WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S TIMON OF ATHENS

# A STUDY OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S

# TIMON OF ATHENS

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a close reading of Shakespeare's Timon of Athens. It is probably one of the first attempts at analyzing every act and scene of the play. There is a particular focus on tracing the unities in the play, and in understanding how the play works dramatically.

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# INTRODUCTION

Timon of Athens is one of the least read, least written about and least produced of Shakespeare's plays. It has been neglected or dismissed by many critics who do not consider it in any way to be one of the great Shakespearian plays. Very few critics, however, have attempted a close Act by Act, scene by scene analysis of the play in order to discover exactly where its weaknesses and strengths lie. The main purpose of this thesis is to fill this void and to present a detailed analysis of the play as a whole. The central focus is on the elements that do indicate a certain type of unity in the play. I have termed this "organic unity", in order to differentiate it from the concepts of Classical unities. In Timon of Athens the unity lies in the fact that many elements of imagery, diction, plot, movement, theme, character and setting all combine and lead in the same direction. Timon is at the centre of this process, and as he changes so do all those elements around him. The structure and the dramatic techniques used in the play add to this same sense of a oneness in purpose; they too compliment that one pervading idea of Timon's love and hatred for mankind. This conflict in Timon himself sets off a series of other conflicts that are the essence of Timon of Athens. Therefore, this thesis traces those elements of conflict and organic unity and demonstrates how the play works dramatically to express these central concerns.

The first chapter gives an account of the critical history of Timon of Athens, with a particular focus on the essays that are relevant

to the problems of structure and unity. The second chapter is a close reading of the play, showing how the various scenes work dramatically and thematically, and how they function in the play as a whole. The final chapter is a concentration on three areas of interest in the play that are especially important to an overall understanding of Timon of Athens. In this final chapter, there is an attempt to understand Timon himself, as he is so much the centre of the conflicts and unity of the play.[1]

## CHAPTER ONE

## A SHORT CRITICAL HISTORY OF TIMON OF ATHENS

There is as extreme a division between the passions of the critics for and against Timon of Athens as there is between the violent opposition of forces in the play itself. The conflicts between their various views have centred on the question of authorship and the problems of the structural and dramatic qualities of the play: it is with these latter questions that we will be mainly concerned, although, the authorship debate is interesting to look at briefly as the conclusions affect, indirectly, an understanding of the apparent structural flaws.

This problem of authorship is basically a matter of how much Shakespeare wrote and who wrote the remainder, rather than the question whether in fact Shakespeare was involved at all in the writing of the play. The doubts concerning authorship are coupled directly to the criticisms of the fragmented structure of the play, and it is this structural difficulty that first led critics to suspect more than one hand at work. Charles Knight was the first editor to actually suggest dual authorship of the play, in his edition of Shakespeare in 1839.[1] Knight indicates certain scenes that he felt to be "unshakespearian"; significantly, he centred on the same problem scenes that are discussed by many later critics of the play (II, ii, 47-128; V, i, 1-119; V, iii and III, v, 1-119). His main argument is that the crudeness of the language and style suggests an inferior dramatist at work; also,

those scenes are only vaguely linked to what has gone before. He concludes that those rough portions are remnants of an earlier play that Shakespeare used as a guiding framework. From this point on, several critics agreed with this assumption and attempted to find the lost source play.

Other critics have suggested, alternatively, co-authorship, but there have been disagreements as to the other playwright's identity. Some of the suggestions have been Heywood, Tourneur, Middleton and Day. The assumed allocation of scenes between Shakespeare and the other playwright has also been passionately debated.[2]

The other theory, and perhaps the most credible, is that the play was not written by two hands, but is simply unfinished. The structural problems are thus explained as being the result of the folio text being merely a rough draft that was never finished. This idea was first proposed by Herman Ulrici, in 1815.[3] His theory was generally dismissed or ignored, although eventually there were other attempts at following similar lines of thought. E. K. Chambers re-vitalized the theory in 1930, and concluded, as did Ulrici, that the play was never finished.[4] Perhaps the most interesting essay on this theme is that by Una Ellis-Fermor.[5] This very well argued essay goes into great detail in an Act by Act analysis, to show both the positive qualities and inconsistencies of the play. The standpoint from which she begins is this:

> It is as an unfinished play, then, that I should like to consider it, a play such as a great artist might leave behind him, roughed out, worked over in part and then abandoned; full of inconsistencies in form and presentation, with fragments (some of them considerable) bearing the unmistakable stamp of his workmanship scattered throughout.[6]

The scenes considered by earlier critics to be by another hand, she identifies, by close textual analysis, as the fragmentary, unfinished parts of a potentially great work. At the end of her essay she touches briefly on the other question that inevitably follows from this line of argument: if it really is unfinished, why was it left in that state? Una Ellis-Fermor suggests that Shakespeare miscalculated in his choice of the central character, Timon, and consequently, the whole shape and form of the play became distorted; realizing this, Shakespeare decided to abandon the play.

Many other critics have since supported the unfinished theory. J. C. Maxwell, in the introduction to his edition of the play, basically supports Una Ellis-Fermor's views, although he is more critical of the workings of the plot.[7] H. J. Oliver, in his edition of Timon of Athens, also agrees with the basic idea, and attempts his own answer to Una Ellis-Fermor's question about why the play was left unfinished.[8] Oliver mocks the psychological theories that various critics proposed, concerning Shakespeare's state of mind when the play was being written, and he then goes on to re-examine the idea of the weakness of the choice of the central character, although he elaborates on this suggestion to propose that it is the very subject matter that is not suitable for treatment in tragic drama:

> It remains to ask the question to which any answer is presumptious: why then did Shakespeare leave the play unfinished? Unless my interpretation is very sadly astray, it was not, as Chambers and Brown believed, because the dramatist was 'in a mood verging upon nervous breakdown' not, as G. B. Harrison insisted, because of 'sheer boredom'. More probably Shakespeare was influenced by dramatic difficulties inherent in the subject. There are it seems to me, two difficulties in particular. One is the problem of

> making a great tragic hero out of a man who by hypothesis lacks depth or profundity; and so that it is not that Timon was 'the wrong character to support his theme', I suggest, but rather that he was the only one -- right for the given situation, that is to say, but not right for great tragedy. The other problem is similarly created by the fact that the story does not lend itself to treatment in drama.[9]

Oliver also claims that the absence of conflict in the second half of the play is the main cause of the faults. In saying this, however, he seems to minimize the effect of the intense dramatic conflict and contrast inherent in the clash between Timon and Apemantus. Similarly, he does not mention the continual philosophical and didactic conflicts in Act Four, that are also an important aspect of dramatic tragedy.

Therefore, the critics are generally divided between those who believe in dual-authorship of the play, by a contemporary or earlier playwright, and those who believe Timon of Athens to be unfinished. Why it is unfinished does not seem to have been convincingly answered by anyone, although the idea of a playwright dissatisfied with what he had written does seem to be the most credible suggestion. Whether it was a fault in the character of Timon, or the tragic material itself, is a more difficult problem.

The other main critical interest has been centred on the quality of the play as a whole; in particular, it focuses on the question of structure. Many earlier critics found the structure severely faulted, due to the fragmented nature of the play caused by the lack of obvious connections between certain scenes. The Alcibiades sub-plot was also criticized as being only tenuously linked to the main plot. Again, as was true of the criticism concerning authorship, it is, generally

speaking, the same scenes that lead to these attitudes. The most obvious examples used by the critics are the scene with Apemantus and the Fool (II, ii), the trial (III, v), and the visit of the poet and painter to Timon's cave (V, i). These scenes do not seem to link very coherently with what precedes and with what follows. In particular, the trial scene is enigmatic, as the defendant is never named. Johnson, amongst others, was one who pointed out the disjointed aspects of the structure, summing it up in his comment: "In the plan there is not much art."[10]

In spite of all the difficulties inherent in the unusual plan of the play, some critics have vehemently defended the structure, although the reasons vary considerably. The list of defenders is surprisingly impressive and includes such early critics as Joseph Ritson, John Monck Mason, Edmund Malone, Charles Giddon, William Schlegel, William Hazlitt and A. S. Collins.[11] There are a number of more recent critics who defend the structure as being essentially experimental, rather than satisfactory when judged by the standards of classical definitions. Una Ellis-Fermor holds this point of view, and she sees Timon of Athens as a play with an interesting structure, defined by the opening scene that sets out so carefully "the terms on which we must follow the rest of the play, thus setting our mood by prompting an emotion strictly relevant to that of the main characters and to the theme and strictly related also to the emotion and thought which will, at the end, determine our response to the whole play."[12] This same method she sees in other Shakespearian plays such as Hamlet, All's Well That Ends Well, Macbeth, King Lear and Antony and Cleopatra.

A. S. Collins is another adamant defender of Timon of Athens, and sees the play as one more example of the extraordinary range of different modes of drama produced by Shakespeare. He claims that not only is the play abstract and disjointed deliberately, but also that a failure to recognize this deliberate intention is a failure to understand what the play is trying to do. In effect, Collins argues that Timon of Athens is a brilliant, sophisticated morality play:

> Timon is his true Morality play in the straight sense. It is the Medieval Morality play, only so much altered as to bring it very near to perfection.[13]

He argues that the trial scene, and the appearance of the three strangers (III, ii) are fine examples of deliberate, symbolic, rather than realistic drama. In both scenes it is the moral lesson that is important, rather than the characterization. Collins claims that, apart perhaps from Alcibiades, all the characters are deliberately symbolic and not individual personalities; he even includes Timon in this statement and describes him as "Ideal Bounty and Friendship." Although Collins' overall argument is fascinating and useful, this description of Timon cannot be, and is not in his essay, fully justified. Collins is unable to explain Timon's strange, very personal behaviour embodied in his refusal to recognize the reality and truth of his financial state. Similarly, although, as Collins says, Apemantus is to a large extent "Railing Envy", he displays on occasions humour, individual characteristics, for example his momentary flashes of compassion for Timon; and these allow him to transcend a merely symbolic role. Thus, in his over-enthusiastic attempt to offer an exegesis of the structure of the play, Collins has over-simplified the characters, although, overall, his

approach to the play's structure, through understanding the stress on the intellectual and moral elements, is perhaps the most constructive of all those who have defended it.

Another defender of the play's structure is E. A. J. Honigman.[14] He compares Timon of Athens to Troilus and Cressida and suggests that both plays have certain common qualities that substitute for the normal dramatic suspense and coherent plot of Shakespeare's other works. He sees, in a way similar to Collins, the deliberate attempt by Shakespeare to stress parallels and the didactic and moral aspects of the play; these become the central motivating force of the drama.

