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CYNIC SHAMELESSNESS IN LATE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH TEXTS

'Chacun a ouy parler de la des-hontée façon de vivre des philosophes Cyniques': so says Montaigne in editions of the *Essais* published in his lifetime.¹ Indeed, the Cynics and, in particular, their best-known representative, Diogenes of Sinope of the fourth century BC, were notorious from ancient times onwards for their shameless ways.² According to the anecdotes, for which the most important source is the sixth book of Diogenes Laertius's *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* of the third century AD, Diogenes achieved fame and infamy for his strange blend of asceticism, shamelessness, and ready wit. Diogenes regularly performed shocking acts: spitting into people's faces, disrupting lectures by eating salt-fish, as well as urinating, defecating, and masturbating in public.³ One of Diogenes' disciples, Crates of Thebes, married Hipparchia of Maronea, who, as a Cynic, became the most famous female philosopher of the ancient world. Their 'dog-marriage' (*kunogamia*), which involved them living and sleeping together in public, brought them notoriety in antiquity and beyond. Such bad manners on the part of Hellenistic philosophers were bound to attract the attention of Montaigne and his contemporaries, fascinated as they were by ancient models of behaviour.

As Montaigne suggests, Cynic shamelessness is almost a commonplace: it is discussed in many late sixteenth-century French texts, including Breslay's *Anthologie*, the dialogues of Cholières and Bouchet, the *Essais*, as well as in religious and medical works. A passing reference by Rabelais in the *Tiers Livre* to sex 'faicte en veue du Soleil, à la Cynique' provides further evidence of the commonplace status of Cynic shamelessness.⁴ By the early seventeenth century, Diogenes' lewd conduct is sufficiently well known for Randle Cotgrave, in his *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611), to define 'Faire le sucré' as 'To frig, to wriggle, to commit Diogenes his sinne'.⁵ There is a sense, however, in which the scandalous antics of the Cynics could never be commonplace, since they pose too great a threat to civilized values. This partly explains why works which contain versions of the life of Diogenes, including, for example, Pedro Mexía's *Silva de varia lección* (1540), which was available in French from 1552 onwards, and André Thevet's *Les Vrais Pourtraits* (1584), refuse to countenance tales of shamelessness. It also gives rise to the crucial difference between accounts of Cynic shamelessness and the kind of sexual explicitness or lewdness

¹ *Les Essais*, ed. by Pierre Villey and V.-L. Saulnier, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), II, 12, p. 583 n. 7. This sentence was omitted from the posthumous edition of 1595.

² See Derek Krueger, 'The Bawdy and Society: The Shamelessness of Diogenes in Roman Imperial Culture', in *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and its Legacy*, ed. by R. Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, Hellenistic Culture and Society, 23 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 222–39.

³ See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans by R. D. Hicks, Loeb Classical Library, 185 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925; repr. 1995), 6. 20–81.

⁴ *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Mireille Huchon and François Moreau (Paris: Pléiade, 1994), pp. 406–07.

⁵ *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611; repr. Menston: Scholar Press, 1968).

encountered in comic or facetious literature throughout the sixteenth century. This distinction lies in the philosophical justification for the Cynics' disgraceful performance. Whether sixteenth-century writers acknowledge them or not, the possible ethical motivations for Diogenes' bizarre behaviour always underlie his acts. Shamelessness is one of Diogenes' most devastating heuristic strategies for shocking his contemporaries into re-evaluating social norms. By making his body the centre of attention, Diogenes constantly reminds his audience of the physical constraints of their existence. He thereby engages in what Bakhtin calls the 'drama of bodily life', invoking the 'bodily material principle', which is universal.⁶ Since all people are embodied, jokes or obscenity that derive from the body are sure-fire subversive techniques. Diogenes' authority or licence comes from his performative use of his body, which simultaneously demonstrates his exemption from civilized values and his commitment to nature.⁷ The danger of Diogenes' performance derives from the inevitable association of bodily control with social control. The Cynics blur the boundaries of the body by focusing their audience's attention on the fluids and gases that pass from and between bodies. The Cynics' activities are abominable because they confuse the categories between man and beast. Cynic dirtiness threatens and pollutes the normal order of things.⁸

Shameless Cynic performance gives rise to diverse reactions in the sixteenth century, ranging from disgust to playfulness. However, none of the texts nor any of the authors of the sixteenth century are Cynical themselves in that they do not join Diogenes in advocating a reversal of the social order by returning to nature, although Montaigne comes close.⁹ Narrating a story about masturbating in public is not the same as masturbating in public. However, tracing sixteenth-century responses to the provocative performance of the ancient Cynics is bound to highlight some of the ways in which writers thought about vice, virtue, nature, obscenity, and the body.

As if to prove that some medieval attitudes towards the Cynics persisted into the sixteenth century, Gabriel Du Préau's dictionary of heresies, *De vitis, sectis, et dogmatibus omnium haereticorum* (1569), in its article on 'Turlupins', reproduces an attack on Cynic shamelessness drawn from one of Jean de Gerson's late fourteenth-century sermons. Gerson was more concerned with refuting a contemporary cult than with ancient philosophy. By 1569, however, further evidence of the Cynics' foul behaviour had come to light through the dissemination of Diogenes Laertius, hence Du Préau feels the need to produce his own entry on the ancient Dogs:

Cynici [. . .] ità dicti sive à [. . .] canina mordacitate, qua in hominum vitas nullo discrimine invehebantur: aut (ut alii volunt) ab eo quod canum more in propatulo coire non dubitent: quem admodum de Crate & Hipparchia tradit Laertius. Hos carnales &

⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 88.

