Athenians as predominantly sympathetic mythical beings.[31] As children and partners of nymphs and servants of Dionysus they were *theōn homauloi* ('companions of gods'; [Soph.] fr. 1130.5–6 Radt) and so had unique knowledge of oracles, the underworld and 'every conspicuous *tekhnē*' (ibid., 6–14).[32] More importantly, they were closely aligned with the city's religious worship. Celebrations for Dionysus were unique in classical Athens and elsewhere for their ritual licence, which involved the perceived collapse of social distinctions,

[26] Sydney, Nicholson Museum, inv. no. NM 47.5.

[27] K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, second edition (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 127–30; J. M. Padgett, 'The Stable Hands of Dionysos: Satyrs and Donkeys as Symbols of Social Marginalization in Attic Vase Painting', in B. Cohen (ed.), *Not the Classical Ideal. Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2000), 46–7.

[28] Lissarrague (n. 21), 235; see also Padgett (n. 27), 43.

[29] Padgett (n. 27), 46.

[30] P. O'Sullivan, 'Satyr and Image in Aeschylus' *Theoroi*', *CQ* 50 (2000), 365.

[31] Griffith (n. 2), 172; B. Seidensticker, 'Dithyramb, Comedy, and Satyr-play', in J. Gregory (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 2005), 47.

[32] Seaford (n. 2), 6–7, 32.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the breaking of social norms, and the inversion of social roles.[33] While not absent from the *pompē* ('procession') and the theatrical contests of Dionysian festivals, this ritualized suspension of social normalcy was most apparent in their special *kōmoi*, or evening revels for the god. These began in private houses where male companions drank inordinate amounts of wine, the god's gift to mankind and a sure 'medicine for *ponoi*' (Eur. *Bacch.* 278–82), before spilling into the streets.[34] Accompanied by bearers of large phalluses and often cross-dressing, revellers wandered the city, singing and dancing for Dionysus, and engaging passers-by in *aiskhologia* (abusive and foul speech).[35] For the classical Athenians, these acts of licence were both immensely enjoyable and divine honours that Dionysus demanded of every male, young and old alike (see Aesch. fr. 78c.37–40 Radt; Eur. *Bacch.* 322–7). That they also echoed characteristics and behaviours of the god's traditional servants reveals how satyrs served as a justifying mythical paradigm for the mortal worshippers of Dionysus and as a useful metaphor for what Athenian males became in his presence.

This strong association of the satyrs with Dionysus and his actual worship in classical Athens also seems to have been closely connected with satyric drama's introduction into the Great Dionysia. This, at least, is the gist of Zenobius' explanation of the proverb 'nothing to do with Dionysus' (5.40). According to this Roman-period paroemiographer, choruses initially sang dithyrambs honouring Dionysus, but later the poets 'abandoned this custom and began trying to write of Ajaxes and Centaurs'. This changing of direction was not well received by theatre-goers, who mockingly called out 'nothing to do with Dionysus'. 'No doubt because of this', Zenobius concludes, 'they decided later to introduce satyrs in order that they would not seem to be forgetting the god.' If, as is likely, satyric drama emerged in such circumstances, then the chorus of satyrs was the genre's *raison d'être* and considerably more intrinsic to its character and popularity than was the chorus to either comedy or tragedy.[36] Certainly the satyric chorus stood apart

[33] P. E. Easterling, 'A Show for Dionysus', in eadem (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1997) 36–53; R. J. Hoffmann, 'Ritual License and the Cult of Dionysus', *Athenaeum* 67 (1989), 91–115; R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford, 2005), 290–326.

[34] Hoffmann (n. 33), 96–9.

[35] S. Halliwell, *Greek Laughter. A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* (Cambridge, 2008), 215–63.

[36] Seaford (n. 2), 14–16, 30–3; B. Seidensticker, 'The Chorus of Greek Satyrplay', in E. Csapo and M. C. Miller (eds.), *Poetry, Theory, Praxis. The Social Life of Myth, Word and Image in Ancient Greece* (Oxford 2003), 120; idem (n. 31), 48–9.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for its extensive involvement in, and, at times, dominance of, the dramatic action.[37]

This incongruous involvement of the satyrs in the struggles of the heroes or in other mythical stories happened to be the source of the genre's humour.[38] As François Lissarrague explains,

> It works by playing with myth, by taking a well-known story and overlaying it with a group of satyrs who react to the situation in their own peculiar fashion. The recipe is as follows: take one myth, add satyrs, observe results.[39]