> The episodic nature of the action, again, may not be so much Shakespeare's slack planning as an intended effect. Many scenes are placed side by side rather than closely integrated with one another, a feature which goes hand in hand with the diminished individualisation of the minor characters.[15]

Honigman also defends, in opposition to Una Ellis-Fermor, the ending of the play. He believes the inconclusive nature of that ending to be, once again, a deliberate attempt at exploring new possibilities of dramatic technique.

> Thus Timon's suicide is hinted at but not definitely asserted, the reformation of Athens proposed but not demonstrated. I do not say that this is aesthetically more satisfying than the crashing chords at the end of grand tragedy: yet the 'dark comedies' corroborate that in his probing plays Shakespeare found it rewarding to ask frightening questions and close them with perfunctory answers, fading out without the high moral seriousness and conviction of his greatest purging catastrophes.[16]

Honigman similarly sees the overall structure as experimental, rather than simply unfinished.

Apart from these various arguments for and against the structure of Timon of Athens, there is also a more detailed overall appreciation

of the violent passions and tragic beauty of the play by Wilson Knight.[17] He is one of the most influential critics to have praised Timon of Athens, and he also offers a detailed description of his own production of the play.[18] He argues that the imaginative elements of the play, concerned with violent passions and the five senses, are the central forces from which all else follows. These areas of concentration combine to make a play that is vast and even universal in its scope; more so than the other great Shakesperian plays concerned with similar elements:

> In this essay I outline the nature of a tragic movement more precipitous and unimpeded than any other in Shakespeare; one which is conceived on a scale even more tremendous than that of Macbeth and King Lear; and whose universal tragic significance is of all most clearly apparent. My purpose will be to concentrate on whatever is of positive power and significance, regarding the imaginative impact as all-important however it may appear to contradict the logic of human life.[19]

He then continues to stress the appeal of the early part of the play to the senses. Timon, he claims, is at the centre of all the extravagant world of beauty and splendour: that is, Timon projects outward to that world his own perfect love, so that Timon is himself the reason that all the splendour exists. This implies what is stated explicitly later in the essay, that Timon really is the perfect "flower of human aspiration", and Wilson Knight makes no allowance for the possibility of a flaw of pride in Timon: Knight sees Timon as noble and perfect at all times. The remainder of his essay is concerned with the contrast between this magnificent world of Act I and the second movement of the play. Timon, in his nobility, is both a universal hater and a universal lover: he does nothing in moderation. From this violent passion at the centre of

the play all the other themes and concerns flow. Wilson Knight sees it as an unrealistic, allegorical drama that has positive, powerful unity of thought:

> Thus Timon of Athens is a parable, or allegory; its rush of power, its clean-limned and massive simplicity, its crystal and purposive technique -- all these are blurred and distorted if we search for exact verisimilitude with the appearance of human life. It is sublimely unrealistic. But if we recognise its universal philosophic meaning, it is then apparent in all its profundity and masterly construction.[20]

Therefore Knight has, in effect, extended those ideas of the other critics who also believed Timon of Athens to be a deliberate attempt at a new dramatic form. Knight, like Honigman and Collins, finds a symbolic morality tone in the play that substitutes for the usual attributes of coherence and unity.

Apart from essays which take one or another of the two main approaches to the play, the authorship question and the structural problems, there are also many concerned just with particular themes of the play. In the "Pilgrimage of Hate", for example, there is a section on the use of gold symbolism. Knight traces the gold symbol from the early part of the play when it is linked to all the magnificence that surrounds Timon, to Act Four in which gold becomes the central symbol for Timon's new hatred. Knight suggests that this is an essential, dominant theme of the play.

Another critic interested in this theme of gold, although from a very different point of view, is John Draper.[21] He sees not gold itself as the central theme, but rather the question of usury in Athens. The gold, as he sees it, is part of this overall central theme of a great man ruined by paying extortionate interest rates: the gold is

the vehicle for this process. Draper tries to show that usury, and the fall of great lords, was an important issue in the Elizabethan age: therefore, a certain topicality explains to some extent the obsession with gold and usury.

Although there are numerous other essays on particular themes in Timon of Athens, only a few are concerned with the same areas of interest as this thesis. Apart from the criticism by Wilson Knight and Una Ellis-Fermor, there has been little attempt to deal with a close reading of the play as a whole. However, it is worth briefly mentioning a few essays that do touch on some of the themes and ideas explored in the following chapters.

John Draper, in another essay, mentions an interesting question on the play.[22] He is one of the few critics to concern himself with the complexity of character that Timon offers. It would seem that the tendency to see the work totally as a morality play has obscured the real problems inherent in a personality like Timon's. Indirectly, Wilson Knight raises the questions when he claims Timon to be the perfect "flower of human aspiration", for this statement begs the reader to ask: why then does Timon behave so strangely and refuse to listen to the truth being told so frequently by Flavius and Apemantus? There is something about Timon that cannot fit into an easily defined picture of the morality play figure described by Collins. Draper attempts to understand how and why such a character functions. He discusses Timon's psychology by the standards of an Elizabethan audience's sense of the term. He tries to show that the characters in the play conform to the traditional patterns of the "four humours" that

govern all thought and action. The senators are the melancholy type; Flavius is phlegmatic; Alcibiades and Apemantus are choleric, whereas Timon is, in Act I at least, sanguine. Thus it is the conflict between Timon's humour, that is so happy, good and noble, and the other characters' coldness and anger, that causes Timon's fall:

> Thus Shakespeare gives to Timon the affluence and the happy, generous nature that should bring good to all, but in this diseased society brings only evil.[23]

After the conflict and the recognition that the world is not as good as he had always believed, Timon changes from sanguine to choleric: the choleric humour was traditionally caused by overwhelming misfortune or by contempt of others. As this change was a natural result of his fall from fortune, choler could be accepted by the Elizabethan audience without their blaming Timon; sympathy would not be lost. The final movement is to the melancholy humour, which led often to madness. This, claims Draper, would prepare the audience for Timon's suicide, which is clearly implied in Timon's last speech.

This short essay by John Draper brings up for the first time one of the main problems of the play: without understanding Timon, the reader or audience can never understand the play. The psychological problem is surprisingly subtle and complex, so that although the concept of the four humours is a good starting point for a psychological exploration of Timon, it is perhaps with modern hind-sight that his character can be more fully understood.[24]

In an interesting essay, Willard Farnham explores the beast imagery in Timon of Athens.[25] This he feels, contains "the essence of the tragedy. He demonstrates how the words referring to beasts

occur frequently in the play. Timon, he says, unlike Lear who watches and learns from wild nature, becomes a beast himself. Therefore the beast theme serves to stress the lowness of man's nature in the world of Athens. Farnham also touches on the idea of man eating man. Although Farnham says little about the actual thematic and dramatic consequences of this motif, he does identify various passages that suggest similar thoughts. What he does not do at all is pursue the important consequences of this pattern, which is itself perhaps a more dominant theme than simply the idea of Athens as a "commonwealth of beasts". Similarly, the good symbol, which is an integral part of this cannibalistic theme, is left unexplored.[26]

An essay by W. Nowottny explores in fuller depth the gold symbol noted by Knight and Draper.[27] She links gold to the concept of natural and divine order, using biblical allusions in Act Four and Act Five to connect the themes, and interpreting the end of the play as a dialectic between traditional order and corrupt order, offered by Timon through the symbol of gold. She says that Timon uses gold as the sign of his new anti-Christ doctrines: Timon has substituted the morality of thieves, corruption and prostitution for the established concepts of order in which "heirarchical functions operate for mutual benefit".

E. C. Pettet offers a socio-historical view of the play; he sees Timon of Athens as a play concerned with the changing nature of society in the Elizabethan age.[28] Timon is a lord who belongs more to the Christian medieval past than to the present. Timon's acts of generosity, that is, lending or giving without interest or gain, are the acts of a medieval nobleman. Timon's fall, and the resulting universal disorder,

is a reflection of the "disruption of feudal morality".

Another largely ignored aspect of the play is the political problem. One critic who has thrown some light on it is Ruth Anderson, who attempts to prove that it is Timon's excessive goodness that is itself a quality to be condemned by an Elizabethan audience.[29] She argues that Timon, as a Prince or Lord, should be politically astute. She quotes two sources of political thought, works by Charron and Bacon, which declare that a Prince should be able to deceive and think cunningly if his people are to prosper.[30] Looking at the play from an Elizabethan point of view, she concludes that in an evil world, like that of Athens, a lord should not trust indiscriminately, or if he does, he will cause his own downfall: thus, Timon's tragic faults are his lack of practical wisdom and his "excessive goodness".

An essay by Andor Gomme sets out to offer an alternative to Wilson Knight's interpretation of the play, which Gomme dismisses as a romantic sentimentalization of Timon.[31] Gomme argues that from the beginning, the audience knows only two well how corrupt Athens is, whereas Knight sees it all to be perfect. Similarly, Gomme detects a trace of a self-satisfied tone in Timon's early speeches, although again, for Knight Timon is "perfect". The essay then goes on to explore the darker side of Timon's character and the uglier aspects of Athens, both in direct opposition to Knight's approach:

> But at least one can say that there is no tendency to sentimentalise Timon's hate: rather is one impelled to call it something fundamentally ignoble, just because it is as gross and unjustified as his self-confident luxury was earlier.[32]

Gomme concludes that although it has momentary brilliant flashes, the play is ultimately a failure. Overall, the central character, Timon,

and the society of Athens are too ugly, too decadent to support Knight's interpretation.

These essays seem to give an overall idea of the directions that criticism has taken on Timon of Athens. Most essays are on thematic or technical points that are small in scope, there is little criticism concerned with a detailed examination of the play. There is also an exceptional polarity between the stands of critics like Wilson Knight and Gomme: perhaps one could say of these critics that they have shown only "the extremity of both ends".

## CHAPTER TWO

Sophocles once said that Euripides depicted men as they really were, whilst he wrote about men as they should be.[1] In Timon of Athens we are presented with a meeting of, and conflict between, these two extremes: Timon the apparently ideal man, amongst many far from ideal men. In the beginning of the play Timon seems to be in many ways the ideal man; he appears noble, generous and free from selfish intent. Like Sophocles' ideal characters, Electra, Odysseus or Antigone, Timon is absolute in all his actions and obeys only the dictates of what he believes to be true goodness. Timon is willing to aid his friends, even though he might suffer himself, just as Sophocles' Electra insists on revenging her father's death at the cost of her own life. Electra, like the Timon of Act One, will do only what she believes to be right. At the end of Sophocles' Electra the revenge is complete and there is no suggestion that the circles of revenge will continue with the next generation; justice is seen to have been done. In Euripides' Electra the tone is very different. His Electra is not the strong, defiant and assured character of Sophocles' play; Euripides' Electra is neurotic and insecure. Similarly, at the end of Euripides' play there is no final end to the problems of revenge and it is clearly suggested that the next generation will perpetuate revengeful murder. In the

ideal world of Sophocles, absolute goodness is enough. In the second half of Timon of Athens, when we see that Timon does not live in an ideal world, we see that his naive goodness, manifested in his abundant generosity, is bound to end in disaster. It is not possible for the ideal Timon to co-exist with the world of Athens, in which usury and corruption lie at the heart and soul of society. Similarly, a Sophoclean character could not survive in a Euripidean play. The extreme change from the Timon who loves mankind to the misanthrope of the later parts of the play, is a direct consequence of the impossibility of compromise between the two extremes.

