

MENIPPUS, THE CUR FROM CRETE

Diogenes Laertius' *Life* of Menippus (6.99-101) denounces him as avaricious, a suicide, and unworthy of his creed. Laertius' verses summarize these scandalous details with a sneer:

Φοίνικα τὸ γένος, ἀλλὰ Κρητικὸν κύνα,
ἡμεροδανειστήν – τοῦτο γὰρ ἐπεκλήζετο –
οἶσθα Μένιππον ἴσως.
Θήβησιν οὗτος ὡς διωρύγη ποτὲ
καὶ πάντ' ἀπέβαλεν οὐδ' ἐνόει φύσιν κυνός,
αὐτὸν ἀνεκρέμασεν (1).

“Perhaps you know Menippus: Phoenician by birth but a cur from Crete, a lender of money by the day, as his nickname shows. When he was robbed and lost everything once at Thebes, and did not know what it meant to be a dog, he hanged himself.”

The curious epithet “cur from Crete” has, to my knowledge, aroused no critic's interest beyond the brief comments of the variorum *Commentarii in Diogenem Laertium*, which merely point to classical passages attesting the virtues of Cretan dogs (2). There is no evidence that Menippus himself was ever on Crete. Even Lucian's *Icaromenippus*, whose title suggests a jocular connection between Menippus and Crete, places Menippus' first flying lessons on the Acropolis at Athens, and concludes with Hermes ushering him back to the Ceramicus (3). Nor is Laertius confusing the Cynic with another Menippus (4). Laertius makes it clear that he does not consider Menippus to be, or to understand the nature of, a true dog (οὐδ' ἐνόει φύσιν κυνός);

(1) Unlike the rest of Laertius' poetry, this poem reappears not in the *Palatine Anthology*, but only in the *Planudean Anthology* (*App. Anth.* 5.41).

(2) H. G. Huebner, ed., *Comentarii in Diogenem Laertium*, Vol. II, Lipsiae 1833, 93; the edition includes the notes of the Casaubons, among others.

(3) *Icar.* 10-11 has Menippus first flying down from the Acropolis to the theater; then flying from Mts. Parnes and Hymettus to Mt. Gerania in Megara; from there to Acrocorinth; and then over Mts. Pholoe and Erymanthus to Mt. Taygetus in Sparta. His flight to the moon begins from Mt. Olympus.

(4) Laertius does not follow the scholiasts on Lucian (*ad Pisc.* 26, *ad Icar.* 1) and Eupapius (*VS* 454) in confusing the Cynic Menippus and the first-century A.D. Menippus of Lycia, the follower of Apollonius of Tyana. No other Menippus seems to have any Cretan connections.

that is, he is not a true Cynic. But what sort of dog is he? It is clear that in this context Κρητικὸν κύνα is some sort of slur or insult. Therefore the questions before us are: to what sort of a dog does Κρητικὸν κύνα refer, in what way is it appropriate to speak of the dog as Cretan, and to what aspect of Menippus' life or writings is this insult directed? If we consider the various meanings, literal and metaphoric, of κύων, and the various associations that the adjective Κρητικός may possess, some interesting possibilities emerge, which may be fitted into what we know elsewhere of Menippus and his reputation.

1. "Dog" certainly can refer to Menippus as a Cynic. Κύων of course means both "dog" and "Cynic", but there may be more here than just a trite witticism, as Menippus is elsewhere described as the dog par excellence, whose canine, not Cynical, nature is stressed (5). But in what way would Menippus be a Cretan kind of Cynic? As Laertius' poem makes it clear that he thinks Menippus untrue to his principles and unaware of what Cynicism really entails, perhaps Κρητικὸν is to be taken in the sense of "false", "lying", in accordance with the popular slur, first attributed to Epimenides, "all Cretans are liars" (6). I find no other use of the simple adjective in this sense, but the proverbial use of κρητίζειν, "to lie", certainly suggests that the adjective could be applied in this way (7). But it is difficult both to postulate the meaning "telling lies" for the adjective and then to claim that Laertius uses it in the vague and extended sense of "untrue to his principles", "hypocritical", "insincere". We may infer from the *Suda* that antiquity thought of Menippus as an imposter and a teller of lies, but this does not fit Laertius' context (8).