The humour of such juxtapositions arose not just from the inappropriate presence of satyrs but also from the anticipated confirmation of the audience's perceptions of these flawed, sympathetic creatures.[40] Thus, in satyr-plays where a hero challenges an ogre, such as in Euripides' *Cyclops*, the chorus initially promises to behave heroically but invariably ends up doing the opposite, making plain their questionable morality. Alternatively, playwrights confirmed the true character of the satyrs by staging their predictable reactions to newly invented objects and practices or their not-always-successful attempts to take up new occupations. Despite the fact that the city's pottery-painters were not very interested in depicting scenes from satyr-plays, they did use a comparable set-up to get a laugh; for they showed satyrs (sometimes with wine cup or thyrsus in hand) practising athletics, soldiering, or performing some other incongruous activity.[41]

The raising of laughs in this manner explains why satyric choruses encountered athletics so often, and hence fills in our explanation for the prominence of this upper-class activity in satyric drama. The citizens of classical Athens believed that athletes and soldiers faced comparable toils and personal risks and had to meet some of the same requirements to be victorious.[42] To win their respective *agōnes*, both had to endure *ponoi* and *kindunoi* ('dangers') and to display *aretē*.[43]

[37] Seidensticker (n. 36), 106–7, 118; idem (n. 31), 44–5.
[38] O'Sullivan (n. 30), 363; Sutton (n. 2), 159–60.
[39] Lissarrague (n. 21), 235.
[40] Cf. Seidensticker (n. 36), 120.
[41] E.g. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, inv. no. 2381.
[42] Pritchard (n. 1), 2009, 223–6.
[43] For the *ponoi* of athletic competition, see, e.g., Eur. *Alc.* 1025–6, 1035; Isoc. 12.44; Pind. *Isthm.* 4.47, 5.22–5; Pind. *Ol.* 6.9–11, 10.22–3; Pind. *Nem.* 6.23–4. Pindar for one recognizes the *kindunoi* of athletics (see C. M. Bowra, *Pindar* [Oxford, 1964], 186). For the toils of battle, see, e.g., Ar. *Ach.* 695–7; Dem. 9.71; Eur. *Supp.* 373; Lys. 6.47; Thuc. 2.38.1. For its dangers, see, e.g., Dem. 60.3–5; Lys. 2.20, 43, 50–1; Pl. *Menex.* 239a–b. Pindar makes *aretē* a prerequisite for sporting success (Bowra, 171–2). For the courage of soldiers as the cause for victory, see, e.g., Dem. 60.21; Lys. 2.4–6, 20, 64–5; Pl. *Menex.* 240d.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Since satyrs were the antithesis of courage and habituated only to the '*ponoi*' of dancing, drinking, and fornicating, they were the most unlikely of athletes. Thus the poets of satyric drama saw choruses witnessing sporting contests or, better still, trying unsuccessfully to be sportsmen as ideal scenarios for bringing to the fore the true colours of the satyrs and hence entertaining theatre-goers.

While lacunose fragments of the play survive only on two sheets of papyrus, *Isthmian Competitors* by Aeschylus seems to have fully exploited the second of these athletic scenarios. The satyrs of its chorus have been sent by Dionysus as his *theōroi* to the newly founded Isthmian Games, but, as soon as they arrive, they abandon this service for something that seems more interesting (fr. 78a.11–12, 18–22; 78c.43–8 Radt).[44] Dionysus arrives here, after an easy search for them (78a.23–8), and is immediately taken aback by their 'little penises', which are 'tapered and short' (29). The reason for this incongruous physical change becomes quickly apparent: the satyrs are now practising athletics (30–5) and so have tied up the foreskins of their penises as Greek athletes were wont to do.[45] Addressing Silenus or the chorus-leader, Dionysus acknowledges how, despite neglecting dancing (32–3), his sometime servant has been training exceedingly hard for the Isthmian Games and practising athletics finely. 'You are', he concludes, 'an Isthmian competitor and, as you have learnt novel ways [*tropous kainous*], are training your arm and wasting my money' (34–5). Much of what follows is lost, but Silenus or the chorus-leader seems to try to justify the disloyalty of the satyrs on the grounds that serving Dionysus is exceedingly onerous, which is something Dionysus categorically refuses to accept (36–72). His response continues on the second papyrus sheet, where he accuses the satyrs of dishonouring his divine prerogatives for the sake of Isthmian competition (78c.37–40) and promises retribution (41). In reply the satyr solemnly vows never to leave Poseidon's temple at Isthmia (43–8), but their commitment to their new *tekhnē* (56) of athletics proves to be very short-lived, for an unidentifiable character now approaches the satyr and says: '[Since] you are fond of learning these new things, I am bringing you new playthings, newly created from the adze and anvil. This here is the first of your toys' (49–52). These composite objects have consistently been identified as javelins.[46] Faced with actual sporting equipment,