This polarity between, in Euripidean terms, the real and the ideal, is typical of the intense conflicts between various opposing forces in the play. The problem concerning idealism is complicated by the accompanying extremes of passions. The two violent extremes of love and hate, divided respectively between the first and second half of the play, are the central medium for the expression of the various conflicts with which the play is concerned. Timon of Athens is a play that refuses to acknowledge any intermediate positions; the characters are divided basically into two distinct groups of good and evil. Similarly, Timon one moment loves all men and the next moment is transformed into a total misanthrope. The central focus of the play is on the process of conflict that arises when two opposing forces are set against one another. Thus, Timon of Athens has a certain affinity to a morality play in which there is not much stress on distinct characterization, although there is a clear sense of what a character represents. In Timon of Athens this is particularly true of the secondary characters

like the poet, the painter, the jeweller or the merchant, who introduce the audience to the play. In a similar way, the importance of a particular moment in the play is not just related to the workings of the plot, but also to how that moment parallels, or differs from, comparable moments in the play. Therefore, as we begin to look closely at the structure of Timon of Athens, we become aware of strong similarities between different scenes.

It is with these ideas of contrasting and conflicting forces in mind that we can begin an analysis of Timon of Athens. Although many of the difficulties concerning the lack of distinct connections between certain scenes can be attributed to an unfinished or hurried text, this dominant concern of the dramatist with parallels and comparisons suggests that the play is in some ways inevitably episodic. As we move through the play, there is a sense that the logical continuation of plot has been sometimes sacrificed or ignored, because of a concern with dramatic effect. In spite of a certain truth in Johnson's comment that, "In the plan there is not much art",[2] it is possible that the real power and beauty of Timon of Athens is to be found in its organic unity, rather than in the workings of the plot. The occasional faulty interrelation of the parts, and lack of coherence in the sequence of events, are undeniable, but a pre-occupation with them ultimately is not very useful or constructive when exploring the play. We shall see that from the very beginning of the play the organic unity is dominant, including a unity of diction, structure, imagery and characterization.

As soon as the play opens, the audience is alerted to the

the carefully conceived form of the play. Timon of Athens commences with the conversations between a poet, a painter, a jeweller and a merchant. Between them they represent the worlds of art and materialism, which are themselves suggestive of the central problem concerning idealism and reality. Just as Timon cannot survive in his own false, ideal world, apart from society, so ideal art is contaminated by any compromise with materialism. The poet himself recognizes that this devaluation of art is taking place:

> When we for recompense
> have praised the vile,
> It stains the glory in that happy verse
> Which aptly sings the good. (I, i, 15)

Thus, the poet who writes merely for gain, without exercising discrimination in his choice of subject, devalues the art that really does praise what is good. The association of these four men, two artists with two traders, represents the very cause of the destruction of honest art in the play. Similarly, by means of the poet and painter, we can see that uncorrupted goodness is also difficult to attain in a world where usury and greed are omnipresent; art and goodness are both corrupted by money. The notable exceptions to this general truism are Alcibiades, Flavius and various servants, all of whom will be looked at later in this chapter.

It is also seen as the play progresses that Timon's main fault is not generosity in itself, but more specifically the fact that he too, like the artist and poet, fails to discriminate between those who request what he has to give. He is unable to see beneath the surface of a human being; one moment he believes all men to be good, and the next moment he sees them all to be evil.

Throughout the first scene the questions concerning the true value of art are closely related to those concerning the truth about human nature. The painting of the unidentified man, probably Timon, focuses precisely on these problems. When the poet first sees the painting he says:

> it tutors nature; artificial strife
> Lives in these touches, livelier than life. (I, i, 40)

Thus, he suggests that the painting is itself superior to the real life that it depicts. The strange and complex irony becomes clearer when the audience realizes that art itself has already been condemned by the poet for being devalued through its connection with material gain. Therefore, if the painting itself has little or no value, but is nevertheless considered superior to the subject, what does that then say about the true worth of that subject: man? Apemantus adds weight to this interpretation when he is asked his opinions concerning the painting:

> Timon: How lik'st thou this picture, Apemantus?
> Apemantus: The best for the innocence.
> Timon: Wrought he not well that painted it?
> Apemantus: He wrought better that made the painter, and yet he's but a filthy piece of work. (I, i, 195)

When he praises the "innocence", his meaning is ambiguous; he seems to be mocking its simplicity as well as the fact that the painting, unlike the painter, can do no harm. In his second statement, however, he rejects the idea that art can be superior to nature and adds his own ironical opinion, saying that although the artist is poor, the painting is an even poorer creation.

A further complication is added to these various attitudes toward the painting, when the audience becomes aware of the conflict

between Timon's apparent wisdom in relation to the painting and the way he acts in his own life. Thus the supreme irony arises when Timon says:

> Painting is welcome.
> The painting is almost the natural man.
> For since dishonour traffics with man's nature,
> He is but outside, these pencill'd figures are
> Even such as they give out. (I, i, 160)

Timon praises the simple purity of the painting of a man; he is saying that a painting is more honest than men, who are often not what they appear to be. Whilst he applauds the fact that the "pencill'd figures are / Even such as they give out", he is ignoring the consequences of such a statement if applied to his own life. In spite of his apparent wisdom, Timon can never see any more than the "pencill'd" form of those about him. Later, in his anger, Timon remembers Apemantus' criticism of the painting in an aside:

> Excellent workman, thou canst not paint a man
> so bad as thyself. (V, i, 30)

The close relation between the falsity in human nature and the falsity in art, is further emphasized in the words of the poet. His language betrays a superficiality that symbolizes the emptiness of the meaning. He is frequently unnecessarily vague, and he is often pretentious in his excessive imagery and diction:

> our poesy is as a gum which oozes
> From whence 'tis nourished; the fire i'th'flint
> Shows not till it be struck: our gentle flame
> Provokes itself, and like the current flies
> Each bound it chases. (I, i, 20)

The false modesty of the introductory words to the speech, "A thing slipped idly from me", sets the tone for the shallow verses that follow. The superficiality of language, in this and his other speeches, is

similar to the technique used by Shakespeare near the beginning of King Lear. He places the simplicity of Cordelia's honest, "Nothing, my Lord", against the lavish insincerity of her two sisters' professions of love. Thus, the audience suspects early on that behind empty praise lies danger for him who is easily flattered:

> Goneril: Sir, I love you more than words can yield the matter;
> Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty;
> Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;
> No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;
> As much as child e'er loved, or father found;
> A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable;
> Beyond all manner of so much I love you. (I, i, 51-57)

Similarly, in Timon of Athens the irony of what Timon does is emphasized by the audience knowing more than he does; the audience strongly suspects the poet's false praise. The ultimate irony in this concern occurs in Act Five, when Timon has finally become aware of the poet's true nature, just as Timon has also realized the falsity of the painter's flattery:

> Timon: Thou counterfeit'st most lively.
> Painter: So, so, my lord.
> Timon: E'en so, sir, as I say. And for thy fiction,
> Why, the verse swells with stuff so fine and smooth
> That thou art even natural in thine art... (V, i, 81)

Significantly, moments earlier, the poet's profession of love for Timon has strong linguistic echoes of Goneril's speech to Lear. The poet, too, stresses the inability of the universe to yield suitable expressions for communicating his feelings; ironically, he too contradicts that same statement in his general excessiveness of imagery and diction:

> Sir,
> Having often of your open bounty trusted,
> Hearing you were retired, your friends fallen off,
> Whose thankless natures (O abhorred spirits!)
> Not all the whips of heaven are large enough-
> What to you,

> Whose star-like nobleness gave life and influence
> To their whole being! I am rapt, and cannot cover
> The monstrous bulk of this ingratitude
> With any size of words. (V, i, 56)

It is also significant that, in his accusation of the poet and the painter as false flatterers, Timon adds the play's final comment on the theme of art and nature. When he says, "thou art even natural in thine art", he really means that the false poetry is the outward manifestation of the false human nature that created it.

If we return again to Act One, scene one, we can see other ways in which this first scene suggests many of the other problems considered throughout the play. The poet actually tells the audience in advance what will happen in the play, when the wheel of fortune turns and Timon must fall:

> When fortune in her shift and change of mood
> Spurns down her late beloved, all his dependants
> Which laboured after him to the mountain's top
> Even on their knees and hands, let him slip down,
> Not one accompanying his declining foot. (I, i, 87)

This foreshadowing of events goes far beyond the subtle foreshadowings in a play like King Lear. Dramatically, it places Timon of Athens in a genre that has more in common with Greek tragedy, than with other Shakespearian tragedies. In Greek tragedy, the sequence of events and the outcome of the drama were known before the play began. The plots were based on legends that were well known to the audience. The audience's attention was therefore not really on what happened, but on how it happened and how the various characters would react to what happened. It is understandable that Shadwell cut all the foreshadowing speeches from his version of Timon of Athens, as he felt that it would

reduce dramatic tension.[4] In fact, however, he was also changing, whether he knew it or not, the entire perception of the play by the audience. Without that distinct awareness of inevitable disaster, the focus of attention cannot be concentrated fully on why Timon acts as he does. The complex thematic problems of the play would therefore be obscured by the mechanics of plot. This speech suggests clearly, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that in this play Shakespeare is not concerned with the technicalities of plot. This advance foreshadowing of the story also allows the intense dramatic irony so common in Sophoclean tragedy.[5]

After the first ninety-five lines, the scene suddenly changes, as Timon enters. Dramatically, the effect is complex. Just before Timon's entrance, the painter had remarked that he could illustrate the theme of fortune's wheel with a "thousand moral paintings". At about the same moment, Timon arrives, thus suggesting that he himself is one of these "moral paintings". The overall stage effect is akin to the concept of a play within a play. As soon as Timon has arrived, on cue, he is immediately seen to be apart, both physically and spiritually, from the four characters who have hitherto dominated the stage. His tone, unlike the other four characters, is totally sincere, and his attitudes are clearly very different. Instead of being obsessed with the desire for material gain, like the poet, the painter, the jeweller and the merchant, Timon offers his money to others:

> I'll pay the debt and free him. (I, i, 105)

Similarly, although the tone is to some extent ambiguous and could be interpreted as peculiarly self-conscious and pompous, Timon emphasizes

his distance from the four greedy flatterers, by stressing his belief in charity:

> T'is not enough to help the feeble up,
> But to help him after. (I, i, 110)

Therefore, even at first sight, the audience is aware that Timon is alienated from those around him. At this point in the play, this alienation and isolation is spiritual, although on stage the physical aspect could also be suggested, and later in the play the distance becomes also literal, when Timon leaves the city.

