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SHAKESPEARE AND THE TRUTH-TELLER
Confronting the Cynic Ideal

DAVID HERSHINOW

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Diogenes might stand alone, but this book is a testament to the fact that I do not. This project began as a dissertation written at Johns Hopkins University, and it’s impossible to overstate how formative those years of training proved to be on my sensibilities as a scholar and intellectual. This book simply would not exist without the support and guidance of Richard Halpern, whose course on ‘The Continental Renaissance’ first introduced me to the figure of Diogenes, and whose mentorship and feedback helped me to shape rough ideas into the material this book would eventually become. Frances Ferguson taught me to think about form and Amanda Anderson taught me to evaluate the *ethos* of an argument. While he arrived too late for me to take coursework with him, Drew Daniel was, and continues to be, an invaluable interlocutor and cheerleader. I thank my classmates for making a small programme feel so replete. Special thanks go to Tara Bynum, Elisha Cohn, Robert Day, Cristie Ellis, Rob Higney, Jason Hoppe, Claire Jarvis, James Kuzner, Ben Parris, Andrew Sisson, Beth Steedley and Dan Stout. I am especially grateful to Rebecca Brown and Sam Chambers for being such incredible friends and role models. Finally, I have to thank the members of my Accountability Group: Stephanie Hershinow, Dave Schley, Jessica Valdez and Maggie Vinter. For the past decade, their willingness to celebrate even the smallest accomplishment has been essential.
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as a sibling with whom they’ve had to compete all their lives.
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back-and-forth of reading and commenting on one another’s
work. She has read every word of this book and its many,
many drafts. Diogenes has his lantern; I have Stephanie. She
is the giver of all good titles and punchy last lines. She is the
light of my life. This book is dedicated to her.
Picture Macbeth alone on stage, staring intently into empty space. ‘Is this a dagger which I see before me?’ he asks, grasping decisively at the air. On one hand, this is a quintessentially theatrical question. At once an object and a vector, the dagger describes the possibility of knowledge (‘Is this a dagger’) in specifically visual and spatial terms (‘which I see before me’). At the same time, Macbeth is posing a quintessentially philosophical question, one that assumes knowledge to be both conditional and experiential, and that probes the relationship between certainty and perception as well as intention and action. It is from this shared ground of art and inquiry, of theatre and theory, that this series advances its basic premise: Shakespeare is philosophical.

It seems like a simple enough claim. But what does it mean exactly, beyond the parameters of this specific moment in Macbeth? Does it mean that Shakespeare had something we could think of as his own philosophy? Does it mean that he was influenced by particular philosophical schools, texts and thinkers? Does it mean, conversely, that modern philosophers have been influenced by him, that Shakespeare’s plays and poems have been, and continue to be, resources for philosophical thought and speculation?

The answer is yes all around. These are all useful ways of conceiving a philosophical Shakespeare and all point to
lines of inquiry that this series welcomes. But Shakespeare is philosophical in a much more fundamental way as well. Shakespeare is philosophical because the plays and poems actively create new worlds of knowledge and new scenes of ethical encounter. They ask big questions, make bold arguments and develop new vocabularies in order to think what might otherwise be unthinkable. Through both their scenarios and their imagery, the plays and poems engage the qualities of consciousness, the consequences of human action, the phenomenology of motive and attention, the conditions of personhood and the relationship among different orders of reality and experience. This is writing and dramaturgy, moreover, that consistently experiments with a broad range of conceptual crossings, between love and subjectivity, nature and politics, and temporality and form.

Edinburgh Critical Studies in Shakespeare and Philosophy takes seriously these speculative and world-making dimensions of Shakespeare’s work. The series proceeds from a core conviction that art’s capacity to think – to formulate, not just reflect, ideas – is what makes it urgent and valuable. Art matters because unlike other human activities it establishes its own frame of reference, reminding us that all acts of creation – biological, political, intellectual and amorous – are grounded in imagination. This is a far cry from business-as-usual in Shakespeare studies. Because historicism remains the methodological gold standard of the field, far more energy has been invested in exploring what Shakespeare once meant than in thinking rigorously about what Shakespeare continues to make possible. In response, Edinburgh Critical Studies in Shakespeare and Philosophy pushes back against the critical orthodoxies of historicism and cultural studies to clear a space for scholarship that confronts aspects of literature that can neither be reduced to nor adequately explained by particular historical contexts.
Shakespeare’s creations are not just inheritances of a past culture, frozen artefacts whose original settings must be expertly reconstructed in order to be understood. The plays and poems are also living art, vital thought-worlds that struggle, across time, with foundational questions of metaphysics, ethics, politics and aesthetics. With this orientation in mind, Edinburgh Critical Studies in Shakespeare and Philosophy offers a series of scholarly monographs that will reinvigorate Shakespeare studies by opening new interdisciplinary conversations among scholars, artists and students.

Kevin Curran
Early on in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, the melancholy Jaques, having just made the acquaintance of Touchstone, declares himself ‘ambitious for a motley coat’, explaining his interest in foolery in terms of the freedom its practitioner can exercise in criticising others:

I must have liberty,  
Withal, as large a charter as the wind,  
To blow on whom I please.¹

This is not simply a matter, for Jaques, of getting to be full of hot air; rather, he imagines that being a fool would entail his practicing a way of life with real political consequences:

Invest me in my motley; give me leave  
To speak my mind, and I will through and through  
Cleanse the foul body of th’infected world. (II, vii, 58–60)

Jaques’s ambition for motley is ambitious indeed, for he attributes to foolery the capacity to speak a new, healthier world into being, as if the critique a fool delivers holds the power to overcome and thus transform all others with its truth. At least, Jaques entertains the desire for such a power, a desire he belatedly – and I think mournfully – acknowledges to be
out of his reach. Were he to be invested in motley, Jaques promises to ‘Cleanse the foul body of th’infected world’, but only on the condition that others ‘will patiently receive [his] medicine’ (II, vii, 61). Jaques’s world-making critical impulse is checked by the pragmatic realities of argument and debate, under which interlocutors can always refuse to listen. Yet rather than modulating his vision for critical outspokenness in order to conform to these realities, Jaques completely abandons his ambition for motley in favour of turning hermetically inward. If the world will refuse his ministrations, then he will refuse the world in order to contemplate a better one of his own.