⁷ See the excellent study by R. Bracht Branham, 'Defacing the Currency: Diogenes' Rhetoric and the *Invention of Cynicism*', in *The Cynics*, pp. 81–104.

⁸ See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), and Krueger, 'The Bawdy and Society', p. 237.

⁹ The same is true of Roman writing on the Cynics: see Krueger, 'The Bawdy and Society', p. 238.

bestiales philosophos, dicentes licere cuique commisceri foeminis instar canum, omni pudore sublato, Vualdenses & consimiles haeritici imitari non erubuerunt ab hinc aliquot seculis.¹⁰

The Cynics [. . .] were so called either because of [. . .] the dog-like ferocity with which they used to criticize men's lives without distinction; or (as others would have it) because they did not hesitate to copulate openly like dogs; Crates and Hipparchia certainly behaved like this, according to Diogenes Laertius. The Waldenses and similar heretics, some generations ago, did not blush to imitate these worldly and bestial philosophers, alleging that each man has the right shamelessly to copulate with women, like dogs.

The Cynics are not only bad dogs, but they have allegedly served as models for future generations of free-living Christian sects. As a fervent opponent of Reform, Du Préau seeks to dismiss such cults precisely by associating them with the Cynics, and vice versa. This is a clear sign that the threat posed by Cynic shamelessness resonated in the sixteenth century, and, given the reproduction of Du Préau's views in seventeenth-century works, throughout the early modern period.¹¹

Pierre Breslay's *Anthologie* (1574) is typical of the French miscellanies inspired by Mexia which plunder mostly ancient texts to present diverse knowledge on various subjects in a more or less random fashion.¹² Breslay devotes a chapter to the Cynics, 'Plusieurs choses estre mauvaises par le seul abus des hommes, & de la vilanie de Crates Philosophe Cynique'.¹³ Breslay criticizes Crates of Thebes, a once wealthy hunchback, for having thrown his money into the sea. He then launches an attack on Crates' 'dog-marriage' with Hipparchia:

tels estoient les Cyniques, gens sans soing, discretion, ny conscience: ainsi nommez, à cause de leur éshontment, & contumelieuse médisance. Ils entroient par tout comme chiens, abbayans les actions de chacun, & ne doutoient exercer en plain marché ce que l'honnesteté naturelle oblige aux plus espesses tenebres de la nuit. Toutefois bien que les femmes, signamment dames de qualité, aient accoustumé en tels actes endurer spectateurs trop plus envis que les hommes: si est-ce que Hipparchie, Damoiselle de riche maison, enamourée de ce bossu besacier, le requist de mariage, & se laissa mener par luy en cuer de jour soubz un porche fort hanté, où il l'eust depucelee à la veuë de tout le monde, sans Zenon, qui estendit son reitre au devant, fist ombre à l'abhumanition de son maistre. (fol. 66^v)

Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism, was a disciple of Crates, which explains the amusing image of him covering up the misdeeds of his master with his cloak. This part of Breslay's text is inspired by Apuleius, *Florida*, 14, although the latter portrays Crates and Hipparchia's relationship in a predominantly positive way. It is likely that Breslay is drawing on an unidentified syncretistic

¹⁰ *De vitis, sectis, et dogmatibus omnium haereticorum* [. . .] (Cologne: Gervinus [Gerwin] Calenius and the heirs of Ioannes [Johann] Quentel, 1569), fol. 136^v.

¹¹ For Du Préau's work, and its influence on subsequent generations, see Sylvain Matton, 'Cynicism and Christianity from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance', in *The Cynics*, pp. 240–64 (pp. 257–59).

¹² See Neil Kenny, *The Palace of Secrets: Béroalde de Verville and Renaissance Conceptions of Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 35–53.

¹³ *L'Anthologie ou recueil de plusieurs discours notables, tirez de divers bons auteurs grecs & latins* (Paris: Jean Poupy, 1574), fols 64^v–66^v. This is one of several chapters that Jean Des Caurres lifts in its entirety to put in his *Œuvres morales*, 2nd edn (Paris: Guillaume Chaudiere, 1584), fols 455^v–456^v, which leads Matton incorrectly to ascribe it to Des Caurres ('Cynicism and Christianity', p. 260).

source for his assault on Cynic shamelessness. In contrast to Du Préau's treatment, there is nothing specifically Christian about Breslay's polemic. In fact, his material is sensationalist so as to appeal to the baser instincts of his readership, something which is characteristic of many early modern miscellanies, and reminiscent of modern tabloids.¹⁴ The coupling of Crates and Hipparchia was popular with writers precisely because of this titillating quality. For example, Lodovico Guicciardini features their marriage in his commonplace book *Hore di ricreatione*, which was translated into French by François de Belleforest in 1571.¹⁵ The dog-marriage topos is ironically entitled 'L'Amour avoir effort sur les cueurs les plus tendres des filles' and relates the story of Crates' attempt, at the request of Hipparchia's parents, to dissuade her from marrying him by throwing off his cloak in front of her, thereby exposing his hunchbacked nakedness and, by extension, all his worldly possessions. Guicciardini continues the story as follows:

Hiparchie accepta la condition, & ainsi ce venerable philosophe estendit gentilment son manteau par terre, & y mit l'espousée dessus, & sans honte de personne il l'accolla, & consumma le mariage en presence de tous les parens de la fille: & le meilleur fut, que comme on luy demandast qu'est ce qu'il faisoit, il respondit je plante un homme. Autant en dit-on de Diogene surnommé Cynique. (fols 13^v-14^r)