2. The reference may be to a literal dog. To translate the metaphor into a simile: Menippus is not a Cynic, but is like a Cretan hound. There are a number of breeds of dog unique to Crete. However, Cretan hounds are

(5) Lucian, *Bis Acc.* 33 (Dialogue complains of what Lucian has done): τελευταῖον δὲ καὶ Μένιπὸν τινα τῶν παλαιῶν κυνῶν μάλα ὑλακτικὸν ὡς δοκεῖ καὶ κάρχαρον ἀνορύζας, καὶ τοῦτον ἐπεισήγαγέ μοι φοβερόν τινα ὡς ἀληθῶς κύνα καὶ τὸ δῆγμα λαθραῖον, ὅσφ καὶ γελῶν ἅμα ἔδακνευ.

(6) From his *De Oraculis* (Epimenid. *Cret.* fr. 1, *Vorsokr.* I⁵ p. 32.1), = Paul *ad Tit.* 1.12. Further references in Pfeiffer's notes and the scholia to Callimachus, *Hymn* 1.8.

(7) From the *Paroemiographi Graeci*: Κρητίζειν· ἀντὶ τοῦ ψεύδεσθαι καὶ ἀπατᾶν, 1.101.17-8; Κρητίζειν· ἀντὶ τοῦ ψεύδεσθαι· τοιοῦτοι γὰρ οἱ Κρήτες, 2.119.5; Κρητίζειν· ἀντὶ τοῦ ψεύδεσθαι· ἀπατητικοὶ γὰρ οἱ Κρήτες, 2.487.3-4, *sim.* ad 1.262.15-6; Κρητίζει ὁ κριτής· ἐπὶ τῶν ἐν τῷ κρίνειν ψευδόμενοι, 2.181.5; Πρὸς Κρήτα κρητίζεις· ἐπὶ τῶν πρὸς τοὺς ὁμοίους ψευδομένων, 2.205.5-6. Cf. also κρητισμός, "habitual lying", at Plutarch *Aem.* 26.3.

(8) *Suda*, s.v. φαίος, accuses him of *τετρατεία*; cf. *infra*, n. 16.

noted for their strength, agility, and stamina (9), and these positive characteristics would be very much out of place in such a derogatory poem. There remains a remote possibility: among the Cretan breeds is a type called Outrunners (πάριπποι), evidently the only ancient breed to hunt without being on a leash (10). This could constitute an oblique description of Menippus' unbridled nature as a critic and to his separation from the traditional Cynics. That Menippus is not a true member of the Cynic succession is a point that must be stressed. Laertius seems to list Menippus at 6.95 among the disciples of Metrocles, but actually, as has recently been shown, among the followers of Crates (11). This accords with the speech of Philosophy in Lucian *Fugitivi* 11: 'Αντισθένης... καὶ Διογένης καὶ μετὰ μικρὸν Κράτης καὶ Μένιππος οὗτος (12). But Laertius' words are quite vague: ἐγένετο καὶ Μένιππος Σινωπεὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐπιφανής: "And Menippus of Sinope became well-known among them". This lacks the traditional vocabulary of discipleship: μαθητής, ἤκουσεν, διήκουσεν. And the opening words of the *Life* perhaps suggest, though we should not push the evidence too far, that the inclusion of Menippus among the Cynics in Book VI may strike Laertius' readers as strange: Μένιππος, καὶ οὗτος κυνικός, "Even Menippus is a Cynic". Notice also that in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* Menippus is never shown in the company of the other Cynics, and that the lessons which he preaches in the Underworld, and the creatures whom he addresses, are quite apart from those assigned the traditional Cynics (13). Yet the Outrunner is supposed to listen to his master's voice, something that Laertius would never say was true of Menippus even if Menippus would have said it of himself (the quotation from the *Fugitivi* above similarly shows Philosophy disagreeing with Menippus' inclusion of himself among the Cynics); it is best to consider this interpretation of Κρητικὸν κύνα unlikely.