A failed fool before he even tries, Jaques renews his commitment to melancholy, which he now views as the antithesis of the critical impulse that drew him to licensed foolery. We see this when, in the play’s second half, Jaques mounts a defence of his melancholia, insisting that he ‘love[s] it better than laughing’ (IV, i, 4), thereby opposing Rosalind’s view that she ‘had rather have a fool to make [her] merry than experience to make [her] sad’ (IV, i, 25–7). Here, Jaques entirely disclaims his earlier commitment to social critique in order to instead endorse an antithetical position: ‘Why, ’tis good to be sad and say nothing’ (IV, i, 8). In contrast with his earlier partisanship for a fool’s communicative and socially minded ethics, Jaques subscribes here to an ethics of muteness. By this view, his travels in search of ‘sundry contemplation[s]’ amount to a cultivation of the self in which experience and the acquisition of critical insights advance an exclusively personal enlightenment. They serve to enclose Jaques in a kind of mental cocoon, or, as he puts it, ‘my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness’ (IV, i, 7–9).

There is something undeniably comic about Jaques’s careening from one extreme of social engagement to another, yet Shakespeare characterises him in this pendulous fashion not only for the sake of comic contrast but also for the sake
of serious comparison. Of course, the precise nature of the comparison I understand Shakespeare to be thinking about does not entirely come across in the figure of Jaques, whose return to melancholy marks a total withdrawal from the project of social critique. The comparison between artificial foolery and melancholia that Shakespeare builds into the character of Jaques does not seem to satisfy Shakespeare, for he goes on to explore the overlap between the two orientations in his subsequent characterisation of the melancholy Hamlet. Though critics have generally cast Hamlet as a failed revenger, it would be more correct to say that Shakespeare depicts Hamlet as a man who reframes the project of revenge and its entailments – rather than exacting revenge, he withholds it, counterintuitively offering critique by way of hermetic detachment instead of heroic engagement. Hamlet, I argue, forgoes an action-oriented effort to set his time back into joint and, instead, contemplatively seeks to further disjoin himself from time. When he imagines Alexander the Great turning to dust and that dust being used to stopper a beer barrel, or when he muses over the progress of a king’s body through the guts of a worm, a fish and finally a fisherman, Hamlet ruminates his way out of his fixed place in time in order to view worldly happenings from an incorporeal vantage. Eschewing individual action as the means of achieving vengeance, Hamlet pursues his critical agenda against Claudius and a rotten Denmark by claiming to see the inevitability of things as they have been, are and are going to be – thereby fulfilling his revenge through the impersonal operations of the cosmos. The aspirational inverse of Jaques’s world-cleansing foolery, Hamlet undertakes an ethics of thoughtful sadness that posits contemplative self-enclosure as public activism’s final frontier.

In Shakespeare and the Truth-Teller, I argue that Shakespeare takes a particular interest in testing and commenting on a series of practical strategies for realising what we might call the critic’s will to revolution, strategies for living and acting
in just the right way to be invested with an absolute degree of critical authority and agency. These are strategies that do not work, even as they nevertheless invite our belief because of our didactic relationship to literary and para-literary characterisations of the radical critic. I argue that Shakespeare comments on the conflation between literary character and ethical character that sustains these visions of aggrandised critical agency and that he produces this commentary in and through his depictions of several wise fools, Hamlet, and Timon of Athens. What links these disparate examples? In each case, Shakespeare’s engagement with the character of the radical critic is more specifically an engagement with his period’s mixed reception of Diogenes the Cynic – the Greek (anti-) philosopher and contemporary of Plato who, in the sixteenth century, becomes a central figure in debates over the possibility of giving voice to radically effective critique. An irritating iconoclast who rejected creaturely comforts, humiliated Plato in front of his students and masturbated in the agora, Diogenes had no interest in making himself easy to love. And yet, both in ancient Greece and over a long reception history, he gained an admirer for every detractor. Suspicious of schools of thought, uninterested in disciples, Diogenes nevertheless proved to be a powerful (if troublesome) model for critical engagement.

It may at first seem odd to cast a Cynic like Diogenes in the role of revolutionary critic, for the term ‘cynic’ has come to name a person of worldly disenchantment, a person who sees the dirty reality of things as they are and doesn’t believe in the possibility of change. However, this particular understanding of modern cynicism has only been around for some two hundred years, and its emergence is but one salvo in a millennia-long interpretive struggle over the figure of the Cynic, a figure that has been viewed both as the most formidable truth-teller that the world has ever seen and as a crackpot whose perverse behaviour renders anything he says...
Introduction

self-evidently dismissible. Indeed, as we will see, the interpretive conflation of literary character with ethical character that Shakespeare works to address plays a hand in provoking these differing views not only in his historical moment but also in subsequent ones, including our own. Consequently, Shakespeare’s efforts to confront the problem of character posed by the Cynic ideal continue to be as valuable now as they were in his own day.

Diogenes and His Early Modern Reception

We have no direct knowledge of Diogenes the historical person. Born in Sinope, an Ionian colony on the Black Sea, late in the fifth century BCE, Diogenes put none of his views into writing and, by many accounts, refused to take on any students. Our knowledge of Diogenes thus comes to us indirectly through the many anecdotes about his sayings and doings that have been told and retold through the centuries. A span of three hundred years divides Diogenes of Sinope from the earliest extant accounts of him, and another three or more centuries separate these accounts from Diogenes Laertius’s Lives of Eminent Philosophers (c.300 CE), which contains the first comprehensive collection of diogenical anecdotes, and which therefore plays an influential role in this figure’s later reception history. A work of doxography, Laertius’s chapter on Diogenes gathers together the many stories about the Cynic philosopher that had accumulated over the previous centuries, stories that were variously inflected by the admirers and detractors of Diogenes who took part in the telling of them. These anecdotes tell us as much about the people who partook in their transmission as they do about Diogenes himself. In particular, they reveal the thorniest and most evaluatively uncertain aspect of Diogenes’ reception to be his critical mission. Some of the most unflattering accounts of Diogenes – like the story
of him masturbating in public as a demonstration of his self-sufficiency, or of him begging alms of a statue in order to ‘get practice in being refused’ – deal with his efforts to criticise the phoniness of the people around him. At the same time, the anecdotes that present Diogenes in the most ennobling light – like the stories in which he stands up to Alexander the Great, or the one in which he claims that freedom of speech (parrhésia) is the most beautiful thing in the world – also deal with the theme of the Cynic serving as a deliverer of critique.