The above combines elements from Diogenes Laertius and Apuleius, although there does not seem to be any ancient source for the final saying.¹⁶ Guicciardini delights in the humour of the story. In contrast, Jean de Léry, a Protestant explorer of Brazil, is not amused. Tales of alfresco fornication inevitably led to comparisons with the peoples of the New World, who were alleged to engage in such activity, notably by Vespucci in his *Mundus novus* (1502/03?). None the less, Léry, in his *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre de Brésil*, first published in 1578, maintains that they do not behave in such a fashion:

Au surplus, poursuivant à parler du mariage des *Toioupinambaoults*, autant que la vergogne le pourra porter, j'affirme contre ce qu'aucuns ont imaginé que les hommes d'entre eux, gardant l'honnêteté de nature, n'ayant jamais publiquement la compagnie de leurs femmes, sont en cela non seulement à préférer à ce vilain Philosophe Cynique, qui, trouvé sur le fait, au lieu d'avoir honte, dit qu'il plantait un homme; mais qu'aussi ces boucs puants qu'on ouit de notre par-deçà, ne sont point cachés pour commettre leurs vilénies, sont sans comparaison plus infâmes qu'eux.¹⁷

In a kind of anthropological inversion familiar from Montaigne, Léry compares the Brazilians with Europeans, and finds the latter wanting. For while there are

¹⁴ Hope Glidden notes the resemblance between Breslay's work and popular handbooks of miracles in *The Storyteller as Humanist: The 'Serées' of Guillaume Bouchet* (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1981), p. 84.

¹⁵ *Les Heures de recreations et apres-disnées de Louys Guicciardin citoyen & gentilhomme florentin, traduit d'italien par François de Belle-Forest comingeois* (Paris: Jean Ruelle, 1571); see Michel Simonin, *Vivre de sa plume au XVI^e siècle ou la carrière de François de Belleforest*, *Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 268 (Geneva: Droz, 1992), pp. 121-22.

¹⁶ Apuleius, *Florida*, in *Apologia. Florida*, ed. and trans. by Paul Vallette (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1971), 14, and Diogenes Laertius, 6. 96.

¹⁷ *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* (1578) 2^e édition, 1580, ed. by Frank Lestringant (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1994), pp. 436-37. The idea that the native people of America had public sex is also denied by André Thevet in *Les Singularitez de la France Antarticque* [. . .] (Paris: les heritiers de Maurice de la Porte, 1558), fol. 80^r; see Lestringant, edn., p. 436 n. 4.

shameless 'boucs puants' at home, the native people of Brazil demonstrate a natural sense of shame. Léry clearly has a vested religious interest in witnessing such 'honnêteté de nature'. His attitude is indistinguishable from that of Du Préau, indicating that both Calvinist and Catholic zealots are as one as far as their disgust at Cynic sex is concerned. Whether he is aware of the fact or not, his criticism of Cynic shamelessness mirrors that of Augustine in Book 14, Chapter 20 of *City of God*. Augustine's work was well known throughout the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, and was translated into French, together with Juan Luis Vivès's early sixteenth-century commentary, by Gentian Hervet in 1570:

Les Philosophes de Chien, c'est à dire, les Cyniques, n'ont pas veu cecy produisans contre la vergongne humaine [. . .] C'est à sçavoir que pource que ce qui se fait en sa femme est juste, on n'ait point honte de le faire en public [. . .] Toutesfois la honte naturelle a vaincu l'opinion de cest erreur. Car combien qu'ils disent, que Diogene l'ait fait quelque fois en se glorifiant, pensant que sa secte seroit ainsi plus noble & plus fameuse [. . .] toutesfois les Cyniques ont puis apres cessé de le faire: & la honte à plus valu que les hommes eussent honte des hommes, que n'a fait l'erreur que les hommes taschassent d'estre semblables aux Chiens. Parquoy je pense que celuy ou ceux qu'on dit avoir fait cecy, ont plustost représenté les mouvemens de ceux qui couchent ensemble, aux yeux des hommes qui ne sçavoient que c'est qu'on faisoit sous le manteau, que cest volupté la se soit peu parfaire, le regard de l'homme les pressant.¹⁸

Augustine argues that Cynic sex is theoretically and practically impossible, for it goes against the natural shame that affects fallen man, which entails that the sexual organs are no longer under the control of the will. This makes the Cynics doubly mistaken, for not only do they attempt the impossible, but they claim the sanction of nature for their supposed activities. For Augustine, Diogenes' practice is a publicity stunt, the audience being unaware of what is going on under his cloak. None the less, as with Du Préau and Léry, Augustine was not interested in Cynicism alone, but also in contemporary sects attacked by virtue of associating them with the disgusting Dogs. For other sixteenth-century authors, however, Augustine's polemic was exploited for its comic potential. This is true, for example, of a brief passage in *Les Sérées* of Guillaume Bouchet. Although not strictly a discursive work like those discussed above, Bouchet's dialogue resembles commonplace books and miscellanies in its use of ancient material, while it also draws on the *conte* and banquet traditions.¹⁹ Bouchet's brief references to Cynic shamelessness occur in the first book of *Les Sérées*, which appeared in 1584. The following is from the fifth 'Sérée', 'Des nouvellement mariez & mariees':

Saint Augustin dit que telle action ne depend ny de nostre esprit, ny de nostre corps: de sorte que les parties, qui [sont] destinees à telles action, n'obeissent à nostre volonté,

¹⁸ Saint Augustin, *De la cité de Dieu* [. . .] illustrée des commentaires de Jean Louys Vives, de Valance. Le tout fait françois, par Gentian Hervet d'Orleans, chanoine de Rheims [. . .] (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1570), p. 43.

