

Satyrs in Pergamon

In this paper I will use a case study of satyrplay under the Attalids to argue that satyrplay enjoyed a much greater status in the Hellenistic period than is usually imagined.

Satyrplay has long been neglected in comparison to the more famous and influential genres of tragedy and comedy. Several recent, major studies have remedied this oversight (Lämmle 2013; O'Sullivan and Collard 2013; Shaw 2014; Hunter and Lämmle 2020). However, to the extent that satyrplay has attracted scholarly or popular attention, the focus has been on satyrplay from Athens in the fifth century BC. This is hardly surprising, given that Euripides' *Cyclops* is the only satyrplay to have survived intact. Nevertheless, the resulting picture of satyrplay is determined profoundly by the performative context of the Classical period, and often goes so far as to assert that the fortunes of satyrplay declined significantly at the end of the fifth century.

Despite some recent surveys of postclassical satyrplay (Lämmle 2014; Shaw 2014; Hornblower 2018), this Classical paradigm of satyrplay continues to frame scholarly approaches to later developments in the genre. I will argue, by contrast, that satyrplay emerged as an independent genre only after the Classical period. Moreover, I contend that this development was to a great degree spurred on by the interests and investments of Hellenistic rulers, beginning already with Alexander.

To illustrate this, I will examine satyrplay under the Attalids in Pergamon, where we have striking evidence for both the place of satyrplay at the court, as well as the influence of royal patronage on the development of satyrplay as a professional specialisation separate from tragedy and comedy.

First, I will consider a verse epigram, discovered in the 1960s, dedicated to Attalus I and Dionysus, which makes a surprising reference to its “Pratinean theme” (*SEG* 39.1334). I will develop past readings of this short poem, which set it in the context of Hellenistic learning (Müller 1989; Nicolucci 2003), and argue that the reference to Pratinas, the supposed inventor of satyrplay, highlights the way in which satyrplay was cultivated by the Attalids as part of a broader project of Dionysian self-presentation.

Second, I will argue that Attalid interest in satyrplay supported the increasing professionalisation of satyrplay as an independent genre by the local chapter of the Artists of Dionysus. Epigraphic evidence from Teos (*LBW* 91-93; *SEG* 57.1137) not only attests to the prominent place of satyrplay in performances managed by the Artists in honour of the Attalids, as has been observed by Nicolucci (2003), but also demonstrates that satyrplay occupied its own place at these festivals, with distinct prizes for poets and, uniquely, actors of satyrplay.

Finally, I will argue that an additional reason for the specific appeal of satyrplay to the Attalids was the definitive role of the chorus, which offered subjects a way to participate in royal ideology.

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