These competing pictures of Cynic critical activity prove to be a persistent and vexing feature of Diogenes’ reception history, and two of the origin stories Laertius attributes to Diogenes offer some preliminary insights into the cause of this interpretive dilemma. In one origin story, Diogenes, the son of a Sinopian banker, visits an oracle and is instructed by Apollo to ‘alter the political currency’. Initially misunderstanding this mandate, he returns home and adulterates the city’s coinage, and it is only after his banishment and subsequent relocation to Athens that he comes to understand that the prophecy was allegorical: his true purpose is to challenge the social and political values in which everyone around him fraudulently trades. In another origin story, Diogenes becomes a Cynic philosopher when he arrives in Athens and sees a mouse ‘not looking for a place to lie down in, not afraid of the dark, not seeking any of the things which are considered to be dainties’ and discovers, in consequence, ‘the means of adapting himself to circumstances’. In the first story, we have the beginnings of Cynicism understood as a form of truth-telling; in the second, we have the beginnings of Cynicism understood as an ascetic practice that eschews social and material niceties in order to obtain personal happiness and peace of mind, the kind of Cynicism that Crates learns from Diogenes and in turn passes on to Zeno, the father of Stoicism. Read separately, as some people assuredly
have done, these two anecdotes paint very different pictures of diogenical Cynicism. However, this book takes interest in the vexed reception history that coheres around the figure of Diogenes precisely because people have so often read them together, understanding him to undertake an extreme regimen of ethical self-discipline as the means of legitimating his acts of truth-telling. More than anything else, it is the proposition of a causal link between Diogenes’ ethical and critical projects that provokes divergent assessments of his efficacy as a truth-teller. Does his absolute adherence to guiding ethical principles make Diogenes into a truth-teller who is singularly able to speak truth to power, or is that very extremism a sign that he is cracked, a perverted madman who pleasures himself in public as a matter of ‘principle’, and therefore someone whose criticisms are self-evidently unserious and dismissible?

Diogenes has, to one degree or another, been provoking this interpretive struggle for over two thousand years, but the sixteenth century stands out as a watershed moment within this span for two interrelated reasons: first, because thinkers in this period begin to cathect on the problem of the Cynic truth-teller more than ever before, and second, because they do so at a time when actual practitioners of the Cynic way of life had been lost to living memory. This is a period in which the critical practice Diogenes is understood to exemplify circulates only in the form of literary and para-literary characters, meaning that the ethics of diogenical truth-telling is embodied not by real people but by their simulacra. Indeed, as we will see, the revolutionary potential of Cynic truth-telling becomes more hotly debated in this period precisely because sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thinkers engage only with characterisations of it. This is to suggest, on the one hand, that there is a notable change in the way people read and interpret literary and para-literary character in this period, one that leads some to see more actionable potential
in Cynic practice than would have been true in previous eras. On the other hand, it is to suggest that this new interpretive tendency in turn leads to a newly energised backlash.

In mid-sixteenth-century England, Diogenes quickly transitions from being an arcane figure to a ubiquitous one. In part, this rise in popularity can be credited simply to increased availability, one facilitated by Nicholas Udall’s 1542 translation of Erasmus’s *Apophthegmatum opus* (1531), a compilation of apothegms and anecdotes that devotes more space to Diogenes than to any other figure. As David Mazella notes, this collection – along with accounts of Diogenes peppered across a range of classical and medieval texts – was quickly incorporated into the standard curriculum for teaching students rhetoric. In a curricular framework wherein students looked to the past for both positive and negative examples of argumentative and oratorical technique, Diogenes and his Cynic conception of *parrhêsia* proved to be especially valuable because his saying and doings could furnish students with both kinds of exempla. This schismatic approach to moralising on Cynic truth-telling had the effect of formalising a division between the Renaissance High and Low Views of Diogenes.

On the one hand, accounts of Diogenes fearlessly cutting Alexander the Great down to size led early modern humanists and courtiers to invoke him as the period’s ideal of an honest and forthright counsellor, one who is able to distinguish himself from the many flatterers at court and to command a lord’s attention. As the story goes, Alexander one day approached Diogenes lying on the ground near his tub and offered to grant the Cynic any favour of his choosing, to which Diogenes replied ‘Do not make shadoe betwene the sonne and me’ (as Udall explains, the Cynic philosopher ‘was disposed to sonne hym selfe’). In this anecdote, Diogenes rejects Alexander’s offer of beneficence from his position of relative abjection, a condition that he deliberately cultivates
and that he revalues as the ethical basis from which he can
critique the comparative fraudulence of Alexander’s personal
and social values. If Alexander aspires to god-like status – to
live up to the example of Heracles, from whom he claims to
descend – then Diogenes offers a harsh reminder that Alex-
ander can never replace the warmth and light that emanates
from the sun. The implication is that Alexander’s best efforts
at securing power and distributing favour only amount to an
interposing shadow, something that would deprive Diogenes
of his true, basic needs. According to Mazella, early modern
admirers of this story all sought to assimilate Cynicism into
the *ars rhetorica*, viewing Diogenes as a counsellor who could
productively test the outermost limits of courtly decorum
while managing to stay safely within its bounds. Certainly it
is true that a majority understood Diogenes’ exemplarity to
lie in his skill at the rhetorical game of truth-telling, a game
in which the sovereign interlocutor agrees to exercise mag-
nanimous restraint on condition that the frank subordinate
maintain just enough decorum to preserve his interlocutor’s
goodwill. However, in this book I identify a subset of these
thinkers – Thomas Wilson and John Lyly among them – who
find in Diogenes a more extreme possibility. For the human-
ist who felt especially caught between the aspirations and
the frustrations of critical activity, for the courtier who felt
especially tired of playing games, the story of Diogenes con-
fronting Alexander the Great held the promise of a specifi-
cally non-rhetorical method of delivering critique, one that
imbues an advisor with enough critical authority to make
unwelcome truths literally impossible for a king to discount.
As we will see, in Chapter 2, this is the import of Alexander’s
claim that he simply ‘cannot be angry with [Diogenes]’ in
Lyly’s *A moste excellent comedie of Alexander, Campaspe,
and Diogenes* (1584).\(^{11}\) Lyly’s Alexander doesn’t admit to a
fondness for Diogenes in this statement but to an utter inca-
pacity to counter the force of Diogenes’ critique.
This idea of the Cynic stance as the position from which to speak maximum truth to power – so much so that truth displaces power – deserves our attention, not only because it is noteworthy in its own right, but also because it seems to provoke several antithetical assessments in early modern England. Pointing to the many accounts of Diogenes’ extraordinary shamelessness and incivility, belittlers of Cynicism sought to link Diogenes to such early modern types as the melancholic, the misanthrope, and the parasite-jester, all of whom can be disbelieved on the basis of their faulty or untrustworthy character. In this context, we may recall the story of Diogenes playing sophist and palatably preaching to a growing crowd on the theme of virtuous living, then ending his uncharacteristically pleasing discourse by squatting in front of his audience and taking a shit.