In the stress on Timon's generosity, Shakespeare is again offering two extremes in opposition: charity and greed. Throughout the play these concepts recur in violent opposition to one another, as various characters become associated with them. Similarly, this conflict is connected to other opposing forces: naivety and wisdom. Timon's generosity is closely linked to the fact that he is naive in his understanding of human nature. He uses his wealth indiscriminately, so that as soon as he has payed Ventidius' debt, he then immediately hands over money to the next suitor; Timon gives to all. This idea of naivety also connects back to the idea with which this chapter began: the conflict between the real and the ideal. The ideal is now being associated in the play directly with naivety. Significantly, in the acts and scenes that follow, cynicism will be another dominant element that extends awareness of the same problems. Cynicism gradually emerges in close relationship to what we began by defining as reality. Therefore, with the arrival of Apemantus (I, i, 180) the audience becomes aware that the polarity between greed and charity, noted on Timon's first arrival, has widened into the opposition between total naivety and absolute

cynicism. It is only later in the play that we are given brief glimpses of any intermediate possibility, in the form of Flavius and Timon's servants.

The indiscriminate nature of Timon's prodigality is stressed by the rapid succession of brief interviews with the various suitors. The fast movement from Ventidius to the old Athenian and then to the poet, the painter and finally to the jeweller, leaves the audience with a breath-taking confirmation of their earlier suspicions, felt when Timon entered straight after the speech concerning "moral paintings". This pattern of one incident following closely upon another, each incident similar but with distinct differences, is used twice again in the play. A similar pattern is used in the series of requests for financial aid, from Timon to various lords (II, ii), and again near the end of the play when Timon is visited by numerous characters whilst he is outside the city walls (IV, iii). Although, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter, the focus of interest varies in each of the three scenes, the dramatic framework is similar in each. Once again, it is clearly seen that there is a very closely controlled structure on which the play is based.

After the series of suitors comes Apemantus. He is firmly connected with the cynic philosophy: "Y'are a dog".[6] The image of the dog, as well as being associated literally with cynicism, recurs as a term of abuse throughout the play, and acts as another means of linguistic unity. When Apemantus arrives, the tone of the scene changes once again. At the opening of the play there was an ironic tone, that extended the audience's awareness of the realities of a materially

biased society, the language was frequently superficial, and the tone often pretentious. When Timon entered, the audience became aware of a different outlook on life; Timon manifested naivety and idealism, expressed by a serious tone. Now, however, with the addition of Apemantus, the tone becomes harsh, bitter and sardonic. As Timon greets him he replies scornfully:

> Timon: Good morrow to thee, gentle Apemantus.
> Apemantus: Till I be gentle, stay thou for they good morrow,
> When thou art Timon's dog, and these knaves honest.
> (I, i, 180)

Thus, the ideal goodness of Timon that allows him to greet even Apemantus as "gentle", is now overshadowed by the cruel finality of the cynic's philosophy: as the "knaves" will never be honest, Apemantus will never greet Timon with "good morrow".

In the exchanges that follow Apemantus' entrance, his attitudes toward his fellow men are clearly shown. Ironically, like the Fools in other Shakespearian plays, it is Apemantus, the man laughed at by all the other characters, who speaks objective truth; as Timon learns later in the play, Apemantus is right when he calls them "knaves". The combination in one character of truth and cynicism is, however, difficult for an audience to accept, and consequently, Apemantus is often seen as a figure of fun, rather than a sage. Yet again, Shakespeare has introduced a character who is extreme in his thoughts and philosophy, and again there is a character in continual conflict with those about him. The focus of the drama is on that process of character conflict and the accompanying philosophical conflict. Similarly, in Sophocles' Ajax there is a concentration on the opposing attitudes and characters of Odysseus and Ajax. In Sophocles' play, the

attention is on the character who lives by the law of the gods and has the qualities of 'sophrosene', Odysseus, and the proud man, Ajax, guilty of 'hybris'. In Ajax, as in Timon of Athens, there are many scenes when the opposing characters are juxtaposed, so that the audience can watch and hear them in a state of violent conflict. Shakespeare often uses this technique in his play. The most complex example of this is in the confrontation between Timon the misanthrope, and Apemantus the cynic (IV, iii); this will be observed in greater detail later in the chapter. Apemantus is also responsible for introducing into the play the other important theme that is concerned with images of food.[7]

Finally, before this first scene ends, there is one other arrival who will play an important role in the unfolding play: Alcibiades. As he enters he is greeted by Timon, and Apemantus mocks the courtesy with which Timon greets him:

> That there should be small love amongst these sweet knaves,
> And all this courtesy! The strain of man's bred out
> Into baboon and monkey. (I, i, 251)

The fact that he is mocked by Apemantus places Alcibiades in line with all the other "friends" of Timon, and it is not until later in the play, during the trial, that Alcibiades is shown to be any different from the norm. Apemantus' refusal to acknowledge any superior qualities in Alcibiades is recalled later in the play, when the audience sees Alcibiades in company with courtesans. This note of ambiguity concerning Alcibiades' nature is thus continued throughout the play. Even at the very end, when he comes back to clean up the corrupt city of Athens, the audience has, like Apemantus, severe doubts about Alcibiades' freedom

from corruption. When remembering the scene with the courtesans, it is difficult to accept some of his declarations without a certain sense of irony:

> Sound to this coward and lascivious town
> Our terrible approach. (V, iv, 1)

In Act One, Alcibiades has only a few words to say; it is therefore difficult for an audience to form any concrete opinion about him. Visually, however, a production should be able to stress his distance from the other friends of Timon; his military appearance would be particularly useful in this respect. As a soldier, probably in full uniform, he must seem alienated from the rest of the civilian crowd. It is this same military aspect of his character that becomes extreme, if not obsessive, as the play progresses. Therefore, although he does not fit into any distinct definition of good or evil, like the other important characters in the play, he still represents an extremist point of view. It is tempting to think back to Angelo in Measure for Measure; he is another puritan minded disciplinarian, who has hidden corrupt desires, although in his case there is a more overt awareness by the audience of that corruption. However we respond to Alcibiades, he still represents an alternative to the other characters in the play, and is a further complicating force in a play so much concerned with extremes and absolutes.

As Timon exits with Alcibiades, only Apemantus is left on stage. Two lords enter, unidentified in the text but possibly Lucius and Lucullus, and end the first scene in conversation with Apemantus. The dialogue that then takes place acts as a summary to the themes that have

been introduced throughout the scene. As they speak to him, Apemantus reiterates once again the idea that the world is dishonest:

> First Lord: What time o'day is't, Apemantus?
> Apemantus: Time to be honest. (I, i, 256)

Whilst Apemantus is leaving, the first lord indicates how Apemantus, like Timon and Alcibiades, stands outside his circle of society. He too is alone, apart from all those around him, and this adds to the overwhelming sense that isolation is very much a part of the world of Athens:

> He's opposite to humanity. (I, i, 272)

After Apemantus has left the stage, the two lords end the first scene with a final stress on Timon's relentless prodigality; everyone knows that to give a gift to Timon is a certain way to ensure an even greater return:

> No meed but he repays
> Seven-fold above itself: no gift to him
> But breeds the giver a return exceeding
> All use of quittance. (I, i, 279)

In this way they look ahead to Act One, scene two, when gifts arrive for Timon from Lucius and Lucullus. As the lords exit to go to the feast, there are the final words of the second lord (perhaps the only sincere words spoken by any of the flattering lords throughout the play), that declare his hope that Timon will live on as a wealthy man for a long time to come, and so be able to continue providing his "friends" with gifts:

> Long may he live in fortunes.

On this note the scene ends. In a space of under three hundred lines a vast amount of material has been introduced. Apart from Flavius, all

the principal characters have been established, many of the central themes have been announced, and the structure of the play has been firmly layed out. The focus has been drawm away from the suspense of the actual workings of the plot, by the foreshadowing of events, and instead, the attention is on the various processes of conflict. The absolute concepts of idealism, cruel reality, cynicism, pure naivety, unbounded generosity, selfish greed, truth, deception, military prowess, love for man and hatred, have all been introduced; in the scenes that follow, the conflicts between them all begin. As in Sophoclean drama, the speed is breath-taking as the action moves from one point to another without pause. During this rapid movement the contrasting characters, and all the qualities and principles they represent, are continually juxtaposed.

As Act One, scene two opens, there is an immediate change apparent in the dramatic techniques being used. For a while at least, the majority of characters appear together on stage, centred at the table in the feast. Visually, the characters are closely bound together, and the conversations that follow are moulded into the overall sense of unity. On stage, the effect should be the diametric opposite of the first scene, which was frantic and fragmentary, with various characters moving back and forth. Thus, all the philosophical and thematic contrasts are subtly paralleled in the very structure and workings of the play. Again we are reminded of Sophoclean drama in which there is frequently a structural movement that reflects a pattern of the themes within the play. The audience's sensibilities are now enticed into the feast itself by the overwhelming appeal to the senses. Momentarily,

the ominous prognostications of the first scene are set aside, as the bright colours and gay music distract the audience. If this scene is not vibrant, and at least superficially happy, the contrast with the second feast will not be dramatically effective. Thus, this first feast is in contrast to what has gone before and, in a different way, to what will happen later in the play. The festive elements fuse into a unified whole and act as a suitable background for Timon's continuing generosity and general good nature; for a while, all seems well. The only reminder of oncoming doom is Apemantus, but his effect is almost entirely negated by the sheer force of the festivity around him. The audience is aware that a cynic at a party is hardly the most reliable representative of objective truth! Thus, the genius of using the cynic as the speaker of truth, unlike the traditional fool who is at least a sympathetic character, is seen at its best during this scene. Also, it is not until nearly the end of the scene, lines 190-203, that the audience is factually aware that Timon is living on borrowed money. During the early part of the feast it is known that Fortune's wheel will turn, but the extent to which that motion has already begun had not been revealed.

During the conversation between Ventidius and Timon that opens the scene, Timon expounds his philosophy of generosity, when Ventidius offers to repay the debt:

> there's none
> Can truly say he gives, if he receives. (I, ii, 10)

He is, ironically, accidentally condemning those who bring gifts to him later in the scene, as of course Timon will repay the gift with interest.