[44] Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker (n. 4), 368–74.
[45] S. G. Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics* (London and New Haven, CT, 2004), 12–13.
[46] See, e.g., Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker (n. 4), 148; O'Sullivan (n. 30), 362–3.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

our satyr gets cold feet: he refuses to accept the javelins, suggests they should be given to a satyric companion, and claims ignorance of their purpose (53–6). Clearly satyrs were not cut out to be sportsmen.[47]

The diatribe against athletes in Euripides' *Autolycus*

> While countless bad things exist across Greece, nothing is worse than the race of athletic competitors. Firstly they do not know how to live well nor would they be able to do so; for how could a man who is a slave of his jaw and weaker than his belly acquire prosperity beyond his father? Additionally they are not capable of working for a living and making the best of fortune, because they have not learnt good customs and hence change with difficulty when facing a lack of resources. They are illustrious in their youth and go back and forth as statues of the city. But when bitter old age falls upon them, their humble cloaks are no more through loss of thread. Also, I blame the custom of the Greeks, who gather together for these men and honour useless pleasures for the sake of a feast. Who by wrestling well or being swift footed or by punching a jaw finely aided his paternal city through the winning of a crown? Will they fight the enemy with discuses in their hands or repel them from the fatherland by striking between the shields with their hands? In this no one is silly when standing before the spear. Wise and good men must be wreathed with leaves, along with him who, being a moderate and just man, leads his city very finely and the man who puts away bad deeds with words and diminishes battles and civil wars; for such things are fine both for every city and for every one of the Greeks. Eur. fr. 282 Kannicht

Here Euripides furnishes an exception to the representation of athletics in satyric drama. Clearly this surviving portion of his *Autolycus* is not using athletics as a measure against which the foibles of the satyric chorus can be perceived more easily. In its appropriating of the traditional criticisms of athletes and inventing of new ones, the fragment happens to be the fullest critique of athletics in any genre of Athenian literature. Indeed it only survives because post-classical writers found its attack so unusual that they quoted it regularly (for example, Ath. 413c; Diog. Laert. 1.56; Plut. *Mor.* 581f).

Most sports historians of ancient Greece take it as sure evidence of mainstream views in classical Athens.[48] But some have cautioned against doing so.[49] Certainly it is not easy to interpret, because the sketchy reconstruction of this satyr-play does not extend to the

[47] Seidensticker (n. 36), 106.

[48] E.g. Golden (n. 7), 158–62; Larmour (n. 5), 114; Miller (n. 45), 28.

[49] E.g. M. Dickie, 'Phaeacian Athletics', in F. Cairns (ed.), *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar. Fourth Volume* (Liverpool, 1983), 236; Kyle (n. 15), 128–30.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

dramatic context of this fragment. It was possibly linked to Autolycus' use of anti-logical argumentation to deceive the victims of his thieving. Nevertheless the range of audience responses to this attack seems quite clear. The Athenian *dēmos* regarded athletics very highly, supported pro-sport policies, and disliked public criticism of this upper-class pursuit and its practitioners.[50] Thus it is doubtful that any considerable number of theatre-goers would have agreed with this fragment's criticisms. Many were no doubt angered by them, while some others may have laughed at their apparently calculated offensiveness. As Autolycus himself is likely to have delivered them, this wholesale attack against a highly regarded group would have made him appear more villainous in the audience's eyes. Thus the fragment probably served the same purpose as the criticisms of athletes in Euripides' *Electra*: instead of giving voice to popular sentiments it helped to characterize a protagonist.[51]

Euripides clearly went out of his way to shock his audience with an unusually detailed attack against athletes. Athenaeus noted correctly his appropriating of Xenophanes of Colophon for this diatribe. Like this itinerant intellectual of the sixth century (413f), Euripides described athletics as 'useless' (fr. 282.15 Kannicht) and even expanded upon his predecessor's criticism by claiming that it was not only wise men but also those in possession of *sōphrosunē* and justice who were more worthy of public recognition than victorious athletes (24–8; Xenophanes fragment 2.5–12 West).[52] But Euripides clearly built on the other traditional criticism of athletics too; for, in this fragment, he also attacked them for contributing nothing militarily to the *polis*, on the grounds that they could not box or throw their discuses (that is, use their sporting know-how) in phalanx-based battles (fr. 282.16–23 Kannicht). This was a practical – and rather hyperbolic – illustration of the argument that Tyrtaeus had made in the seventh century, namely that military *aretē* was superior to, and intrinsically different from, sporting *aretē* (fr. 12.1–9 West).[53]

Athenaeus did not comment on this second appropriation or, for that matter, on the two novel criticisms of athletes that Euripides introduced in this fragment. The first of these was that the unusually

[50] Pritchard (n. 1), 2009, 213–16; A. H. Sommerstein, 'How to Avoid Being a *Komodoumenos*', *CQ* 46 (1996), 331.