¹⁹ See Kenny, *Palace of Secrets*, p. 43; Gabriel-André Pérouse, 'De Montaigne à Boccace et de Boccace à Montaigne: contribution à l'étude de la naissance de l'essai', in *La Nouvelle française à la Renaissance*, ed. by Lionello Sozzi and V.-L. Saulnier (Paris: Slatkine, 1981), pp. 13–40 (p. 24), and André Janier, 'Les Sources des *Sérées* de G. Bouchet', *ibid.*, pp. 557–86. See also Gabriel-André Pérouse, 'Les *Sérées*, de Guillaume Bouchet (1584, 1597, 1598)', in *Nouvelles françaises du XVI^e siècle: images de la vie du temps* (Geneva: Droz, 1977), pp. 372–94.

comme les autres membres [. . .] Et m'esbahis, adjouste de Montagne, d'où est venu ce congrez, & quelle assurance on y peut avoir pour rompre un mariage: car quelque assurance que tout homme se puisse promettre, il confessera qu'il nest en sa puissance de se faire paroistre capable du mariage en presence de la Justice, des Medecins, Chirurgiens, & matrones, que l'on craint, & avecques une femme que l'on tient pour son ennemie: veu que telles actions d'elles mesmes requierent une assurance, & un secret, & une amitié, & qu'elles sont hors de la puissance & de l'esprit & du corps. Ce congrez mesmes est reprové par les Cyniques Philosophes.²⁰

The idea that Diogenes' followers gave up on outdoor intercourse is drawn from Augustine, whose theological arguments Bouchet renders facetiously. The topic of impotence is clearly well suited to such treatment. On the other hand, Cynic shamelessness, which might appear to be ideally adapted for facetious literature, is an uneasy presence owing to its inherent seriousness. This is partly apparent from the fact that Bouchet joins Augustine in refusing to countenance Cynic sex. Acknowledging the full force of the Dogs is no joke, so Bouchet seeks to keep them on the leash. The other reference to Cynic shamelessness in *Les Sérées* features a 'Fesse-tonduë' who had been 'escholier en l'eschole des Cyniques'. The joke here is that it is hard to imagine a less academic school than Cynicism, but this joke could in itself be seen as part of an unwitting attempt to render the Cynics more conventional. The Cynic in *Les Sérées* points out that the Roman law permitting unembarrassed farting is made redundant by Cynicism, according to which 'on ne craindroit nullement de faire les choses naturelles' (p. 123). Such an unexpectedly serious philosophical point sits uncomfortably with a characteristically facetious handling of the subject of breaking wind, and misses the point that ancient Cynicism invariably combines humour and philosophy.

The discomfort caused by attempting to squeeze Cynic shamelessness into a facetious frame is more clearly demonstrated in Cholières's *Matinées* (1585) and *Aprèsdisnées* (1587), which are similar in form and content to *Les Sérées*. The ninth and final 'Matinée' is devoted to a well-worn topic in both comic and serious works: 'De la trefve conjugale: En quel temps n'est loisible au mary de toucher conjugalement sa femme'.²¹ The two main speakers of the dialogue are Dominique, whose wife is refusing him sex, and Theodat, who attempts to demonstrate to an increasingly exasperated Dominique that there are times when couples should put sexual relations on hold. Dominique bemoans his temporary celibacy through a series of licentious metaphors: he cannot fire off his cannon, he has the key but is not allowed to put it in the lock, and so on. Cholières delights in such euphemisms, which also play a large part in Theodat's attempt to persuade Dominique that 'la retention de la semence [. . .] pourroit estre grandement nuisible' (p. 302), and that there is an easy remedy to his ills:

je ne voudroie que vous proposer l'histoire laquelle Agatius Scholasticus, au septiesme livre des *Epigrammes Grecs*, nous propose touchant Diogenes le Cynique, lequel au

²⁰ *Les Sérées*, ed. by C.-E. Roybet (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1873; repr. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969), p. 65.

²¹ *Œuvres du Seigneur de Cholières*, ed. by E. Tricotel and D. Jouaust, 2 vols (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1879). See Gabriel-André Pérouse, 'L'Œuvre facétieuse du Sieur de Cholières', *Nouvelles françaises*, pp. 342-71.

reste on tient avoir esté autant continent et attempé qu'autre personnage de son siecle, toutesfois ne peut s'exempter des accouplementz feminins, ausquels il ne tendoit point pour quelque sale et du tout brutale lubricité, ains seulement pour, deschargeant ses reins, se garentir des mal-heurs qui suivent et accompagnent la retention de semence. On raconte que, comme il eut pris assignation avec Laïs la courtisane [. . .] ce pauvre philosophe anheloit de l'attendre [. . .] Tantost levoit la teste, ores il la remettoit bas, puis encores la relevoit, pensant découvrir sa venue [. . .] après avoir long temps attendu, en fin, parce qu'il ne pouvoit plus empescher que sa poudre ne prist feu et que son pistolet ne se deschargeast, quoy que le blanc ne fust mis à la butte, si luy fallut il deslascher, et n'eut rien de plus hastif que de recevoir en sa main ce qu'il ne pouvoit plus retenir. Quelque temps après, Laïs vint, mais ce fut trop tard: les plus grands coups avoient esté donnez; et pource Diogenes la renvoya, lui disant: *Manus hymenaeum celebrando te praevenit*.²² (pp. 303–04)