Mazella understands the negative view of Cynic truth-telling – that of its being utterly self-defeating – to emerge out of the curricular process that locates examples of ‘bad Cynicism’ in a different subset of apothegms than those associated with ‘good Cynicism’, yet such an account overlooks the tendency for Cynicism’s admirers and detractors to read the same apothegms in completely different ways. The story of Diogenes walking the streets with a lantern in broad daylight, explaining to passers-by that he is looking for a single honest man, is but one of many anecdotes held up as evidence that a Cynic is nothing but a misanthropic railer, and a decidedly perverse one at that. Yet this same story has also been invoked as an example of effective Cynic truth-telling that is aimed not at a king but at society as a whole. Samuel Rowlands takes this latter view in *Diogenes Lanthorne* (1607), an entry into the fashionable ‘book of fools’ genre in which Rowlands has a narrating Diogenes taxonomise the many different kinds of fools, knaves and hypocrites that populate society. In a similar vein, the vernacularisation of Diogenes that reads Cynicism through the lens of melancholia produces
a positive assessment of Cynic truth-telling in addition to the negative one Mazella rightly identifies. We see an example of this when Robert Burton, in his preface to *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), revalues his retreat from public service into private intellectualising by likening himself to Diogenes, thereby casting intellectual melancholy as a sublimated form of critical activity. In both cases, competing evaluations of Cynicism’s critical potential are bound together by their shared object of analysis, the depictions of Cynic character upon which these antithetical assessments are based.

The fact that early modern thinkers could look at the same depictions of Cynic truth-telling and see them so differently caused no small amount of uneasiness. To appreciate why, think of how disconcerting we all find it to know that others see a rabbit where we see a duck (or, to take a more recent example, to know that others see a white and gold dress where we see a blue and black one) and add the socio-political stakes of having such a difference of perspective over a mode of conduct that is either the most or the least effective way to speak truth to power. The hermeneutic uneasiness that surrounds the early modern reception of Diogenes is important to note because the unresolvability at its core made the figure of the Cynic into a culturally productive object of cathexis. I say this not only because Diogenes was carted out as both icon and whipping boy for writers grappling with the means both of delivering effective counsel and of impressing upon others one’s Protestant (or Catholic) religious convictions, but also because writers of the period would advance their positions in these debates by generating new literary and para-literary depictions of the diogenical truth-teller. This is most obviously the case with texts like Lyly’s *Campaspe* and Rowland’s *Diogenes Lanthorne*, which use known anecdotes about the Cynic philosopher as a starting point for their own rendering of him, thereby modelling themselves on Lucian’s and Dio Chrysostom’s creative
engagement with Diogenes in late antiquity. Less obviously, but perhaps more importantly, writers drew on both the positive and negative iterations of the Cynic type to populate the literature of the period – drama, most especially – with a whole host of characters that might exemplify either the efficacy or the impotence of truth-telling grounded in an extreme way of life. Sometimes allusions to Diogenes are built into these characterisations; often they are not. But either way, these early modern iterations of Cynic character are held up to the judgment of viewers and readers on the basis of their critical posture and its perceived practical value.

As we will see, Shakespeare does not take sides in contemporary debates over Cynicism’s critical efficacy; instead, he diagnoses the crisis of character that is provoked among his peers by the diogenical figure of the indomitable critic. Shakespeare, I argue, proves to be especially sensitive to the interpretive confusion that results from reading literary and para-literary characterisations of Cynic truth-telling as practical how-to guides, a confusion considerably intensified in the sixteenth century by the protocols of dramatic realism that were just then coming to dominate the English stage. If, as I claim in Chapter 2, realism develops as a representational form because it enables literature to be the vehicle for instruction that is practical rather than prescriptive, then Shakespeare identifies in his period’s struggle with the Cynic ideal a new potential for didactic failure that goes hand in hand with realism’s considerable potential for didactic success. This is to suggest, first, that the protocols of dramatic realism led viewers and readers to expect the actions and outcomes of literary characters to be instructive in ways that have practical applicability. Second, it is to propose that this assumption is especially misplaced when it comes to representations of Cynic critical practice that posit moral virtue in an ethics of extremity. Shakespeare, I argue, understands
that bringing the instructional expectations of realism to bear on the figure of the Cynic provokes his contemporaries’ antithetical assessments of diogenical truth-telling, causing some to mistake the ideal for the real and others to insist on maintaining their distinction. In his Cynic characterisations of Lear’s Fool (a parasite-jester), Hamlet (a melancholic) and Timon (a misanthrope), Shakespeare forces his viewers and readers to confront the literary mediation of Cynic character that produces such intense cathexis on the idea of its real-world revolutionary potential.

**Cynicism and the Western Critical Tradition**

In tandem with its close reading of Shakespeare’s plays and the early modern diogeneana to which Shakespeare is responding, this book mounts a larger argument about our complex, centuries-long relationship to the character of the radical critic, an argument that is in effect an addendum to Michel Foucault’s unfinished genealogy of Cynicism in the Western critical tradition. In his final two years of research and lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault moved away from a diagnostic interest in ‘regimes of truth’ – in which subjects participate in ratifying their own domination – and toward a heuristic interest in the kind of truth-telling practice that aims to challenge, even obliterate, such regimes.¹⁹ Foucault advances this undertaking by looking to the past for his answers, aiming ‘to construct a genealogy of the critical attitude in Western philosophy’²⁰. This work leads him to conclude, in his 1984 lectures, not only that Cynicism is the practice he is looking for, but also that it figures as ‘the matrix, the embryo anyway of a fundamental ethical experience in the West’.²¹ In these lectures, Foucault develops a compelling account of why Cynicism’s ethics of extremity emerges as a foundational (albeit under-acknowledged) ideal in our Western critical tradition.
But in addition to identifying the emergence of this central thread in our critical traditions, Foucault also endorses Cynic truth-telling as a viable model for changing the world, thereby inserting himself into the long arc of Cynicism’s reception history that has been produced by a persistent misunderstanding of Cynic character and the practical lessons it can and cannot teach us. Attending to these lectures is thus a thorny and necessary undertaking, thorny because Foucault’s valuable genealogical insights get tangled up with his own participation in that genealogy, necessary because, properly untangled, Foucault’s lectures are both a starting point for my own account of the Cynic ideal’s centrality to our critical tradition and an example of the interpretive mistake the causes the persistence of this centrality. While I’ll discuss Foucault’s reading of Diogenes at length in the next chapter, it’s worth sketching out his claims in miniature here, as they capture the stakes of confronting the Cynic ideal rather than succumbing to it.