(9) D. B. Hull, *Hounds and Hunting in Ancient Greece*, Chicago and London 1964, 34-5.

(10) Pollux, *Onomasticon* 5.41, ed. Bethe: οἱ δὲ πάριπποι τοῖς ἵπποις συνθέουσιν, οὔτε προθέοντες οὔτε μὴν ἀπολειπόμενοι; Hull, *op. cit.* 34-5: "The Outrunners evidently ran free, under control of the huntsman's voice alone, and were not led on leashes (a difficult thing for a rider to do in the days before saddles and stirrups without being pulled off his horse) as were all hounds from the earliest times up through the Middle Ages into modern times. If so, they were the first to do so until about the seventeenth century".

(11) Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, *Une liste de disciples de Cratès le Cynique en Diogène Laërce* 6.95, "Hermes" 114, 1986, 247-52.

(12) The last word is contemptuous: "that damn Menippus".

(13) See my *Vainglorious Menippus in the Dialogues of the Dead*, "ICS" 12, 1987, 191-2.

3. Menippus is neither a Cynic hound nor a literal Cretan hound. We are in the realm of metaphor, and may be emboldened by Aristotle to look for something *recherché* hidden within it; for as he says, the surprising metaphor gratifies the reader who takes the time to figure out the unexpected meaning (Rhet. 3.11, 1412a22 ff) (14). Κύων may refer to Menippus as a demon; specifically as an Erinyes. Menippus is depicted in the ancient sources as being particularly concerned with the Underworld. Varro seems to refer to him as an Underworld spirit who terrifies people (15); and the *Suda* describes him as one who dressed up (with many a comic flourish, wearing a tragic actor's boots and sporting a great beard) as a Fury (Ἐρινύς) and claimed to be an emissary from the Underworld, coming to the upper world to spy on the misdeeds of mortals, and going back to the Underworld to report on what he has seen (16). Further, it has been recently suggested that the numerous depictions of demons on Bronze Age seals and other objects are in fact depictions of dogs, and that the name of these dog demons, as attested in Linear B tablets, is Erinyes (17). The Erinyes are not infrequently referred to as hounds even in Classical times (18), and Menippus the dog-Fury may in fact be playing upon a popular survival of this belief. It would accord with Menippus' self-representation to take to himself more of the infernal than the Cynic implications of being a κύων. Although Menippus dresses up as a travesty of a stage Fury, and not in the guise of a Minoan dog-Fury, he could be called a Cynic Hound of Hell.

(14) "Ἔστι δὲ καὶ τὰ ἀστεία τὰ πλεῖστα διὰ μεταφορᾶς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ προεξαπατᾶν· μᾶλλον γὰρ γίνεται δῆλον ὅτι ἔμαθε παρὰ τὸ ἐναντίως ἔχειν, καὶ ἔοικε λέγειν ἢ ψυχὴ "ὡς ἀλητῶς, ἐγὼ δ' ἦμαρτον".

(15) Varro's *Menippean* Ταφή Μενίππου fr. 516 Astbury begins: <Menippus,> *ille nobilis quondam canis* (the name supplied by Scaliger); but this seems to be qualified by a portrait of Menippus in his rôle as agent of Hades, fr. 539: *saltem infernus tenebrio, κακὸς δαίμων, atque habeat homines sollicitos quod eum peius formidant quam fullo ululam*: "but an Underworld rascal, a malevolent spirit; and let him keep people on their toes, because they fear him more than the fuller fears the owl".

(16) *Suda*, s. v. φαίος ("grey"): "Menippus the Cynic went so far in his hocus-pocus that he took on the appearance of a Fury and said that he had come from Hades as an observer of sins and would go back down again to report them to the divinities there. This was his attire: a grey, ankle-length cloak with a purple belt around it; an Arcadian cap with the twelve signs of the Zodiac woven into it on his head; tragic boots; an immense beard; and an ashen staff in his hand". Laertius preserves the same account, but assigns it to Menedemus (Laertius 6.102). See *Vainglorious Menippus in the Dialogues of the Dead* 193-5 and n. 29.