Therefore, Timon has a double standard: one rule for himself, and one for others. He is, perhaps, just a little too keen to do unselfish good, and there is always a slight uneasy feeling about his excessive generosity. Similarly, a few lines later, Timon condemns the concept of ceremony, although in Act One, scene one, it was Apemantus who condemned Timon for the same fault when greeting Alcibiades:

> Nay, my lords, ceremony was but devised at first
> To set a gloss on faint deeds, hollow welcome,
> Recanting goodness, sorry ere 'tis shown;
> But where there is true friendship, there needs none. (I, ii, 15)

Once more, Timon speaks as though he is wise and knowing, but acts differently; we think back to his apparent wisdom concerning human nature, when looking at the painting in Act One, scene one.

As this scene progresses, Apemantus introduces the dominant theme of the scene that is centred in the concept of friendship. Friendship is itself connected, as embodied in Timon, to the values of idealism and reality, with which this chapter began. Timon has a naively ideal belief in what friendship is, whereas Apemantus continually warns the audience and Timon about false friends. In particular, Apemantus invokes the name of Judas, in order to prove his point[8]:

> the fellow that sits next him, now parts bread with him,
> pledges the breath of him in a divided draught, is the readiest
> man to kill him. 'T'as been proved. (I, ii, 45)

Apemantus' Grace, which follows almost immediately after, verges on an almost existential refusal to rely on any other man, and yet again warns Timon not to trust his "friends":

Immortal gods, I crave no pelf;
I pray for no man but myself
Grant I may never prove so fond,
To trust man on his oath or bond;
Or a harlot for her weeping,
Or a dog that seems a-sleeping,
Or a keeper with my freedom,
Or my friends, if I should need 'em,
Amen. So fall to't:
Rich men sin and I eat root. (I, ii, 71)

This speech bears close scrutiny, as it touches on central problems of the play. In the first two lines, Apemantus is swearing a belief only in himself; he trusts no other man. Similarly, in the third and fourth lines, Apemantus focuses the mistrust on the concept of "oath" and "bond"; these words suggest that he is referring more specifically to financial mistrust. Then, in the mention of the harlot and the dog, he is invoking two other recurrent images of the play. The harlot connects directly to the company kept by Alcibiades, as well as to the general disgust with sex expressed by Timon later in the play. After stressing the necessity for freedom, he then moves on to the specific mention of the theme with which he is concerned, when he says that he would never like to have to trust his friends, "if I should need 'em". Thus, the wheel has turned full circle and he has come back to the point where the Grace began. Then, the subtlety gives way to overt statement, with the final: "Rich men sin", and, as though to foreshadow Timon clutching at roots by the sea later in the play, he ends on the words: "and I eat root".

Timon then talks across to Alcibiades, perhaps as an attempt to change an embarrassing conversation. Again, Alcibiades is allowed only a few words, but this time, in spite of the economy of speech, his

character is substantially revealed. His first momentary appearance in Act One, scene one, established him as the military man amongst civilians; his exchange with Timon in this scene increases the audience's awareness of this military aspect of his character. In fact, no other part of his character is revealed but that which emphasizes his military blood-thirst:

> Timon: Captain Alcibiades, your heart's in the field now.
> Alcibiades: My heart is ever at your service, my lord.
> Timon: You had rather be at a breakfast of enemies than a dinner of friends.
> Alcibiades: So thay were bleeding new, my lord, there's no meat like 'em; I could wish my best friend at such a feast. (I, ii, 72)

His professed loyalty to Timon cannot at this point be treated any more seriously than the other lords' statement of friendship and loyalty. All that is positively known about him in this act, is this obsessional pre-concern with war and conflict. His very reluctance to speak more than a few words, could easily produce on stage the effect of a cold, calculated refusal to expose himself, not unlike the commanding officer on a battlefield. As mentioned at greater length in the previous chapter, the diction and metaphors of Alcibiades' speech connect closely to the patterns of food imagery found in the play as a whole.[9]

In total contrast to Apemantus' beliefs, Timon then announces at length his own attitudes toward friendship. Even a brief extract will illustrate his absolute belief in his friends:

> Why, I
> have often wished myself poorer, that I might come nearer to you. We are born to do benefits; and what better or properer can we call our own than the riches of our friends? O, what a precious comfort 'tis to have so many brothers commanding one another's fortune! (I, ii, 88)

The irony of all this is self-evident by the end of the play, and needs no further comment. However, the pensive tone is not allowed to last long, and is broken by the arrival of "certain ladies". Timon might well sound surprised at the arrival of female characters, for in this play, more than any other of Shakespeare's, there is a peculiar absence of women:

Timon: Ladies? What are their wills?

Apart from those who take part in the masque, and a very brief appearance by Phrynia and Timandra, there are no women at all in the play. This absence is difficult to explain, but perhaps it adds in some way to the sense of isolation that surrounds Timon and other characters in the play; he has no lover, wife nor children. Certainly, the audience's reaction to the disgust with sex expressed later by Timon would be different to that of the same audience watching parallel moments in King Lear. Although there is at times a similar focus on this same theme, Lear's comments condemning the female sex are partly balanced by the presence of a woman like Cordelia. In Timon of Athens there is no norm on which a balanced judgement can be made.

The entrance of these "certain ladies" is a device to increase even more the feelings and atmosphere of festivity, with which the scene began. The masque that then ensues begins by indicating the general attempt of the scene to stimulate and indulge the senses:

> Cupid: Hail to thee, worthy Timon, and to all
> That of his bounties taste! The five best senses
> Acknowledge thee their patron, and come freely
> To gratulate thy plenteous bosom, Th'ear,
> Taste, touch, smell, all pleased from thy table rise;
> They only now come but to feast thine eyes.
> (I, ii, 122)

The back and forth rhythms of contrast and conflict between characters, philosophies and schematic structures, occur again, this time within the one short scene rather than as they did in scene one, which was like a collection of many different scenes. Thus, Apemantus comments mockingly on the masque whilst it is going on, and as soon as he has finished speaking, the scene moves back again to vibrant festivity as the lords begin to dance. In his mocking speech, Apemantus projects ahead to the second part of the play when Timon will reject, like Lear, "civilised" man. Apemantus talks of the stupidity and vainglory of the celebrations, especially when compared with the simple necessities of life. Thus he says:

> Like madness is the glory of this life
> As this pomp shows to a little oil and root. (I, ii, 134)

The "oil and root" represent that little sustenance which is necessary to continue existing. Similarly, Timon clutches at root whilst he is outside the city walls.

At the end of this speech, Apemantus concludes with the line:

> Men shut their doors against the setting sun.

This image of the sun recalls the proverb, "The rising, not the setting, sun is worshipped by most men".[10] The sun is another one of those recurring images in the play that add to its sense of unity. There are various moments in the play when the sun is used to express a particular thought. In Act Four, scene three, the sun is referred to as both a thief, who "robs the vast sea", and a victim of a thief: "the moon's an arrant thief, / And her pale fire she snatches from the sun" (IV, iii, 438). There is a certain sense of pathos in the sun

being robbed of light, particularly when we remember that Apemantus has already suggested some correlation between Timon and the sun: soon after this speech we see that Timon is rapidly becoming a setting rather than a rising sun. In this way the old proverb will come true, as men begin to turn their backs from a sun that is fading. Similarly, the parallel between Timon and the sun is reinforced by other characters' comments. In Act three, scene four, the servants of the various lords are waiting for Timon to pay their masters' debts, and Lucius' servant says:

> Ay, but the days are waxed shorter with him;
> You must consider that a prodigal course
> Is like the sun's, but not, like his, recoverable.
> I fear
> 'Tis deepest winter in Lord Timon's purse; (III, iv, 12)

Therefore, like the setting sun, Timon is fading away at the end of a period of brilliance; but there the analogy ends, as Timon will never recover his strength. The final affinity between Timon and the sun is suggested at the very end of Timon's life. The last words he speaks, before going off to die, signify the final coming together of Timon and the sun, as he cries out to the sun to go out now that he himself is extinguished:

> Sun, hide thy beams, Timon hath done his reign. (V, i, 222)

When Apemantus has finished speaking, the dancing between the lords and ladies begins. Then, the movement of the scene changes from the unified pattern of the banquet, into the fragmentary, episodic manner used earlier. Therefore, Act One as a whole has moved in a circle, and ends as it began, with various lords sending messages to,

or visiting Timon, whilst Timon gives away gifts to the lords. Although they now send gifts, the audience knows from the second servant's earlier comments (I, i, 276), that this is in order to gain greater gifts in return. In one case Timon replies, typically: "Let them be received, not without fair reward."

The new element in the scene is Flavius (although apart from line 157, he is referred to as 'Steward'). Through Flavius, after the celebrations of the feast, the audience finally learns that Timon really has no money at all to give away:

> What will this come to?
> He commands us to provide and give great gifts,
> And all out of an empty coffer;
> Nor will he know his purse, or yield me this,
> To show him what a beggar his heart is,
> Being of no power to make his wishes good.
> His promises fly so beyond his state
> That what he speaks is all in debt, he owes
> For every word. He is so kind that he now
> Pays interest for't; his land's put to their books.
> (I, ii, 195)

The audience is thus told that Timon's land and property is in fact mortgaged; Timon is living on borrowed money and borrowed time. Like the sun at the end of the day, his life must inevitably darken, as he disappears behind the horizon of financial reality. The glimmering light of sunset is no longer enough to sustain the illusion of the festivities that have just passed; as the Fool in King Lear says: "So out went the candle, and we were left darkling." (I, iv, 208)

The feast was the last happy celebration for Timon; from this point on the play never looks back to daylight, and idealism is permanently overshadowed by cruel reality.[11] Ironically, Timon's own words accidentally recognize that oncoming darkness, as he suddenly

calls out, "Lights, more lights!" (I, ii, 237), but his plea is not heard. Timon exits, and Apemantus is left to end the first Act. This final note summarizes Timon's folly throughout the scene, and also looks ahead to the disappointments that Timon will suffer in Act Two:

> O, that men's ears should be
> To counsel deaf, but not to flattery. (I, ii, 250)

Act Two is used in the play primarily in order to move as fast as possible from the situation at the end of the previous scene, when it was known beyond doubt that Timon is doomed, to the events that actually culminate in his fall. It is now known, from Flavius, that Timon is in great debt, but Timon's "friends" have yet to be asked for help. Dramatically, it is now also necessary for the net of debt to begin an inward, closing movement around Timon. The facts about the extent of the debt have been revealed to the audience, and now it only remains for Timon to be convinced of their reality. During this movement toward Timon's finally recognizing the truth about his finances, Shakespeare takes the opportunity to establish Flavius more fully as a character, and to focus closely on Timon in a moment of crisis.