Cholières claims that the source for this anecdote is one of Agathias's *Epigrams*, written in the sixth century AD. This is misleading, however, for although the final witticism is featured in Agathias, it and the other significant details of the passage are in fact drawn from Galen, *On the Affected Parts*, which Cholières renders facetiously. This is seen most clearly in his considerable addition of lewd metaphors, none of which is present in Galen. Cholières's ascription of the anecdote to Agathias is both a joke on over-credulous readers (the story about Diogenes is rather long for an epigram) and a way of flaunting his learning, by referring to Agathias's little-known work. The passage concerning Diogenes in Galen was, however, very well known in the sixteenth century, particularly in medical works. Galen's argument that Diogenes' use of masturbation was for sound medical reasons is a serious one which early modern writers found hard to swallow. For example, Abraham Zacuto refuses to believe that Diogenes' practice constitutes an example of self-control, and Rodrigo a Castro goes still further in maintaining that the Cynic was extremely bad, since the act of masturbation is a disgusting one. Winifred Schleiner has shown that masturbation was not an easy topic to address within Renaissance medical works, and even in situations where release of sperm is recommended, a euphemistic code word is used.²³ While medical writers used euphemism to shelter their more innocent readers from potentially corrupting material, Cholières employs the same technique for comic effect. None the less, such euphemistic treatment of the subject of masturbation by facetious and serious authors alike indicates that it, and by extension Diogenes' performance, were troubling. Although not completely taboo, there is a sense in which Diogenes' masturbation is beyond the pale in comic as well as in didactic discourses.

It is easier for Cholières to be more direct when voicing disapproval of Cynic sex. This occurs in the sixth 'Apresdisnée': 'Des Barbes'. In a Lucianic move, Camille, who speaks in favour of beards, ascribes the wisdom of the Cynics to their facial hair. His adversary, Demonax, counters by criticizing Diogenes' 'estrange vie' (p. 260), but his attack on shamelessness is reserved for his followers:

Et quant à ses compaignons, ils ne valloient pas mieux que luy: c'estoient des gens

²² 'My hand got there before you in the celebration of our union.'

²³ *Medical Ethics in the Renaissance* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1995), pp. 129–32.

desesperez, ennemis d'honnesteté, et qui avoient perdu toute honte; de sorte que, de mesmes que les bestes brutes, ils ne se hontoioient point de s'ambloquer à la cupidique les uns devant les autres, voire ne faisoient difficulté d'aucune parole, tant sale fut elle. (p. 261)

Such a polemical attitude towards the Cynics is already familiar from Du Préau, Breslay, and Léry, and is well suited to a dialogue *pro* and *contra*, in which extreme positions are easily reached. In contrast to *Les Sérées*, however, no Cynic voice speaks up in favour of shamelessness. Cholières's failure to engage in any way with the possible philosophical motivations of the Cynics' behaviour may be a sign of the limitations of both genre and author, but it also indicates that Cynic shamelessness was in a sense beyond the pale, a topic to be dealt with either euphemistically or polemically, both responses being characteristic of underlying anxiety.

In contrast, Brantôme's treatment of Diogenes' masturbation in the *Recueil des dames* makes a point of being direct. Pierre de Bourdeille, Seigneur de Brantôme, a French nobleman, spent the final years of his life convalescing from a riding accident which occurred in 1584. He passed his time in bed writing his memoirs of gallant ladies. They were not published until 1665–66, partly because of their frequently salacious content, which has led one recent critic to characterize them as the Kinsey Report of their time.²⁴ His brief reference to Diogenes' outrageous behaviour occurs towards the beginning of his 'Discours sur le sujet qui contente plus en amours, ou le toucher, ou la veue, ou la parole'. This title recalls the stages of courtly love familiar in medieval and sixteenth-century poetry. However, where this courtly love was invariably chaste and metaphysical, Brantôme soon demonstrates that he is not interested in Neoplatonic notions of the soul, but in the body:

Or, quand à l'attouchement, certainement il faut advoüer qu'il est très-delectable, d'autant que la perfection d'Amour c'est de jouir, et ce jouir ne se peut faire sans l'attouchement: car, tout ainsi que la faim et la soif ne se peut soulager et appaiser, sinon par le manger et le boir, aussi l'amour ne se passe ny par l'oye ni par la veuë, mais par le toucher, l'embraser, et par l'usage de Venus. À quoy le badin fat Diogenes Cincus rencontra badinement, mais salaudement pourtant, quand il souhaittoit qu'il pust abatre sa faim en se frottant le ventre, tout ainsi qu'en se frottant la verge il passoit sa rage d'amour. J'eusse voulu mettre cecy en paroles plus nettes, mais il le faut passer fort legerement.²⁵

Brantôme gleefully flouts the convention of treating masturbation euphemistically. The *Recueil des dames* does of course belong to a different genre from either Cholières's dialogue or medical works. These generic differences can, however, only partly account for Brantôme's candid version of the subject, particularly in contrast to its mealy-mouthed rendering in Cholières. Brantôme has realized that Diogenes' performance cannot be tamed through euphemism, so he gives it full rein. As Branham has recognized, Diogenes' joke 'blandly asserts the claims of nature without even acknowledging the restraints of cul-

²⁴ Madeleine Lazard, *Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), Chapters 17–18.