In his 1984 lectures, the last he ever delivers, Foucault makes a powerful argument for seeing Diogenes’ brand of Cynicism as the logical culmination of an impulse that is common to post-Socratic Greek philosophy and that in turn proves foundational to the critical attitude in the West – the impulse to derive one’s authority as a speaker of truths from living in a manner that is true to one’s words. Foucault helps us to see that a logic of maximisation is imminent to this ethical turn, for it follows that the more closely one can match word to deed, the more powerfully one can convey the truth behind both. In disclosing this logic, Foucault takes particular interest in the under-acknowledged ethical virtue a person must demonstrate in order to achieve maximum communicative power, a virtue he calls ‘the courage of truth’. It takes courage to fashion one’s life in conformity with one’s principles, but it takes courage of truth to do so absolutely. This is the difference between Socrates’ moderate approach to the project of eudaemonia, the pursuit of
the good or happy life, and Diogenes’ extreme embodiment of its values. Whereas Socrates embraces the principles of self-sufficiency and authenticity by living in a modest house and wearing simple clothing, Diogenes applies these values to his daily life with unremitting rigour, sleeping not in a house but in an abandoned cistern, or tub, and under the awnings of public buildings, wearing only a blanket (or, on hot days, nothing at all), and even going so far as to seek out hardships, for example by rolling his tubular home over hot sand in the summer. Foucault understands Diogenes to be the first (and only) post-Socratic philosopher to demonstrate complete courage of truth, matching logos to ethos so perfectly that he fully realises the Hellenistic ideal of ‘the true life’, a life that, for Foucault, is imbued with the power to change the world:

the Cynic is someone who, taking up the traditional themes of the true life in ancient philosophy, transposes them and turns them round into the demand and assertion of the need for an other life. And then, through the image and figure of the king of poverty, he transposes anew the idea of an other life into the theme of a life whose otherness must lead to the change in the world. An other life for an other world.

Foucault understands Diogenes to show his peers that their own social values, when lived truly, entail a life and a world that is scandalously other, and for this reason he concludes that Cynicism was ‘the banality of philosophy, but it was a scandalous banality’. Cynicism is banal because it pursues the same core ethical values as every other Hellenic school of philosophy: self-sufficiency and authenticity (which is to say, the matching of word to deed, principle to practice). Yet Cynicism is also uniquely scandalous because it assigns virtue to an extreme state rather than a mean one, thereby exposing the fraudulence of other people’s watered down claims to authenticity.
Foucault takes Cynicism to name an ethical experience that belongs to the role of the social critic, the experience of seeking, or, at the very least, of desiring, a means of delivering one’s critique so effectively and so absolutely that it brings about its own obsolescence. This impulse is felt most acutely by the critic who bristles against the rhetorical limits of argument and debate, who strives to improve the collective good by convincing society of a truth that most have failed to discern and would prefer not to accept. Foucault identifies Cynicism as the means for overcoming these limits; it names for him the critical practice imagined to bring about a socially transformative event, one that leaves everyone in its wake shaped by the sheer obviousness of the truth the critic sought to impart. Alain Badiou theorises the Pauline event as a purely subjective experience: at some point on his solitary walk to Damascus, Saul becomes Paul – the event of his conversion is interior and self-derived. By contrast, Foucault suggests that the critical attitude in the West conceives the event as something one person can compel upon another, much in the way Jesus’s rigorously self-sacrificing way of life directly effects the convictions of his disciples, or the way early Christians similarly undertook a life of asceticism and corporal humility in order to impel Christ’s truth upon others. To shift from a secular to a religious register with these examples is entirely fitting, as early Christian proselytisers explicitly modelled their asceticism, principled outspokenness, and mendicant itinerancy upon the established protocols of Cynics in the first and second centuries CE.

Presented as a developmental genealogy, Foucault’s theorisation of Cynic parrhésia necessarily imbues it with an air of climactic finality; it is, after all, the catalyst for a world-changing revolutionary event. And yet, Foucault does not see Diogenes’ ethical achievement as the end of a history so much as the beginning of one. The realities of delivering a circumscribed series of lectures on what is essentially a work-in-progress
leave Foucault with little space to explore and outline this history, but he manages to devote his seventh and final lecture to a consideration of early Christianity’s appropriation of *parrhêsia* and the true life as an ethical basis for spreading the good word. He also offers tantalisingly brief remarks on the modern, secular perpetuation of the Cynic critical stance, which he locates in the ethical militantism of certain nineteenth-century political revolutionaries and (somewhat disjunctively) in the *ethos* of modernist art. Finally, Foucault implicitly places himself at the tail end of this history. In a January 1984 interview — given just a week prior to starting his final course at the Collège de France — Foucault explains his recent shift in direction from a longstanding interest in exposing the complicity between Enlightenment rationality and forms of domination to a newfound interest in identifying ‘the ethics, the *ethos*, the practice of self, which would allow . . . games of power to be played with a minimum of domination’.27 Foucault is looking for a practical means of unleashing the emancipatory power of the avant-garde philosopher and social critic, a means of fulfilling the project of Enlightenment that, according to his earlier scholarship, has come to be thoroughly subverted by the knowledge–power nexus and the operations of instrumentalised reason. Yet at the time of this interview, Foucault has not yet fixed his attention on Cynicism as the means for achieving this end, and so the moderation figured in the fight for a minimum of domination does not reflect the role he envisions for himself and other avant-garde philosophers some three months later.

It is my sense that Foucault comes to care about the prospect of Cynic *parrhêsia*’s finality, the prospect of a critical agency robust enough to effect the radical transformation of others and, through them, the political world they populate. However, in moving the goalposts from Socratic to Cynic *parrhêsia*, Foucault also finds himself telling a history of *parrhêsia*’s (enduring) Cynic moment that poses a serious
problem for his own critical ambitions. If the Cynic style of life, in its unstintingly courageous relation to truth, is constitutive of the true life, and if the true life is ‘an other life’ that brings about ‘an other world’, then why is Athens not remade in Diogenes’ image? The very fact that we can tell a history of parrhêsia in which people have turned time after time to Cynic militancy suggests that this mode of veridiction isn’t as radically transformative as Foucault seems inclined to think. It also suggests that there is something about Cynic character that, time after time, invites such an inclination, and this insight can lead us to a more fruitful way of thinking about the history of Cynic parrhêsia and the will to revolution in our Western critical tradition. If my diagnosis of this failure seems deflationary, it is only because I share with Foucault and others an optimism about the possibility of radical change; I simply find suspect the lodging of a revolutionary ethos in a single figure, and hence the conclusion that sweeping change might be achieved through the exercise of one individual’s critical agency.