(17) David Sansone, *The Survival of the Bronze Age Demon*, "ICS" 13, 1988, 1-17.

(18) Sansone, *op. cit.* 11-3; see also Wilhelm H. Roscher, *Das von der 'Kynanthropie' handelnde Fragment des Marcellus von Side*, "AbhLeip" 17.3, 1896, 25-50: "Die Beziehungen des Hundes zu den Dämonen, des Tottenreiches".

But what sense would we make of the adjective Cretan in this case? At first, it seems the appropriate home of a Fury. The majority of the evidence for the Bronze Age dog-demons comes from Crete, and Crete seems to be the place of origin for the Erinyes, who are not merely avengers or killers but spirits who, like Menippus, work together with the other powers below (19). Crete is also the home of other creatures associated with the world of the Dead. For example, the Harpies (who work in concert with the Erinyes in the story of the daughters of Pandareus; see below) are said to make their home on Crete after being forced to leave Phineas' island (20). For Laertius to berate Menippus for his imposture as an Erinys would be quite reasonable, though we may question whether labelling him as "the sort of dog that comes from Crete" would convey that censure to the reader. There are late inscriptions from Crete that speak of the Erinyes in their original role as agents of the Underworld powers (21), but there seems to be no direct evidence that the ancients spoke of Crete as the home of the Erinyes. Ultimately, then, this interpretation of Laertius' words is unlikely.

4. A fascinating possibility remains. "Dog" may refer to Menippus as a dog-man, as one affected by that species of melancholy known in ancient medical literature as cynanthropy or lycanthropy, or called simply κύων (22). The earliest description of this is attributed to Marcellus of Side (2nd

(19) R. F. Willets, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, London 1962, 197-8, considers the Erinyes a "legacy from Minoan times", spirits of the dead who work in concert with the *καταχθόνιοι θεοί*. Note that Menippus the Erinys is not depicted as an avenger but a spy, working for the infernal agents of justice. A. Heubeck, *Ἐρινύς in der archaischen Epik*, "Glotta" 64, 1986, 143-65, points out that revenge seems not to be their primary aspect in our earliest written sources (165): "Sie wirken – meist im Verein den Göttern – als Hüter und Bewahrer göttlich-menschlicher Lebensordnungen".

(20) Traditionally on Mt. Arginous: Apollonius of Rhodes, who mentions this change of abode twice, once says only that they went to a cave on Crete (2.298-9), and once says that they went to Mt. Dicte (2.434-5). The Budé edition (*Notes Complémentaires du Chant I*, 511) is of the opinion that Dicte has no specific geographical significance for Apollonius.

(21) Willets, *op. cit.* 197-8.

(22) Modern literature on ancient melancholy leaves lycanthropy to one side. Cf. Hellmut Flashar, *Melancholie und Melancholiker in den medizinischen Theorien der Antike*, Berlin 1966, 85 n. 4: "Die Lykanthropie gehört jedoch sachlich nicht zur Melancholie...". Walter Burkert (Peter Bing transl.), *Homo Necans. The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1983, 89: "even in late antiquity, then, the so-called mental disorder was regulated through ritual". Burkert's fascinating description of werewolves as they found or implied in ancient myth and sacrificial ritual has, unfortunately, no bearing here (Ch. II: "Werewolves around the Tripod Kettle"); we have to do here with popular perceptions of physical and mental disorder.

century A.D.); through repetitions by Oribasius, Paulus of Aegina, Aetius of Amida, and a compendium on melancholy (23), it enters the medical and popular literature of the West, being a primary source for a description of the habits of werewolves (24). The text gives both symptoms and cures; I give the symptoms (25):