The first scene of Act Two is very short, thirty-five lines, and begins the inward movement of the net around Timon, as the debtors await their dues. What is particularly interesting is that this process is begun, not by one of the lords seen previously at the feast, but by one of the senators. Until this point in the play, Timon and his friends have represented only one part of the ruling powers in Athens. As lords, they are all influential and important, but it is

the senators who hold the real legal and political power. Now, the audience becomes aware that the senators are also contaminated by the corruption so often referred to by Apemantus. The senator in Act Two, scene one, is clearly identified as a usurer who has lent money to Timon, and is thus involved in exploiting Timon's good nature and generosity, as much as are the other lords. Similarly, when Timon is sending off his servants to ask his "friends" for help, he includes the senators amongst the list, although it transpires that Flavius has already discovered their attitudes:

> They answer in a joint and corporate voice
> That now they are at fall, want treasure, cannot
> Do what they would; are sorry -- you are honourable --
> But yet they could have wished -- they know not --
> Something hath been amiss -- a noble nature
> May catch a wrench -- would all were well -- 'tis pity.
> (II, ii, 210)

The "corporate voice" expresses how they are all one of a kind, thus indicating that the senator at the beginning of the Act, is representative of them all. The mock, politely formal language used here by Flavius, is another symbolic example of the "courtesy" disparaged earlier by Apemantus; again, the outward form of something hides a corrupt inner self.

In Act One, scene two, the real focus of interest is in the meeting between Timon and Flavius, which is the climax to the first part of Timon's changing behaviour patterns. It is only after this meeting that the decline begins, from the lover to the hater of man. The brief moments at the beginning of the scene are merely a build-up to this climax, as the various servants clamour around Timon's house, demanding payment for their masters. Before the confrontation

between Timon and Flavius, however, are about seventy-five lines that are given over to the conversations between Apemantus, the servants and a Fool. This is one of the incidents that has been frequently singled out as proof of dual authorship, bad writing or an unfinished text.[12] The conversation between Timon and Flavius that is interrupted by these lines, continues after the interlude almost as though nothing has happened. The style of writing is not as effective or witty as similar scenes in other of Shakespeare's plays, nor does it contain the usual quantity of puns. In spite of all this, however, the interlude does have certain positive effects on the dramatic balance of the scene. The fast movement from one dramatic rhythm to another in this play has already been mentioned; in a similar way, this shift from a near climax to light comedy, and then back again, does affect an audience's responses in a curious way. The overall effect is to produce a momentary dramatic suspense, that is near to making the audience frustrated. A comparable, although in many ways different, moment in a play is in the first meeting between Electra and Orestes in Sophocles' Electra. Electra is looking at what she believes to be the urn containing her brother's ashes, and Orestes is about to reveal his identity to her, so that the revenge plot of the play can begin. Instead of allowing him to declare his identity to her immediately, at a climax of emotion, Sophocles deliberately toys with the audience as he builds toward the apparent climax and then momentarily breaks it, as Orestes suddenly begins to play guessing games with his sister, thus delaying the moment of recognition.[13] In this scene in Timon of Athens, the inopportune, lingering humour achieves a similar end. There is also the presence

of a parallel dramatic irony in the two incidents. In Electra, there is the additional element of the audience knowing that Electra is weeping without cause, as they know that Orestes is not dead. In Timon of Athens, the audience knows already, largely because of the story told at the beginning by the poet, that Flavius is about to tell Timon the truth, and that his subsequent fall will be inevitable. Therefore, in each case, the audience is anticipating the moment of recognition that is being deliberately, momentarily withheld.

It also seems that there is an attempt in this incident to insert yet another complex character contrast: between the Fool and Apemantus. Just as later in the play there is the contrast between the philosophies of the cynic and the misanthrope, so here is the possibility of the contrast and conflict between the cynic's eye view of the world, and the traditional outsider's, the Fool's, view of the world. The attempt is for some reason left incomplete, however, and the Fool disappears from the remainder of the play.

The one speech of the Fool that is worth lingering on for a moment, is the one from line 113 to 119. In this speech, the Fool adds to the play another condemnation of the corrupt elements of Athenian society. Perhaps the extra voice of a character, traditionally more reliable than a cynic, is a desirable addition to the voices that condemn Athens. The speech centres on the idea of "Whoremasters", and prostitution, that cuts across the entire spectrum of Athenian society. In a sense, this theme is complementary to the idea of artists who prostitute their art, and the concept of usury that effects Senators as well as the public at large:

Servant: What is a whoremaster, fool?
Fool: A fool in good clothes, and something like thee. 'Tis a spirit. Sometime 't appears like a lord, sometime like a lawyer, sometime like a philosopher, with two stones moe than 's artificial one. He is very often like a knight; and generally, in all shapes that man goes up and down in, from fourscore to thirteen, this spirit walks in. (II, ii, 112)

When the Fool and the others have exited, the stage is then left clear for the confrontation between Timon and Flavius. In the course of this meeting, Flavius finally convinces Timon of the seriousness of the financial situation. Before Timon admits the truth, however, there is a considerable period of time in which he refuses to acknowledge the facts. Timon opens the discussion by accusing Flavius of having hidden the truth from him:

> You make me marvel wherefore ere this time
> Had you not fully laid my state before me. (II, ii, 129)

From Flavius, however, we learn that Timon had previously refused to listen when the truth was offered to him:

> At many times I brought in my accounts,
> Laid them before you; you would throw them off,
> And say you found them in mine honesty. (II, ii, 139)

Thus, the audience sees that time has been running out for a long while, and that the play has in fact begun after the downward movement from Fortune's Hill. Timon has perversely ignored the warning signs, and even now, after hearing about his debts, he continues in his own illusionary world and replies: "Let all my land be sold." Again, the audience is informed by Flavius that it has all been mortgaged long ago. The end of the first stage of recognition finally occurs as Timon admits the truth in what Flavius says: "You tell me true." The

full process of recognition is, however, deliberately split into two stages, so as to delay again the climax. Thus, although Timon admits that he really is in great debt, he does not yet recognize the falseness of his "friends". Instinctively, Flavius knows that Timon is only part way to seeing the truth; it is for this reason that Flavius continues the long moral sermon against Timon, even after Timon has recognized the truth about the debts. Flavius makes two speeches condemning Timon's past prodigality, as well as the "friends" who have drained Timon's wealth. Flavius is deliberately excessive in the way he argues his case, as he knows how difficult it is to convince Timon of anything:

> Heavens, have I said, the bounty of
> this lord!
> How many prodigal bits have slaves and peasants
> This night englutted! Who is not Timon's?
> What heart, head, sword, force, means, but is Lord Timon's?
> Great Timon, noble, worthy, royal Timon!
> Ah, when the means are gone that buy this praise,
> The breath is gone whereof this praise is made.
> Feast-won, fast-lost; one cloud of winter showers,
> These flies are couched. (II, ii, 170)

Yet, even after all this, Timon reasserts his belief in his "friends", and in the same way that he has always closed his eyes to the truth spoken by Flavius, he now stops listening to what is being said:

> Come, sermon me no further. . . .
> Canst thou the conscience lack
> To think I shall, lack friends? (II, ii, 178)

Therefore, Timon delays once again the full realization that his light has, already, fatally begun to fade.

The Act then ends with Timon dispatching servants to the various lords. When Timon is told by Flavius that the senators have

already refused help, Timon merely assumes that they are different to all his other friends, and he blames their meanness on their old age. Timon then reaffirms his belief in another of his "friends", Ventidius, the first person helped by Timon at the beginning of the play; and once again, a circle has been turned. By the end of Act Two, the days of lightness and festivity are gone forever, and it only now remains for the second part of the realization process to take place. Then come the last two acts of Timon's misanthropy, when only darkness is left.

Act Three is the transitional stage between the two violent extremes of the first and last sections of the play. This Act illustrates all that has been warned by Apemantus and Flavius, as Timon is rapidly deserted by his "friends". This Act also attempts to bring together in some way the sub-plot, concerning Alcibiades, and the main plot, in the trial scene.

The Act begins with three short scenes that illustrate three lords being asked for money to help Timon, and in each case refusing. The structure of these scenes, with one brief interview following straight after another, is strongly parallel to Act One when the various suitors arrived. In both Acts, the episodic qualities of contrast rather than continuity are immediately apparent. In each case, the lord refuses to give the money, but the technique with which each dismisses the servant is different. The three different forms of dishonesty and hypocrisy are satirically compared.

In the first scene, Timon's servant, Flaminius, has been sent to Lucullus. Lucullus assumes that, as always, Timon is sending him

another gift:

> One of Lord Timon's men? a gift, I warrant. Why, this hits right; I dreamt of a silver basin and ewer to-night. (III, i, 5)

As the conversations between them begin, Lucullus realizes why Flaminius has really come and, without hesitation, says that it all has nothing to do with him as he has already warned Timon of the dangers of generosity:

> Many a time and often I ha' dined with him, and told him on't, and come again to supper to him of purpose to have him spend less. (II, i, 21)

There is great irony in the fact that he claims having dined with Timon in order to warn him about entertaining too many people! Then comes the moment when Lucullus must give a message to Flavius for delivery to Timon. Surreptitiously, Lucullus draws the servant toward him and attempts bribery, in order to silence him:

> Here's three solidares for thee. Good boy,
> Wink at me, and say thou saw'st me not. (III, i, 43)

Flaminius refuses the bribe and throws it back at the corrupt lord, thus establishing himself as one of the few honest men in the play. The loyalty of the poor servant is therefore contrasted directly with the treachery of the rich lord; once again the focus is on an absolute contrast. Flaminius ends the scene cursing Lucullus and echoing earlier thoughts of Flavius and Apemantus:

> Let molten coin be thy damnation
> Thou disease of a friend, and not himself!
> Has friendship such a faint and milky heart,
> It turns in less than two nights? (III, i, 52)

The second scene is the meeting between Timon's servant, Servilius, and the lord Lucius. Unlike the first scene that began

immediately with the confrontation, this scene has a brief introduction, in the conversations between Lucius and the three strangers. This short introduction, not unlike the dialogues in Greek tragedy between an actor and the chorus, has the effect of heightening Lucius' blatant hypocrisy as he declares before the audience his disgust with Lucullus, who refused to help Timon:

> What a strange case was that! now, before the gods, I am ashamed on't. Denied that honourable man! there was very little honour show'd in't. For my own part, I must needs confess, I have received some small kindness from him, as money, plate, jewels, and such-like trifles, nothing comparing to his; yet, had he mistook him and sent to me, I should ne'er have denied his occasion so many talents. (III, ii, 17)