²⁵ *Recueil des dames, poésies et tombeaux*, ed. by Étienne Vaucheret (Paris: Pléiade, 1991), 2. 2, pp. 389–90; Diogenes Laertius, 6. 69.

ture': acknowledging the fact that he is violating a taboo would have ruined the joke.²⁶ Brantôme offers a syllogism: the *telos* or 'perfection' of love is to 'jouir', 'jouir' can only be achieved through touching, therefore touch (and not sight or hearing) is a necessary condition of love. This involves the joke that sex for one is the equal of sex for two. Brantôme's paradox here mirrors that of Diogenes' shocking yet comic performance. Diogenes is characterized as being a 'badin fat', that is to say he is both foolish and like a fool. Diogenes has fool's licence to behave in shocking and disgusting ways. This licence is earned through wit, and there is a sense in which Brantôme can himself be said to gain it in this extract. However, neither Diogenes' performance nor Brantôme's playful presentation of it is merely comic. The joke in Brantôme is ultimately disconcerting since it unsettles assumptions about the nature of sexual appetites and their satisfaction in much the same way as Diogenes' performance challenges conventional morality by forcing his audience to ask themselves why it is acceptable to satiate hunger publicly, but not sexual desire.

A similarly playful, but more developed, presentation of Cynic shamelessness occurs towards the end of Montaigne's 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond'.²⁷ This notoriously complex text is best known for its presentation of Pyrrhonism, a Hellenistic philosophy which advocates suspension of judgement (*epochē*) on all beliefs. In order to achieve *epochē*, the Pyrrhonists employ modes of scepticism which are designed to show that beliefs based, for example, on the evidence of the senses are unjustifiable. The tenth mode of scepticism opposes different customs and laws as well as scientific and philosophical beliefs to one another, to encourage suspension of judgement on all such beliefs.²⁸ Montaigne gives a characteristically playful version of the tenth mode, giving long lists of differing philosophical opinions, which he calls '[C]e tintamarre de tant de cervelles philosophiques' (II, 12, p. 516). The few pages devoted to Cynic shamelessness come at the end of Montaigne's idiosyncratic exposition of the tenth mode. It is abruptly followed by well-known sceptical arguments based on the senses. The Cynics thereby provide Montaigne's last word on the diversity of philosophical, and especially ethical, beliefs. This is because the Cynic stance represents a moral extreme beyond which there is nothing to be said. Hence Montaigne's exposition on Cynicism goes beyond strict Pyrrhonism, for it serves as a rhetorical tool to destabilize conventional moral beliefs rather than merely to oppose one set of moral beliefs to another. Among the great number of recent works on Montaigne's use of Pyrrhonism, the most helpful are those which focus on the intricate workings of the text; reducing the *Apologie* to 'scepticism', 'fideism', or even 'Cynicism' eradicates too many vital details.²⁹

²⁶ See Branham, pp. 98–99.

²⁷ *Les Essais*, II, 12, pp. 582–85.

²⁸ See Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes, *The Modes of Scepticism: Ancient Texts and Modern Interpretations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), and Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. by R. G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), I, 14, 145 and 151.

²⁹ The former group includes André Tournon, *Montaigne: la glose et l'essai* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1983), and Terence Cave, *Pré-histoires: textes troublés au seuil de la modernité* (Geneva: Droz, 1999), pp. 25–50. The two studies devoted to Montaigne's treatment of Cynicism fall into the latter category. Raymond Esclapez, 'Montaigne et les philosophes cyniques',

Concentrating on Montaigne's presentation of Cynic shamelessness may not offer a key to the *Apologie*, but it will show how he adapts outrageous Cynic performance to his own shocking ends. Montaigne opens his discussion of Cynic shamelessness with a caveat:

[A] Quant à la liberté des opinions philosophiques touchant le vice et la vertu, c'est chose où il n'est besoing de s'estendre, et où il se trouve plusieurs advis qui valent mieux teus que publiez [C] aux faibles esprits. (II, 12, p. 582)

It is noteworthy that Montaigne's account of Cynic practice is concentrated in the post-1588 manuscript additions of the [C] text, which often contains the most scurrilous material within the *Essais*. His warning to innocent readers is partly tongue-in-cheek, but there is a double movement here that is typical of Montaigne: a conservative reflex coupled with an ironic detachment from that same reflex. Much the same is seen in 'De la vanité':

[C] Antisthenes permet au sage d'aimer et faire à sa mode ce qu'il trouve estre opportun, sans s'attendre aux loix; d'autant qu'il a meilleur advis qu'elles, et plus de cognoissance de la vertu. Son disciple Diogenes disoit opposer aux perturbations la raison, à fortune la confidence, aux loix nature. [B] Pour les estomacs tendres, il faut des ordonnances contraintes et artificielles. [C] Les bons estomacs suivent simplement les prescriptions de leur naturel appetit. (III, 9, p. 990)³⁰

There is an obvious parallel between 'faibles esprits' and 'estomacs tendres'. Montaigne's concern for them is limited, but there is none the less a lingering anxiety about the danger of certain philosophical positions.