Οἱ τῇ λεγομένη κυναθρώπῳ ἢ λυκανθρώπῳ νόσῳ κατεχόμενοι κατὰ τὸν Φεβρουάριον μῆνα νυκτὸς ἐξίασι, τὰ πάντα μιμούμενοι λύκους ἢ κύνας, καὶ μέχρις ἡμέρας τὰ μνήματα μάλιστα διανοίγουσιν. γνωρίσεις δὲ τὸν οὕτω πάσχοντα διὰ τῶνδε· ὄχροι τυγχάνουσι καὶ ὀρῶσιν ἀδρανῆς καὶ ξηροὺς τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχουσι καὶ οὐδὲν δακρύουσι, θεάσῃ δὲ αὐτοὺς καὶ κοίλους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντας καὶ γλῶσσαν ξηράν, καὶ οὐδ' ὄλως σίελον προχέουσιν, εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ διψῶδεις καὶ τὰς κνήμας ἔχουσιν ἠλκωμένας ἀνιάτως διὰ τὰ συνεχῆ συμπτώματα καὶ τῶν κυνῶν τὰ δῆγματα. τοιαῦτα μὲν τὰ γνωρίσματα.

Certainly not all these details can be made to fit the other evidence, biographical or literary, about the life and habits of Menippus. But his obsession with the Land of the Dead is something that antiquity would have ascribed to melancholy (26); and Menippus is certainly associated with tombs and does not cry. The latter condition does not imply light-heartedness, but is a result of the general lack of moisture (the werewolf has no saliva either); it defines an unemotional character. We may associate it with Menippus' famed contemptuous humor and lack of human emotion, and

(23) The texts of Oribasius and Aetius may be found in Förster, *Physiognomonici Graeci* 2.282; the compendium *Περὶ μελαγχολίας* among the works of Galen, 19.699-720 ff. Kühn. The correct title of the compendium is restored by M. Wellman, *Aetius* 8, *RE* I.1, 703-4: *Περὶ μελαγχολίας ἐκ τῶν Γαλήνου καὶ 'Ρούφου καὶ Πωσιδωνίου καὶ Μαρκέλλου Σι(δήτου) καὶ (Ἄ)μι(δην)οῦ τοῦ 'Αετίου*. The material from Marcellus constitutes the third and final chapter of the compendium (Galen 19.719-20).

(24) Charlotte F. Otten, ed., *A Lycanthropy Reader: Werewolves in Western Culture*, Syracuse 1986, 13-14, 24-25; Otten knows of Paulus of Aegina and Aetius, but not of the source, Marcellus.

(25) Text from Roscher, *op. cit.* 89-90.

(26) Raymond Klibanski, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy. Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, New York 1964, 15-6: "The clouding of consciousness, depression, fear and delusions, and finally the dread lycanthropy, which drove its victims through the night as howling, ravening werewolves, were all regarded as effects of the sinister substance whose very name (μέλας = black) conjured up the idea of all that was evil and nocturnal. This substance was so generally accepted as the source of insanity that the verb μελαγχολᾶν (with which cf. χολερίαν) was used from the end of the fifth century B.C. synonymously with μαίνεσθαι (to be mad)".

note that Lucian makes Menippus, as an infernal character, more impassive than comic. At the end of the *Necyomantia*, Menippus climbs back to the upper world through the oracular hole of the hero Trophonius in Boeotia. This establishes Menippus as a false prophet, as Trophonius is a fraud elsewhere mocked by Menippus in the pages of Lucian (cf. *Dial. Mort.* 10 [3]); but further, traditionally anyone who has been to the hole of Trophonius is perpetually gloomy and loses the ability to laugh (27). The strength of the tradition is proved by its few counterexamples (cf. Athenaeus 614 A-B; Pausanias 9.39.13 makes a special point of describing how, through the help of the priests there, the power of laughter returns to those who consult the oracle). One may also add that the Menippus of the *Dialogues of the Dead* is a gloomy character, contemptuously berating all those who have any feeling for the lives that they have left behind; there is nothing in the Underworld of Menippus' earthly laughter, such as Teiresias informed him was the secret of life at Lucian *Nec.* 21: τοῦτο μόνον ἐξ ἅπαντος θηράση, ὅπως τὸ παρὸν εὖ θέμενος παραδράμης γελῶν τὰ πολλὰ καὶ περὶ μηδὲν ἐσπουδακῶς.