[51] W. G. Arnott, 'Double Vision: A Reading of Euripides' *Electra*', *G&R* 28 (1981), 179–92, considers carefully the purpose of athletic imagery in this tragedy.

[52] Kyle (n. 15), 127–8.

[53] Ibid., 127.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

rich diets that athletes required prevented them from acquiring more wealth than their fathers (fr. 282.3–6 Kannicht).[54] The second was that they could not earn a living because 'they have not learnt good customs and hence change with difficulty when facing a lack of resources' (7–9). These two criticisms are closely related to popular perceptions of the wealthy. The first, for example, combined the knowledge that lower-class citizens had of athletes' hearty eating habits with their conviction that upper-class youths, instead of using their patrimonies for public services, wasted them on gourmandizing and other dissolute activities.[55] Likewise, the second complaint built on the popular concern that wealthy citizens were work-shy and so coped badly if their personal circumstances declined (Eur. fr. 54 Kannicht; Men. *Dys.* 766–9).[56] In this fragment, then, Euripides appears to have broadened the traditional attack against athletes by associating them with pre-existing prejudices against the wealthy.

Nikolaus Pechstein plausibly suggests that this expansive attack may have been part of Euripides' adaptation of the traditional portrayal of Autolycus.[57] In Homer he is the grandfather of Odysseus and the best thief among mortals (for example, *Od.* 19.395–6). Hesiod and later poets make him the son of Hermes, from whom he acquired the magical skills that he employed time and again to escape capture and prosecution.[58] Thus Autolycus could take on new appearances or become invisible, and make the items that he had stolen disappear or even unrecognizable to their rightful owners by changing their colour, appearance, or other distinguishing features. Yet the partial summary that Johannes Tzetzes (a twelfth-century Byzantine writer) gave of this satyr-play shows how Euripides treated this mythical figure quite differently. Instead of relying on magic to hide his thefts, Autolycus convinces his victims that he is returning to them what he has stolen (Tzetz. *Chil.* 8.435–43 Leone). In one of the play's episodes he steals a good horse but persuades its owner that he is giving it back, even though it is only an ass that is being handed over (446–7). In

[54] Pritchard (n. 1), 2003, 301.

[55] E.g. Ar. *Ran.* 431–3, 1065–8; Dem. 36.39; Lys. 14.23–5, 19.9–1; D. Pritchard, 'Aristophanes and de Ste. Croix: The Value of Old Comedy as Evidence for Athenian Popular Culture', *Antichthon* 45 (2012); J. Roisman, *The Rhetoric of Manhood. Masculinity and the Attic Orators* (Berkeley, CA, 2005), 89–92.

[56] K. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, 1974), 174–5.

[57] Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker (n. 4), 403–12, which is based on N. Pechstein, *Euripides Satyrographos. Ein Kommentar zu den Euripideischen Satyrspielfragmenten* (Leipzig and Stuttgart, 1998).

[58] Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker (n. 4), 404, with primary references.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

another, a father is none the wiser when he receives a satyr in place of his daughter, whom Autolycus has taken to be his bride (448–50). The four other surviving lines from this play apparently related to one or other of these episodes (fr. 282a, 283–4 Kannicht). Fr. 282a suggests that the satyrs were the servants of Autolycus and hence co-opted into his verbal subterfuges. Thus the villain of this satyr-play 'appears to have emerged in this drama as a particularly experienced orator'.[59] It is here, Pechstein believes, that 'a link can be found' to fr. 282. As Autolycus apparently relied heavily on his oratorical skills, he may have been attacked for neglecting *hē gymnastikē* ('athletics'), which was a common reproach against students of public speaking in classical Athens (Ar. *Nub.* 915–8, 1054; Aeschin. 3.255–6), and may have responded by launching a virtuoso attack against athletes.

Such a link seems very plausible, but was possibly more direct than Pechstein suggests. In classical Athens public speaking was taught by the sophists.[60] For the sake of both defending this new discipline and attracting as many students as possible, these intellectuals for hire regularly rehearsed the criticisms that Xenophanes and Tyrtaeus had made of athletics, which continued to be an established part of traditional education in classical Athens.[61] Probably because they witnessed, or at least heard of, the sophists' apparent envy of athletes, lower-class Athenians believed them to be generally hostile to *hē gymnastikē*.[62] In his *Electra* Euripides exploited this popular belief for characterization. He had the two protagonists, Electra and Orestes, criticize athletics without provocation (for example, 386–90, 880–5) because it was a good way, among others, to flag to the audience that they had indeed been trained in the anti-logical argumentation of the sophists.[63] He could have had the eponymous villain of *Autolycus* do the same. Finally, if the myth that Autolycus was responsible for teaching Heracles how to wrestle dated back to the classical period (Apollod.