Unlike all the authors discussed above, Montaigne engages with Cynicism as a kind of philosophy. This lends the Cynics an authority, and consequently a danger, that they did not have elsewhere. The Cynics are not merely emblematic figures to be rejected or laughed at but they are 'bons estomacs' who, among other things, demonstrate their adoption of radical moral positions through the body: this makes the corporeal metaphor particularly apposite. Montaigne plays on the seriocomic character of Cynic performance, which combines philosophy with humour to express a radical ethical position. While laws take their authority from longevity, philosophers, and in particular Cynics and Stoics, adopt the standard of nature and reason:

[A] ces gens icy qui poisent tout et ramènent à la raison, et qui ne reçoivent rien par autorité et à credit, il n'est pas merveille s'ils ont leurs jugemens souvent tres-esloignez des jugemens publics. Gens qui prennent pour patron l'image premiere de nature, il n'est pas merveille si, en la plupart de leurs opinions, ils gauchissent la voye commune [. . .] [C] et la plus part ont voulu les femmes communes et sans obligation. [A] Ils refusoient nos ceremonies. Chrysippus disoit qu'un philosophe fera une douzaine de culebutes en public, voire sans haut de chausses, pour une douzaine d'olives. (II, 12, p. 583)³¹

Bulletin de la Société Des Amis de Montaigne, 7th ser., 5–6 (1986), 59–76, exaggerates the importance of the Cynics in the *Essais*, while André Comte-Sponville, 'Montaigne cynique? Valeur et vérité dans les *Essais*', in *Valeur et vérité: études cyniques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), pp. 55–104, barely examines Montaigne's use of Cynicism (pp. 82–84), but seeks instead to argue, erroneously in my view, that the *Essais* are a coherent philosophical system, which constitutes a form of 'cynisme', distinct from ancient Cynicism.

³⁰ Diogenes Laertius, 6. 11 and 38.

³¹ Plutarch, *Moralia*, ed. and trans. by Frank Babbitt and others, 15 vols, Loeb Classical Library

The final, comic image illustrates the point that there is no position so *prima facie* absurd that at least one philosopher has not adopted it. This none the less sits uneasily with the notion that such views come from careful consideration of reason and nature. There are therefore two sides to the paradox Montaigne is playing with here: firstly, widely accepted laws and customs are not derived from reason/nature, and, secondly, if reason/nature is rigorously followed, it leads to views that fly in the face of convention.

Montaigne's emphasis on the combination of reason and nature here derives from his conflation of Cynicism and Stoicism as two schools which are happy to adopt unconventional positions. *Logos* was crucial for the latter school, but rarely referred to by the Cynics.³² The Cynic tradition is, however, tainted by Stoicism, given that some later Stoics sought to establish a direct succession from Socrates via Antisthenes and Diogenes. Some confusion on Montaigne's part is therefore unremarkable, and would explain his incorrect placing of Crates and his brother-in-law, Metrocles, in the Stoic school:

[C] Metroclez lascha un peu indiscretement un pet en disputant, en presence de son eschole, et se tenoit en sa maison, caché de honte, jusques à ce que Crates le fut visiter; et, adjoutant à ses consolations et raisons l'exemple de sa liberté, se mettant à peter à l'envi avec luy, il luy osta ce scrupule, et de plus le retira à sa secte Stoïque, plus franche de la secte Peripatetique, plus civile, laquelle jusques lors il avoit suivi. (II, 12, p. 583)³³

Despite Montaigne's conflation of Cynics and Stoics, Crates' farting is an exemplary instance of the ancient Dogs' brazenness in several ways. Crates demonstrates the folly of Metrocles' shame through comic use of the body, and in particular what Bakhtin calls the 'lower-body stratum'.³⁴ Crates' farting is far more persuasive than any theoretical argument, and much of the comedy of the passage comes from the contrast between the act of breaking wind and serious 'consolations et raisons'. Crates demonstrates his philosophy through performative, and comic, use of the body. When Cynic shamelessness is rendered in abstract terms, as it was in Bouchet's discussion of farting discussed above, it becomes awkward. In contrast to his facetious predecessors, Montaigne maintains the combination of philosophy and comedy that is essential to Cynic performance. Montaigne moves from farting to sex:

[C] Ce que nous appellons honnesteté, de n'oser faire à descouvert ce qui nous est honneste de faire à couvert, ils l'appelloient sottise; et de faire le fin à taire et desadvouër ce que nature, coustume et nostre desir publient et proclament de nos actions, ils l'estimoient vice. (II, 12, p. 584)

The Cynics 'deface the currency' of conventional morality: vice becomes virtue, and virtue, vice. Furthermore, making 'les Mysteres de Venus' taboo spurs on lust: '[C] la volupté tres ingenieusement faisoit instance, sous le masque de la vertu, de n'estre prostituée au milieu des quarrefours' (II, 12, p. 584). Montaigne cites the view that the criminalization of brothels would increase

(London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927-76), 569 B, for Chrysippus' saying.

³² See Branham, p. 94 and n. 41.

³³ Diogenes Laertius, 6. 94.

³⁴ *Rabelais and his World*, *passim*.

their frequentation, and two of Martial's epigrams, to illustrate the paradox that obstacles to sex are in fact incentives to desire. By removing shame from sex, the Cynics also take away its 'volupté'. Hence Cynic shamelessness returns sex to 'vertu' by demystifying 'les Mysteres de Venus'.