This categorical statement of professed good-will toward Timon adds to the intense irony, when moments later Lucius is in fact asked for money. With false apologies he immediately claims not to have enough money to be able to help. The ingratiating, cruel hypocrisy is then once more emphasized as the chorus of the three strangers comment cynically on Lucius' actions and words. It is particularly interesting that it is strangers who make the biting observations. They are in their honesty linked closely to Timon's servants. It seems as though it is only men outside the ruling circles of Athens who have the capacity for honest attitudes. The only other loyal men, apart from the strangers, servants and Flavius, who do not belong to the ruling classes, are Apemantus and Alcibiades; as has been demonstrated earlier in this chapter, they too are very much outsiders in their own society. The first stranger ends the scene with a final bitter comment on Athenian society, as he declares:

> policy sits above conscience. (III, ii, 88)

Therefore, both lords have refused aid to Timon, but each in a different way. The dishonesty inherent in the manner of refusal is subtly different: Lucullus tries to bribe the servant, whereas Lucius evasively lies. In the third scene, there is yet another way of refusing aid to a friend. This scene is very brief, and comes directly to the point, without pause and without comment from observers. Sempronius invents the excuse that his pride is hurt, because Timon asked other lords for help before himself. Once Timon has been denied thrice, like Christ, Sempronius will not be the one dishonoured by helping him:

> Who bates mine honour shall not know
> my coin. (III, iii, 25)

His falsely indignant dishonesty is thus different from that of the other two lords. The servant then ends the scene condemning, in a similar way to the strangers, the politic friendship that sits above conscience. Once again, a servant is honest and a lord is corrupt. The play on words in the last line of the servant's speech leads straight into the situation at the beginning of scene four:

> Who cannot keep his wealth must keep his
> house. (III, iii, 43)

As scene four opens, Timon is being literally kept in his house by his servants, whilst the creditor's servants gather impatiently outside. As Timon himself says a few moments into the scene:

> must my house
> Be my retentive enemy, my gaol? (III, iv, 82)

As the numerous servants collect around Timon's house, the audience is aware that there is another parallel scene in action. The

stage patterns are similar to those at the beginning of Act Two, scene two, when servants were also waiting outside the house for payment. Then, the problem was delayed by Timon sending off for help from his "friends". Now, however, there is nothing to stand between Timon and the reality of the debts. The servants emphasize the cruel hypocrisy of their masters who in fact own the same goods for which they now claim payment. Flavius and Timon's other servants again try to protect their master from the lords' servants, and as they argue about whether or not Timon is really sick, he suddenly enters. In a rage, Timon thinks back to the feast, when all the lords were pleased to accept his generosity:

> The place which I have feasted, does it now,
> Like all mankind, show me an iron heart.

In the words, "Like all mankind", the audience hears the first advance warning of the misanthropy that has now taken hold of all Timon's thoughts. As the various servants demand their money, Timon screams at them in words that seem to them to be the meaningless outpourings of a mad-man. In fact, there is a strangely logical connection from the feast to this moment as Timon is now offering them his body, just as Apemantus said he was doing unknowingly at the feast:

> Cut my heart in sums. (II, iv, 93)
> Tell out my blood. (III, iv, 95)
> Tear me, take me, and the gods fall upon you.
> (III, iv, 100)

Timon has at last recognized the truth of Apemantus' former words at the feast:

> What a number of men eats Timon, and he sees 'em not! It grieves me to see so many dip their meat in one man's blood. (I, ii, 38)

At the end of this tirade against the creditors, the servants exit, declaring Timon to be mad. When they have gone, the food image stays in Timon's thoughts as he commands Flavius to prepare for another feast:

> Go, bid all my friends again,
> Lucius, Lucullus, and Sempronius -- all
> I'll once more feast the rascals. (III, iv, 113)

With this command, which looks ahead to another parallel scene in the second feast, the scene ends.

Scene five is a complete shift away from the previous scenes of the Act. Suddenly, the audience is transported to the scene of a mysterious trial; it transpires that someone is being tried for murder and that Alcibiades is defending him. Who that person is we are never told. The fact that no name is mentioned suggests once again that Shakespeare is more interested in the effect of the scene as a whole, and the insight it gives to the audience concerning Alcibiades and the senators, than the actual factual details of plot. Coming directly before the second feast, and after the confrontation between Timon and the servants, the scene is clearly positioned to act as some kind of contrast to what is happening to Timon. Alcibiades and Timon are both being observed at a moment of crisis; and each reacts in a very different manner. It is also at this point in the play that they both move outside the city walls as an expression of their opposition to the corruption in Athens; it is therefore a transitional point in both their lives.

Although the logical plot connections between the two men are

tenuous, thematically, there are these various parallels that are not really so dissimilar to the parallels between the two plots in King Lear. In this other play, the plots are more coherently linked, but the concept of parallel and contrast between two old men betrayed by their children, is not so distant from the two men in conflict with corruption in Timon of Athens.

Alcibiades pleads eloquently for his friend's life. He begins the defence by appealing to the compassion of the senators, as he tells them that justice without pity belongs only to tyrants:

> For pity is the virtue of the law
> And none but tyrants use it cruelly. (III, v, 7)

In this way, from the very beginning of the defence, Alcibiades is determined to make the trial as personal as possible. From this moment on the audience sees the scene as a trial of Alcibiades, the senators and the unknown defendant. Alcibiades has deliberately stated that only tyrants would condemn the man, thus implying a strong personal condemnation of the senators if they find his friend guilty. Alcibiades then moves on quickly to the central defence argument that the man who kills in anger does not recognize the legal consequences of what he does. He momentarily leaves this point as he goes on to give a glowing character reference to his friend, stressing how honourable and brave he is. Then, Alcibiades subtly brings the two ideas together, as he claims that there is a nobility in the passion of such a man that justifies and extenuates the murder he has committed. The argument rests solely on the almost fanatical belief in honour, that is so close to Alcibiades' heart; in this obsessional belief, Alcibiades is

miscalculating the judges to whom he is pleading, as he assumes that all will believe in those same values. He then slightly re-focuses his argument as he implies that the deed was deliberate and justified, rather than due to dangerous, uncontrolled passion. Therefore, he says, there is a difference between that crime and a crime of mere passion; his friend committed murder on a point of honour. This stress on honour, so typical of the military mind, is emphasized at greater length in his second speech. This closely controlled oration, that moves fluently through the three stages of argument, demonstrates clearly Alcibiades' logical mind in action, as well as his calculating military mind.

The first senator answers in a direct, simple manner. The senator in fact only makes one point; he says that the greatest valour exists in ignoring insults or making light of them, rather than seeking bloody revenge, thus dismissing the defence plea of honourable actions:

> He's truly valiant that can wisely suffer
> The worst that man can breathe. (III, v, 31)

Similarly, the second senator merely echoes this same thought, as he prevents Alcibiades' attempted interruption saying:

> You cannot make gross sins look clear,
> To revenge is no valour, but to bear. (III, v, 31)

Then, the military aspect of Alcibiades' character merges fully with his role as orator, as he offers a militaristic analogy to counter the senator's argument. He clearly identifies himself as a soldier before all else, as his second defence speech begins:

> My lords, then, under favour, pardon me,
> If I speak like a captain. (III, v, 41)

As his argument develops, the controlled, formal and polite tone of his first speech gives way to a bitter, mocking tone that personalizes the conflict even more. Alcibiades argues that the passive refusal to fight, as advocated now by the senators, logically contradicts the idea of soldiers fighting on behalf of the state, and consequently, the senators. He ironically suggests that the women who stay at home must be braver and more honourable than the soldiers who go off to war, at least according to the senators' definition of courage and honour:

> Why then, women are more valiant
> That stay at home, if bearing carry it. (III, v, 38)

In the pun on "bear" and "bearing", he is viciously perverting the meaning intended by the second senator. This rhetorical irony rapidly alienates him even further from the senators' sympathies, as Alcibiades becomes more bitter in his arguments against them. Therefore, in spite of the brilliance of the case he makes, when contrasted to the arrogant simplicity of the senators' speeches, Alcibiades fails to do any good for his friend. He ends his speech by saying that thoughtless murder committed in cold blood should be condemned, but noble murder that defends life or honour should be forgiven. Similarly, he says that anger is only a natural part of man, thus implying mocking criticism of the cold, dispassionate senators.

This change from polite rhetoric to a bitter personal attack, angers the senators, and their replies become even more blunt and inflexible:

> You breathe in vain. (III, v, 60)

Therefore, as the scene progresses the audience becomes more and more

aware that the trial is just another false display of "courtesy", and in fact is another outward show of niceties, when the inner truth is corrupt: the senators have already decided before the trial has begun that the defendant is a threat to the state, and therefore guilty. Then, Alcibiades pleads that the friend's service to the state as a soldier should be taken into account. But as he states this, he also implies another cynical comment, as he uses the word "briber":

> In vain, his service done
> At Lacedaemon and Byzantium
> Were a sufficient briber for his life. (III, v, 63)

This choice of language is connected in Alcibiades' mind to the general corruption of the senators who live by usury; he comes back to this theme at the end of the scene. Thus, here he is suggesting that bribery is the only language that the senators will understand.

The second senator replies that the defendant is a dangerous man, unacceptable to the state. The senator accidentally admits the real motive for disposing of the defendant; he says:

> He has been known to commit outrages
> And cherish factions. (III, v, 73)

The word "factions" is the key to his meaning, as it reflects the senators fear of any possible challenge to the authority of their law. Alcibiades already suggested at the beginning of the scene that only tyrants refuse mercy, and now we see that the senators fear, as do any tyrannical rulers, the possibility of dissension.

The control hitherto attempted by Alcibiades then gives way completely to illogical emotionalism, and blatant mockery. He unwisely stresses the old age of the senators, and their desires for safety and

comfort; effectively, Alcibiades is linking them with the women who stay at home whilst the soldiers go to war:

> And for I know your reverend ages love
> Security. (III, v, 81)

Alcibiades only succeeds in aggravating the senators, until it culminates in his banishment. The scene then ends with a tirade against the corruption and the usury in the state, thus linking back to the earlier similar suggestions inherent in the term "bribery":

> banish usury,
> That makes the senate ugly. (III, v, 101)
>
> Is this the balsam that the usuring senate
> Pours into captains' wounds? (III, v, 112)

In the last speech of the scene, Alcibiades focuses the audience's attention on another contrast: that between the senate's corrupt usury and Alcibiades' military purity and honour. Throughout this scene Alcibiades is shown as the soldier before all else, in all his actions and thoughts. He is in continual, overt opposition to all that the senators represent, and he condemns them as tyrants. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, however, he is not as pure or morally perfect as his speeches would imply. Similarly, there is an ambiguous tone to his last words in this scene, when he says:

> Soldiers should brook as little wrongs as gods.
> (III, v, 119)

There are certain ominous implications at work in this phrase, as it suggests some distinct similarity between a soldier and a god. If a soldier has the right to judge between right and wrong, like a god, then Alcibiades must see himself as possessing the absolute right to make moral judgements. In fact, Alcibiades has corrupt, tyrannical

tendencies as much as the senators whom he now condemns. He, like the senators, although without the legal justification that they have, believes in his own right to make and administer law; he takes over the city of Athens at the end of the play in order to establish that right. The potential danger of a military tyrant, who also hypocritically consorts with courtesans, and who unlike the aged senators has the physical means to sustain that tyranny, is some ways more undesirable than the system he replaces.