[59] Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker (n. 4), 411.

[60] M. I. Joyal, I. McDougall, and J. C. Yardley, *Greek and Roman Education. A Sourcebook* (London and New York, 2009), 59–87; H. Yunis, 'The Constraints of Democracy and the Rise of the Art of Rhetoric', in D. Boedeker and K. A. Raaflaub (eds.), *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 223–40.

[61] For examples of such criticisms, see Isoc 4.1–2, 6.93–5, 15.301–2; Pl. *Ap.* 36d–e. H. Tarrant, 'Competition and the Intellectual', in Phillips and Pritchard (n. 1), 351–63, considers carefully the complex relationship that the sophists had with athletics.

[62] J. de Romilly, *The Great Sophists in Periclean Athens*, tr. J. Lloyd (Oxford, 1992), 37–9.

[63] For the other means that he used to flag their education in public speaking, see R. Gallagher, 'Making the Stronger Argument the Weaker: Euripides, *Electra* 518–44', *CQ* 53 (2003), 405–8; S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1996), 239–242; cf. 'Rhetoric and Relevance: Interpolation at Euripides *Electra* 367–400', *GRBS* 27 (1986), 157–71.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Bibl. 2.4.9), theatre-goers would have realized that he happened to be attacking an activity in which he himself excelled. This would have put beyond doubt for them both his mastery of the sophists' so-called making of the weaker argument stronger, which he probably relied on for deceiving his victims, and also his general lack of scruples.

Certainly very few would have accepted what Autolycus said of athletes. Non-elite Athenians were deeply interested in the careers of local and foreign *athlētai*.[64] They considered fellow citizens who had won at the Olympics or other Panhellenic games to be public benefactors of the first order (see, for example, Dem. 20.141; Isoc. 16.50; *IG* I^3 131.11–18).[65] They rewarded victors in their own competitive festivals generously and generally thought of *hē gymnastikē* as an overwhelmingly good thing.[66] The *dēmos*, therefore, would have rejected outright the opening assertion that 'nothing is worse than the race of athletes' (fr. 282.1–2). Nor would they have agreed that they sponsored as many athletic *agōnes* as they did 'for the sake of a feast' (13–14), for they saw competitive festivals as an integral part of religious worship (Aesch. *Sept.* 77, 177–81, 271–8) and a respite that they deserved from the *ponoi* of battle (Thuc. 2.38.1). In addition, lower-class citizens associated athletics with *sōphrosunē* and justice (Ar. *Nub.* 960–2; Ar. *Ran.* 727–30). As a result, they would also have taken issue with the imputation of Autolycus that athletes could not be 'moderate and just' men (fr. 282.15–25).

The sheer number of complaints that Autolycus makes about athletes alone would have shocked the vast majority of theatre-goers. The Athenian *dēmos* simply abhorred public criticism of athletics or those who practised it. Autolycus' sustained attack appears, therefore, to have done more than prove his training in anti-logical argumentation: it helped to guarantee the audience's poor judgement of his character. As such this is comparable to one of the genre's standard uses of athletics. We have already seen how poets regularly chose for their satyr-plays myths involving villains who used perverted forms of athletic *agōnes* to murder their guests, as their breaking of sporting *nomoi* helped to put their baseness beyond doubt and hence

[64] E.g. Aeschin. 1.102, 156–7; 3.91; Ar. *Ach.* 208–18; Ar. *Vesp.* 1190, 1205–7; Dem. 17.10–11, 16; 18.318–19; 21.7–14.

[65] Pritchard (n. 1), 2009, 214.

[66] For the athletic festivals of classical Athens and their prizes, see D. Pritchard, 'Costing Festivals and War in Democratic Athens: Athenian Funding Priorities between 430 and 350 BC', *Historia* 61.1 (2012); Aeschin. 1.138 and Antiph. 3.2.3, for example, explicitly describe athletics as a good thing.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press

also the justice of their final defeats (see above). In *Autolycus* Euripides appears to have used a character's verbal attack against sportsmen in a comparable way to make him appear more villainous in the audience's eyes.

DAVID M. PRITCHARD
d.pritchard@uq.edu.au

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383511000210 Published online by Cambridge University Press