In Shakespeare and the Truth-Teller, I take interest in the figure of Diogenes not because Cynic critical activity produces the revolutionary effects Foucault would have us believe – it doesn’t – but because huge swathes of our intellectual history have been shaped by a succession of people who, whack-a-mole-like, nevertheless entertain the hope that it does. In the sixteenth century, Thomas Wilson invokes Diogenes when defining parrhêsia in The Arte of Rhetorique: ‘Diogenes herein did excel, and feared no man when he saw just cause to say his mynde. This worlde wanteth suche as he was.’

(In the prologue to this book’s 1560 edition, the firmly Protestant Wilson describes his own deployment of diogenical parrhêsia when arrested for heresy in Rome and unapologetically defending his faith before a tribunal of Catholic judges: ‘I tooke such courage, and was so bolde, that the Iudges then did maruaile at my stoutnesse.’) Some two centuries later,
Jean le Rond D’Alembert echoes Wilson – ‘Every age, and especially our own, stands in need of a Diogenes’ – and he does so for remarkably similar reasons; D’Alembert exhorts Europe’s men-of-letters to accelerate the spread of enlightenment by emulating Diogenes, whose robust critical ethos seems to promise a means of escaping the rhetorical constraints of polite conversation, the dominant (and inherently conservative) mode of discourse in eighteenth-century salon culture. As Louisa Shea aptly notes, this exhortation prompts a competition to become the next Diogenes that includes Denis Diderot, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire, among many others, and Cynicism consequently plays a foundational role in the articulation of Enlightenment ideals. In the nineteenth century, Friedrich Nietzsche directly alludes to Diogenes when defining the Übermensch, the superman who announces the death of God, and, in the twentieth century, Peter Sloterdijk looks to classical Cynicism for modern cynicism’s cure just months prior to Foucault’s Cynic turn.

I offer here a curated sampling of thinkers who see something worth emulating in Diogenes, and I do so in order to paint a preliminary picture of Cynicism’s recurrent valorisation from the sixteenth century to the present. This picture is important, but it represents only half of the whole story. Our relationship to Cynic character has driven much of our intellectual history over the past five-or-so centuries, and it has done so not only because of Cynicism’s valorisation but also because of its debasement. As I mentioned earlier, Shakespeare’s contemporaries struggled with their assessments of Diogenes, and the unique problem Cynic character poses for them remains a persistent feature of Cynicism’s reception history. Shea has helped us to see that, in the eighteenth century, men competing to become a Diogenes for the new age had to confront the ease with which adopting a rigidly Cynic stance could backfire and be interpreted as evidence of their pridefulness or misanthropy. At times, this practical reality led would-be Cynics to
Shakespeare and the Truth-Teller

moderate their posture, essentially conflating Cynicism with a conventionally Socratic ideal, but at other times it led these same men to police against such concessions. Accusations would thus be levelled that one or another aspirant was in fact a ‘false Cynic’ merely posing as a principled provocateur while conforming his discourse to the conservative interests of his noble and wealthy patrons. Here we have an early articulation of counter-Enlightenment critique as it springs from the identification of the modern (lowercase) cynic, the self-serving rationaliser who willingly acts as a functionary of prevailing ideology, participating not in reason’s radical advancement but rather in its covert instrumentalisation.

Thanks to a renewed scholarly interest in Cynicism and its legacy, we are just now discovering that these competing responses to the figure of Diogenes together play an important role in the unfolding of Western intellectual history writ large, especially as it concerns the countervailing movements of the Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment, along with post-Enlightenment efforts to break free of our modern cynical malaise by returning (à la Foucault and Sloterdijk) to the radical promise of classical Cynicism. Mazella, Shea and Heinrich Niehues-Pröbsting have all added ground to this field of inquiry, and, for each of them, Cynicism’s guiding influence upon the trajectory of Western thought begins in the mid-eighteenth century and extends into the present. In this book, I offer two correctives to the work that has come before me. First, I argue that debate over the practical value of Cynic truth-telling starts to drive our modern cultural formation in the sixteenth century, not the eighteenth century. Second, I draw out the literary dimension of these ostensibly practical debates, thereby adding another explanatory layer to our centuries-long struggle with the Cynic ideal – a layer, it should be said, that makes the tools of literary criticism necessary to the work of historical and philosophical analysis rather than vice versa.
Shakespeare is not a prophet or a seer. He does not foretell that Cynicism’s countervailing assessments will act as a two-piston engine driving future developments in Western intellectual history. I claim of Shakespeare only that he is an especially keen observer of Diogenes’ mixed reception in his own historical moment and that his writerly engagement with Cynic character mounts an intervention vis-à-vis this vexed reception. Nevertheless, in this book I consistently concern myself with Cynicism’s later reception history, and I do so to establish the ongoing relevance of Shakespeare’s intervention. To take just one urgent example: in the twenty-first-century context of climate change – a context in which our world is in quite literal need of cleansing and in which the diminishing resources of oil, water and air all call upon our baser instinct to compete rather than cooperate – critics and activists simply cannot afford to be lured by the unrealisable fantasy of Cynic critical agency as a means of effecting radical change. Living as we do at a time when we must truly fashion ‘an other world’, and soon, the need for Shakespeare’s diagnosis is more urgent than ever before.

Chapter Summaries

This book is divided into two parts. In Chapters 1 and 2, I lay out the theoretical foundations of my argument. In Chapters 3, 4 and 5, I perform close readings of Shakespeare’s three most prominent Cynics and I show how each, in turn, implicates a different strand of our intellectual history. Readers who consult this book primarily for its Shakespeare criticism should not feel obliged to delay their gratification. The first two chapters clear the way for the more focused work of analysing Shakespeare’s engagement with the diogeneana of his day, but for those willing to accept my preliminary claims, the preview of Part I offered in this introduction provides sufficient context for skipping ahead.
In Chapter 1, ‘Cynicism and the Courage of Truth’, I take a closer look at Foucault’s final lectures in order to substantiate my reading of his Cynic turn – a turn in which he comes to view Cynicism’s extreme approach to the courage of truth as the logical means of becoming a radically effective truth-teller. I then offer a revised account of Diogenes’ mixed reception history that better registers the struggle being played out between the alluring logic of ethical extremity that underwrites our critical tradition, on the one hand, and the time-tested imperative to find virtue in moderation, on the other. That being said, I devote the lion’s share of this chapter to the preliminary work of laying out my reading of Foucault’s lectures, and I do so because my take-away from them is not particularly conventional. The very nature of these lectures, in which Foucault tests out ideas with an exploratory spirit – pursuing some through-lines, abandoning others and adopting new key terms along the way – means that any effort to draw a unified account from them is open to considerable room for disagreement. With latitude to see things another way, current scholarly discussion of these lectures has rather understandably avoided the view that Foucault first identifies and then endorses a totally nonviable critical ethos. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that the general arc of Foucault’s thinking in these lectures tends in the direction of precisely such an endorsement.