At *Bis accusatus* 33 Dialogue complains that Lucian found Menippus the dog among the tombs (text above, note 5): "Lastly, he dug up Menippus, one of the old dogs, a loud barker as it seems and sharp-toothed, and he set him on me, in truth a frightening dog and with a hidden bite, inasmuch as he used to bite while he laughed". "Dug up", ἀνορύξας, may mean more that Lucian "resurrected" the writings of Menippus; more literally, he dug up the dead Menippus and made him live again (surely the point of "one of the old dogs"), and in doing so Lucian, establishing his literary kinship with Menippus, is acting like a κύων, or werewolf, himself. As Marcellus' text puts it: καὶ μέχρις ἡμέρας τὰ μνήματα μάλιστα διανοίγουσιν (28).

And there is a particular connection between those affected with κύων and the island of Crete. The scholiast to *Odyssey* 20.66, telling the story of the daughters of Pandareus, mentions not only that the daughters were taken by the Harpies and given to the Erinyes to be their handmaidens, but also that Zeus gave them the disease called κύων (οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ νόσον αὐταῖς ἐμβάλλει Ζεὺς, καλεῖται δὲ αὕτη κύων). The story of the daughters of Pandareus takes place on Crete. In this context, the adjective Cretan would serve to specify dog as meaning dog-man, by reference to the land in which stories of cynanthropy are told. Here, I think, we have the solution to Laer-

(27) See Frazer's note on Pausanias 9.39.13.

(28) Roscher (*op. cit.* 80 n. 214; see also the text printed at 12-3) thinks that the text may have originally read περὶ τὰ μνήματα διατρίβουσι καὶ αὐτὰ διανοίγουσιν (or αὐτὰ διανοίγοντες).

tius' enigmatic Κρητικὸν κύνα.

Conclusion. Menippus is not a Cynic in any usual sense of the word; he is a dog in quite another way. Lucian depicts him as a true dog; from the *Suda* we learn that he chose to present himself as an infernal emissary, as a comic sort of Fury with a long beard. He is at home in and around the Underworld, and is far removed from the Cynic succession and the teachings of the traditional Cynics. He is, as the four possibilities explored above detail, a liar and a lone wolf, a Fury and a werewolf. This much said, it must be admitted that all but the last of the above interpretations of Laertius' phrase are unlikely. Menippus is not a Cynic, but a cynanthrope. And here is the particular point of Laertius' poem: the man who would haunt the tombs has, by his suicide, *returned to where he belongs*.

There remains the question of the extent to which Laertius may have known of the infernal Menippus. Laertius preserves no quotations from the famous Νέκυια, which heads the list of Menippus' works at 6.101, but only from the Διογένους πρῶσις (6.29), which work does not appear in Laertius' catalogue. Further, the description in the *Suda* of Menippus as a Fury is given in Laertius as a description of Menedemus, in the *Life* which immediately follows that of Menippus (6.102). Crönert's solution to this problem, that Laertius filled out an entry concerning Menedemus, about whom he had no information, with information properly belonging to Menippus, raises the possibility that Laertius did know about Menippus the Fury, but dissimulated such knowledge (29). Yet even if Laertius did not know specifically of the contents of the Νέκυια or of the nature of Menippus' imposture as a Fury, he could still know about the Underworld Menippus. Much of what is known about Menippus is actually a matter of popular literary and biographical tradition: Menippus is the comic and abrasive author and personality whose special interest was the Land of the Dead. Laertius' own interpretation of his cryptic words is, of course, not recoverable. At any event, Laertius is not just saying that Menippus is mad, or rabid, or insane, or contemptible (30). When alive, he could be found among the tombs, not in the company of true philosophers; and now that he is dead he is in his true element.

University of Illinois. Urbana

JOEL C. RELIHAN

(29) W. Crönert, *Kolotes und Menedemos. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Philosophie- und Literaturgeschichte*, Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde VI, Leipzig 1906, 3.

(30) It is remarkable that no one in antiquity seems to call Menippus a rabid dog, though there is another Menippus in Galen whose cure for rabies is preserved (Περὶ ἀντιδότων, Book 2; 14.172.14–173.3 ed. Kühn).