The rhetorical practice of pleading in favour of something that is normally considered to be a vice, or depreciating something usually thought to be virtuous, is known as paradiastole.³⁵ Paradiastole is closely related to so-called rhetorical paradox or mock-encomium, in which something commonly considered to be negative is put in a positive light, or vice versa. Like rhetorical paradox, paradiastole need not be serious.³⁶ None the less, I agree with Skinner³⁷ that Montaigne uses paradiastole genuinely to challenge normative values here, in one of the most daring examples of the technique in the early modern period. Moreover, it is important to appreciate that Cynic 'defacement' of conventional moral values is always already inherently paradiastolic. Cynic performance is a lesson in virtue wrapped up in a scandal. Montaigne's use of paradiastole is therefore ideally adapted to exploring Cynic shamelessness, and to employing it as a tool to shake up the moral values of his own day. It means he can go further than any of the authors considered above in envisaging the philosophical reasons for, and consequences of, Cynic practice. Using the technique of paradiastole also allows Montaigne to keep his distance from the Cynics. His writing comes remarkably close to Cynic performance, yet it is framed in such a way that he does not advocate shamelessness as such but points out that, if nature and virtue are guides for behaviour, normal values should be reversed.

The most serious and influential argument against Cynic shamelessness comes from Augustine, cited above. Montaigne argues against his view, not mentioning him by name, although his better-read readers would have known whom he had in mind:

[C] C'est, comme j'estime, d'une opinion trop tendre et respectueuse, qu'un grant et religieux auteur tient cette action si necessairement obligée à l'occultation et à la vergoigne, qu'en la licence des embrassements cyniques il ne se peut persuader que la besoigne en vint à sa fin [. . .] Il n'avoit pas veu assez avant en leur desbauche. Car Diogenes, exerçant en public sa masturbation, faisoit souhait en presence du peuple assistant, qu'il peut ainsi saouler son ventre en le frottant [. . .] Ces philosophes icy donnoient extreme prix à la vertu et refusoient toutes autres disciplines que la morale; si est ce qu'en toutes actions ils attribuoient la souveraine autorité à l'election de leur sage et au dessus des loix. (II, 12, pp. 584–85)

Montaigne does more than contradict Augustine on the technical point about the possibility of having sex in public. He paradiastolically asserts that the Cynics, despite appearing to be depraved and preposterous, do in fact give

³⁵ See Quentin Skinner, 'Thomas Hobbes: Rhetoric and the Construction of Morality', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 76 (1991), 1–61 (pp. 19–39). Skinner's views on paradiastole are significantly revised in his *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 140–72 (pp. 171–72).

³⁶ See Letizia Panizza, 'The Semantic Field of "Paradox" in 16th and 17th Century Italy: From Truth in Appearance False to Falsehood in Appearance True. A Preliminary Investigation', *Il vocabolario della république des lettres: terminologia filosofica e storia della filosofia. Problemi di metodo. Atti del convegno internazionale in memoriam di Paul Dibon, Napoli, 17–18 maggio 1996*, ed. by Marta Fattori, *Lessico Intellettuale Europeo*, 52 (Florence: Olschki, 1997), pp. 197–220.

³⁷ 'Thomas Hobbes', pp. 27–28.

'extreme prix à la vertu'. Diogenes' open-air onanism, and the 'dog-marriage' of Crates and Hipparchia, serve as examples of lives lived outside the constraints of custom and taboo because they are entirely devoted to virtue. Montaigne's discussion of 'la licence des embrassements cyniques' is similar to Brantôme's in so far as it is free of euphemism. Indeed, this is probably the first occurrence of the word 'masturbation' in French, a word which was avoided even in neo-Latin medical works, as Schleiner has shown.³⁸ Montaigne appears to have been unique at this time in recognizing that Cynic shamelessness constitutes a radical philosophical and cultural message. It is not hard to see why it serves as his last word on the diversity of moral opinion. His playful, paradiastolic adaptation of Cynic performance is in many ways true to the spirit of Diogenes, who himself taught through shock and paradox.

Although it is true that Montaigne goes further than any of his contemporaries in his presentation of Cynic shamelessness, looking at him in isolation would lead to a lop-sided view of sixteenth-century approaches to, and appraisals of, this endlessly provocative topic. Disgust at Cynic sex is predictable, although it can encompass a wish to titillate (Breslay) as well as deriving from religious beliefs, whether Catholic or Protestant (Du Préau and Léry). It is not inevitable, however, as is seen in Guicciardini's humorous rendering of the marriage of Crates and Hipparchia. Facetious dialogues inevitably do not treat the subject in the same way as purely discursive works. None the less, shamelessness is not defused by being treated facetiously. In fact, the essential seriousness of Cynic practice makes it an awkward presence in some texts (Bouchet). Cholières's euphemistic tackling of the topic of masturbation ultimately reveals similar tensions to those found in medical works. For the Renaissance, masturbation, whether outdoors or in private, is more taboo than public sex. It can, however, be dealt with directly, in those few works which engage with the unspoken philosophical motivations for Diogenes' disgraceful behaviour to some degree (Brantôme and Montaigne). These texts come closest to Cynic practice, precisely because they use it as a tool to destabilize their readers' assumptions about sex and morality. Cynic shamelessness questions values that are so basic they are rarely articulated. No one is immune to the threat posed by the Cynics to civilized norms. Hostile or anxious reactions in the sixteenth century attempt, whether wittingly or not, to negate this threat, to return to the normal order of things. This makes it all the more remarkable that the same period sees texts which engage with the philosophical implications of shamelessness. Such responses may seem unusually modern, but they none the less use sophisticated rhetorical tools that are very much of their time.

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³⁸ Philippe Brenot, *Éloge de la masturbation* (Paris: Zulma, 1997); Schleiner, p. 132.