In Chapter 2, ‘The Realist Turn: Parrhêsia, Character and the Limits of Didacticism’, I explain why the crisis of character to which this book attends emerges in the sixteenth century and not sooner, and I do so by offering a new account of literary realism and its origins in early modern drama. I argue that the proliferation of non-allegorical characters in early modern drama results from a major innovation in the role and function of didacticism in literature. This is to suggest that literary realism first emerges as a way to instruct viewers and readers in the ethics of self-care by offering up...
to judgment the actions and outcomes of characters fashioned to be verisimilar to people. For as long as humans have been telling stories, literary character has served as a vehicle for prescriptive instruction, but it is only in the sixteenth century – with the advent of characters that are more-or-less constrained by the same ethico-political conditions of existence under which all people must necessarily operate – that literary character begins to serve as a vehicle for practical instruction.

Moving into the seventeenth century and beyond, literary realism becomes fictionality’s dominant representational mode precisely because it serves as a virtual arena in which to exercise one’s prudential judgments about the ethical means and political ends of action. My particular interest lies not in telling the history of literary realism’s didactic success but rather in telling the concomitant history of its nagging failure. This latter history (or, at least, one key strand of it) coheres around diogenical depictions of the ideal philosopher or social critic that valorise an extreme rather than – following Aristotle – a medial approach to ethical self-care as the best and only means of becoming a radically effective teller of truths. Read through the lens of realist didacticism, this kind of characterisation leads sixteenth-century thinkers into trouble because the positive portrayal of ethical extremity is precisely where the most problematic and incommensurate conflation of ethical character and literary character takes place. There is an enormous amount to say on this point, but the essential observation is straightforward: a positive outcome in a narrative framework does not necessarily correspond to a positive outcome in a political framework, and this is especially true regarding an ethical ideal premised on extremism. The advent of realist didacticism as a normative hermeneutic was also the advent of abiding efforts to refract various ethico-political ideals through the edifying lens of narrative and figural representation. However, the figure
of the Cynic truth-teller amplified the non-correspondence between the operations of literary character and the operations of ethical character, and as a result certain figurations of the truth-telling critic became objects of intense cathexis—they became the lodestones around which larger social, political and intellectual histories formed. I argue that the striking proliferation of diogeneana in the sixteenth century takes place precisely because early modern thinkers were beginning to apply the protocols of realist didacticism to their encounters with idealised representations of Cynic character.

The three chapters on Shakespeare’s Cynics follow a particular order, one intended to reconstruct the experience of someone like Jaques, someone who aspires to critical sovereignty and who seeks alternative means of achieving this state when a previous strategy for its obtainment falls short of the mark. Shakespeare’s Cynic characterisations of wise fools, Hamlet and Timon show him to be keenly aware of the fact that the critic’s will to revolution is like pressurised magma seeking a path to the earth’s surface: when one channel is closed off, another must be found. In this sense, his various treatments of the Cynic critical stance are designed to put his viewers and readers in Jaques’s shoes, to produce a sequence of aspirational identification and eventual disillusionment, and to repeat that process with multiple iterations of the Cynic critical ideal.

In Chapter 3, ‘Shakespeare’s Bitter Fool: The Politics and Aesthetics of Free Speech’, I argue that Shakespeare responds to the most straightforward fantasy of Cynic critical sovereignty—let us call it the direct approach, as reflected in the aspirations of Wilson, Diderot and Foucault—through his depiction of wise fools. In Twelfth Night, Timon of Athens and King Lear, Shakespeare’s citation of diogeneana gives form to a series of wise fools designed to provoke a collision between his period’s antithetical assessments of Cynic critical activity: one that reckons Diogenes’ freedom of speech to
be singularly effective, and one that lambasts Diogenes for being utterly inconsequential, a mere parasite-jester who has renounced all claims to seriousness. This double gesture is most evident in a passage unique to the Quarto Lear in which the Fool defines, and simultaneously performs, the critical activity of a ‘bitter fool’. Here, especially, Shakespeare’s composite characterisation of the Cynic stance challenges viewers to comprehend that the ‘bitter fool’ offers only the appearance of a robust critical practice – that its stridently critique-oriented posture exists in form but not in substance.

Chapter 4, ‘Cynicism, Melancholy and Hamlet’s Memento Moriae’, follows Shakespeare as he responds to a version of the Cynic critical stance that takes root in what appears to be a posture of political disengagement; this is a version of the Cynic fantasy that can be entertained by the sort of person who has already discovered the impossibility of obtaining critical sovereignty via the direct approach and who, however counterintuitively, now seeks to satisfy the critical will to revolution without having to be an agent of change in that revolution. As I’ve already intimated at the outset of this introduction, Shakespeare’s characterisation of Hamlet constitutes both an exploration of and a response to the lines of affiliation between the Cynic-inspired fantasy of unstoppable critical agency and his period’s romanticised portrait of intellectual melancholy. Shakespeare repeatedly has Hamlet frame his opposition to Claudius in terms of Diogenes’ opposition to Alexander, but he also has Hamlet reconceive the operations of Cynic critique when, in the graveyard scene, he imagines the process by which Alexander’s decomposing body over time becomes the plug for a beer barrel. (It is no coincidence that Diogenes asserts his repudiation of society by living in a barrel, nor that Robert Burton invokes Diogenes’ inhabitation of a barrel when he similarly adopts a posture of Cynic melancholy.) Looking upon the ossified remains of a wise fool, Hamlet attempts to breathe new life
into the project of Cynic critique by resorting to intellectual sublimation. This is to suggest that, when Hamlet ruminates over Alexander’s dust plugging a beer barrel, he is imagining a broader historical process by which the politics of kingship with which he is loath to take part will eventually be succeeded by an entirely new formation of the political.

Shakespeare calls upon his viewers to be sceptical of the posture Hamlet adopts, and this note of caution is signalled most clearly when Hamlet decides to approach the gravedigger and speak with him, thereby producing a tableau in which Hamlet plays the part not of Diogenes but of Alexander. For all that Hamlet commits to an extreme ethics of melancholy rumination, thereby imagining himself to commune with the will of the cosmos, the truth is that his *ethos* of sublimated intellection is enabled by the conditions of his princely privilege, by the labour of a busy multitude about whom he does not think. When Hamlet reflects on the possibility that matter from Alexander’s body will eventually become the stopper of a beer barrel, he does so in order to imagine the inevitability of a world in which the forms of power and domination that both Alexander and Claudius represent will eventually be replaced by something else altogether. However, his indulgence in this speculative philosophy noticeably overlooks a key point of continuity between his own moment and this imagined future: the underlying presence of money, labour and commerce, for he invokes a future in which people still have to make and serve beer for a pittance of a living. Hamlet takes comfort in being a conceiver of historical process, but in imagining the large-scale transformations that will enact his revenge for him, he remains blind to the more intractable and depersonalised forms of domination that subsidise his life of the mind.

The irony of Shakespeare’s intervention against Hamlet’s intellectually sublimated agency is that it completely backfires. As I go on to show, the posture of Cynic melancholy becomes
integral to an influential branch of modern philosophy – the philosophy of history – that emerges out of the intellectual hotbed of German Romanticism, a movement that was itself shaped by its participants’ intense identification with Shakespeare in general, and with Hamlet in particular. After linking both Hegel’s and Marx’s philosophies of history to the legacy of Cynic melancholy, I show how Shakespeare’s ultimate interest in problematising this stance allows us to turn the tables on Hamlet’s modern philosophical reception: instead of using modern philosophy as a lens for better understanding an early modern Hamlet, I use an early modern Hamlet as a lens for better understanding the conditions and limits of modern philosophy.

Shakespeare takes us behind the curtain of Hamlet’s Cynic melancholy by disclosing his unthinking reliance on princely privilege, a reliance that recasts him as being more akin to Alexander than to Diogenes. In doing so, Shakespeare points out that Hamlet, like Alexander, cannot see past a world in which power and influence depends on the accumulation and distribution of wealth, a world in which cash, and not the person who temporarily possesses it, is king.

In Chapter 5, ‘Cash is King: Timon, Diogenes and the Search for Sovereign Freedom’, I argue that Shakespeare aligns Timon first with the figure of Alexander, then with the figure of Diogenes, in order to formulate a diagnostic response to two related fantasies of sovereign freedom, both of which imagine the possibility of operating entirely outside money’s influence. Karl Marx famously cites Timon when claiming that Shakespeare understands the true nature of money to be the ‘alienated ability of mankind’, yet it would be more precise to say that Shakespeare – who lived during an earlier chapter of capitalism’s history – understands the true nature of money to be the alienated ability of the sovereign.55 In both his philanthropic and misanthropic modes, Timon attempts to set himself above (or outside) the requirements
of an otherwise moneyed world, and while it is true that both attempts meet with failure, these failures serve to diagnose two distinct fantasies of sovereign freedom that emerge in symptomatic response to a moneyed world. Drawing on a philological analysis of the word ‘frank’ – in which I place considerable pressure on John II’s 1360 ordinance authorising the first minting of the French franc – I argue that Timon at first understands sovereign frankness to make itself manifest as a personal state of exception, one that entitles a true sovereign (like Alexander the Great, or England’s James I) to inaugurate other states of exception at no cost to himself. Just as a king can enfranchise this or that serf as a Franklin, or elevate this or that soldier to a newly created position among the landed gentry, so too (it is imagined) can he speak monetary value into being. When Timon comes to understand that his attempt to instantiate boundless generativity has only ever amounted to a condition of endlessly accelerating expense, he leaves Athens in favour of a self-exiled life in the forest; there, he pursues a particularly extreme regimen of Cynic asceticism in order to recover his self-sovereign ability to speak the truth of money’s alienating effects, the ability to annihilate, not inaugurate, money’s value. Ultimately, I argue that Shakespeare reveals the irony of Timon’s two fantasies of sovereign freedom – fantasies I show to operate across some seven hundred years of our intellectual history: at the end of the day, no one can single-handedly reshape a world in which money talks.

Notes

1. Shakespeare, As You Like It in The Norton Shakespeare, II, vii, 47–9. Further citations will be to this edition and in-text.
2. In this study, I follow the convention of using the uppercase and the lowercase as a means of distinguishing ancient Cynicism from modern cynicism.
4. Ibid., 6.46, 49.
5. Ibid., 6.38, 69.
6. Ibid., 6.22.
9. See Mazella, *The Making of Modern Cynicism*, p. 49. See also Lievsay, ‘Some Renaissance Views of Diogenes the Cynic’.
11. Lyly, *Campaspe*, 5.4.95. Though shortened to the now-standard *Campaspe* in subsequent editions, the play was first printed under the title *A moste excellent comedie of Alexander, Campaspe, and Diogenes*.
13. For influential versions of this anecdote, see Chrysostom, *Discourses* 1-11, Discourse 8, 36; and Julian, *Orationes*, 6.202b.
15. See Rowlands, *Diogenes Lanthorne*.
18. Lucian features Diogenes prominently in nine of his dialogues (a number of appearances exceeded only by his very favourite avatar, Menippus), while four of Dio Chrysostom’s eleven
discourses depict Diogenes in conversation with various interlocutors. For additional examples of early modern texts that generate new literary and para-literary depictions of Diogenes, see Lodge, Catharos; Stafford, Staffords Heavenly Dogge; and Goddard, A Satirycall Dialogue or a sharplye-invective conference.

19. For Foucault’s most sustained consideration of regimes of truth, see On the Government of the Living.


23. Foucault, Courage of Truth, p. 287.


27. Foucault’s articulation of this claim, couched as it is in relative terms, appears just prior to his turn toward Cynicism. See Foucault, ‘The Ethics of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom’, p. 18.

28. Wilson, Arte of Rhetorique, sig. Ddi. Quoted in Colclough, Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England, p. 47. In his study of the various ways the classical mean–extremes polarity gets taken up in the early modern period, Joshua Scodel persuasively shows that early modern thinkers accept the conventional view that mean-states are virtuous while applying this moral schema to categories unanticipated by Aristotle in ways that flexibly present what otherwise might have been an extreme state as instead being a virtuous mean. However, when it comes to the courage of truth, at least some thinkers in the early modern period appear to break from the principle of virtuous moderation and instead wholly accept the possibility of a truly virtuous extreme. See Scodel, Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English.


33. I am indebted to Shea’s insight that Foucault’s embrace of classical Cynicism marks a closing of a circle and thus a return to Enlightenment ideals. By contrast, Mazella’s genealogy of Cynicism supposes that modernity is defined solely by its descent into modern cynicism.