Therefore, although the defendant, who is theoretically the central object of discussion in the trial, is never identified, there is little or no detrimental effect on the play. The interest is not on that unknown man, but on the conflict between Alcibiades and the senators. The trial is merely an opportunity to concentrate closely on characters and principals in opposition. The conflict is heightened by the dramatic circumstances of the formal setting; a trial is literally a perfect situation for the battle between words and thoughts. At the end of it all, the audience has, finally, a clear knowledge of Alcibiades' character, and a fuller insight into the way the senators function as rulers of the state. Above all, the audience becomes aware of the intense complexity of Alcibiades' character that is some ways so commendably loyal, brave and honest, and in other ways potentially tyrannical and corrupt. The audience senses the danger in his excessive military pre-occupations, that were already partially suggested in his brief earlier appearances. At the end of the trial, Alcibiades leaves the city and goes off to raise an army against Athens. Therefore, the main purpose of this scene is a structural one: to stand parallel to

and in contrast with the moments when Timon too rejects and leaves Athens. Immediately following his departure is scene six, that deals with Timon's last moments in Athens.

This scene is an obvious parallel to the first feast in Act One. The stage setting would be almost identical to the earlier scene, perhaps with a few symbolic colour changes or different tones of music, although this time the audience will be anticipating a climax of some kind. Therefore, a tension is evident from the very beginning, and this creates a distinct form of dramatic irony as the various lords remain temporarily unaware of the true situation. This is also the final stage of Timon's alienation; first he learnt the truth about his finances, then he discovered the treachery of his "friends", now it only remains for him to disclose that new insight to all those around him. After this, the movement away from the city and his old life is complete.

As the scene opens, the various lords presumably Lucius, Lucullus, Sempronius, etc., gather to go to Timon's new feast. Just before Timon's arrival they hypocritically express their regrets for not having helped him with money. These moments move very quickly, as by now the audience has heard it all before, and the action moves on to Timon's entrance. Timon greets them all in a friendly manner:

> With all my heart, gentlemen, both, and how fare you?
> (III, vi, 26)

There is accidental irony in the answer of the second lord as he replies:

> The swallow follows not summer more willingly than we
> your lordship.

Timon immediately recognizes the nature metaphor that has previously

applied to himself in connection with the fading sun and the idea that "'Tis deepest winter in lord Timon's purse"; accordingly he replies to himself:

> Nor more willing leaves winter; such summer birds are men.
> (III, vi, 38)

This bitter irony is kept to himself for a while, as Timon goes on graciously to dismiss the lords' concern with their refusal of aid to Timon in the earlier scenes. Before the prayer begins that will lead to the climax of the scene, there is a momentary cross reference to the sub-plot, when one lord mentions the news of Alcibiades' banishment. Again, there is a passing attempt, although dramatically rather crude, to emphasize the affinities, parallels and contrasts between this and the previous scene. Timon then sits all his guests at the table and begins a prayer to the gods. His prayer concentrates on the subject of ungrateful men who care nothing for those who have given them gifts. The end of the prayer is the final lead into total, overt misanthropy, as Timon disassociates himself from all that mankind represents; he casts off all his friends and expresses his new attitude in negative terminology, as he discards them all, crying that now they are "nothing". The word "nothing" denies all possibilities of positive existence that might detract from a total submission to misanthropy.

This speech leads to the dramatic climax of the scene as Timon violently insults the lords and flings stones and water at them. The carefully controlled style and words of the prayer break up into bitter, chaotic expressions of pure hatred. At the very end, verging on a nihilistic dismissal of all that he has hitherto known, Timon cries out

for the destruction of Athens and all mankind. The scene then ends with a brief discussion amongst the lords, which shows that they are still pre-occupied with their material possessions; they look desperately for their goods lost at the feast. Once again, the audience sees from this final discussion that the two extremes of Timon's new attitude, and their own material outlook, are totally in opposition. This return to the lords at the end of a scene that has just violently attacked materialism, is a brilliant demonstration of the impossibility of synthesis or compromise in the city of Athens.

By the end of Act Three, all the opposing elements of the play have been pushed to the ultimate extreme, and the two central characters, Timon and Alcibiades, have now been completely spiritually and physically isolated from Athens. Act Four is by its very position in the play inevitably anti-climatic; the extremes of conflict and passion have been reached just before it begins. The two central confrontations, between Timon and the lords, and between Alcibiades and the senators, have already reached the highest possible point of dramatic tension; any further attempt to continue a comparable state of tension would be doomed to failure. As a skilled dramatist, Shakespeare knows that there must now be some shift in the tone and focus of the next act if the interest of the audience is to be sustained. As he could not have further dramatic conflict, Shakespeare decided to move on to intellectual and ethical conflicts. Whilst concentrating on this principle, he has in addition two other problems to solve. Firstly, he has to begin bringing the two plots closer together, and secondly, he must at all costs retain the audience's interest in Timon.

These three concepts are at the heart of the workings of Act Four. The Act opens with Timon standing outside the city walls verbally attacking all that Athens stands for, and also expressing his own misanthropic vision of life. His speech centres on the question of sexual and financial corruption in Athens. He produces various examples of both of these, and then goes on to the point that is in many ways the most important example of a microcosm of some of the vital concerns of the play:

> piety and fear,
> Religion to the gods, peace, justice, truth,
> Domestic awe, night-rest, and neighbourhood,
> Instruction, manners, mysteries and trades,
> Degrees, observances, customs and laws,
> Decline to your confounding contraries,
> And yet confusion live. (IV, i, 15)

In saying this, Timon touches on the key point of the conflict between opposites, the theme with which the analysis in this chapter began. Timon lists all the traditionally good qualities of "piety", "peace", "justice", "truth", etc., and then stresses the opposing forces in Athens that they have come into conflict with. The result is universal chaos, as the "confounding contraries" battle and destroy one another. In Athens there is no dialectical process leading to final synthesis and progress, only disharmony and deadly disorder. This begins to explain the main problem that Shakespeare faces in the play, and especially in this Act. As mentioned briefly earlier, one of the three problems in this Act is to sustain audience interest in Timon; however, there is no possibility of growth in character through learning, as he is to remain a misanthrope. In King Lear, the alienation and conflict begins in the

earlier parts of the play, but in the latter parts there is a change in Lear as he begins to learn more about the workings of the universe. Lear begins his alienation, like Timon, with a strong sense of personal, introspective hatred, but finishes before his death with a more generalized externalized concept of what man is. Thus he is able to pity other suffering men whom he realizes to be as badly off as himself. This new insight and less selfish vision of life comes about as a direct result of his suffering, and the conflict with his evil daughters. From the battle between the thesis and antithesis a new advanced point is finally reached. In Timon of Athens, the problem is more complex, as Timon cannot change or develop, as the very nature of the play and its subject matter, misanthropy, defies the concept of a progressive movement. In not allowing this forward movement, the play runs the risk of stagnation. Ultimately, Shakespeare does not perhaps fully succeed in conquering the problem, and Act Four and the early part of Act Five do seem in some ways to stand still. However, the attempt to overcome the problem is in many ways successful, in the concentration in this Act on the philosophical and ethical conflicts which produce the chaos in which the last two Acts take place. These conflicts thus become the central interest of the Act; as Milton's God in Paradise Lost creates the Earth from chaos, so in Timon of Athens Shakespeare uses those elements of disorder as the substance of the heart of the play.

At the end of the first scene of the Act, Timon returns to statements of his hatred, and again ends as though he is praying to some powerful anonymous god:

> And grant, as Timon grows, his hate may grow
> To the whole race of mankind high and low.
> Amen. (Iv, i, 39)

Act Four, scene two is very short and shows Flavius sharing his last pieces of money with Timon's other loyal servants, before they all part. His soliloquy at the end of the scene draws together various ideas that combined form a summary of what has happened to Timon in the play. As he is focusing on the subject of false friends and the superficial trappings of wealth, he draws on the image of painting, in a similar way to the manner in which Timon spoke of the painting in Act One:

> Who would be so mocked with glory, or to live
> But in a dream of friendship,
> To have his pomp and all what state compounds
> But only painted, like his varnished friends?
> (IV, ii, 36)

The scene then ends with Flavius going off to serve his master.

Next follows the final scene of the Act, which the other two scenes have been preparing for. It is in this scene that the important meetings between Timon and Alcibiades and Timon and Apemantus take place. The scene begins with Timon rejecting, once again, all of mankind as well as himself. He disdains, like Lear, all that civilized society can offer; instead, he wants only that which is vital for survival:

> Earth yield me roots. (IV, iii, 24)

Then, as he digs for roots, he discovers gold. As he grasps the gold he identifies it as the force that dominates all aspects of life in Athens:

> thus much of this will make
> Black white, foul fair, wrong right,
> Base noble, old young, coward valiant. (IV, iii, 28)

His words echo again the conflicting opposites in the universe that cause so much unrest. The "foul fair" image is similar to the expression of a troubled universe in Macbeth, where "fair is foul" and "foul is fair". At the end of the speech enters Alcibiades, accompanied by Phrynia and Timandra.

During the dialogue that follows, Timon makes certain connections that link back to earlier themes of the play. He compares the destructive disease of a whore to the destructive potential of a soldier, and finds the former evil greater:

> This fell whore of thine
> Hath in her more destruction than thy sword. (IV, iii, 61)

In this way, the military concerns are momentarily merged with the sex-disgust theme, just as Alcibiades suddenly appears on stage with two courtesans, thus casting a shadow over Alcibiades' role in the play, and prepares the audience for an ambiguous presentation of his character at the end of the play. A few lines later, Timon mentions again the sun metaphor, and in fact uses the same analogy as that discussed earlier in this chapter:

> Alcibiades: How came the noble Timon to this change?
> Timon: As the moon does, by wanting light to give.
> But then renew I could not like the moon;
> There were no suns to borrow of. (IV, iii, 67)

Timon also reiterates again the friendship theme, when he says to Alcibiades: "Promise me friendship, but perform none." Therefore, this scene begins by drawing together various loose ends of themes and concerns in a closely controlled manner. It then continues with Timon recognizing Alcibiades' hatred for Athens, which leads Timon to offer

him gold, in order to help him destroy Athens. In his speech, lines 108-20, Timon continues to merge different themes, as he talks of the corruption of usury and sexual corruption at the same time:

> Pity not honoured age for his white beard;
> He is an usurer. Strike me the counterfeit matron:
> It is her habit only that is honest,
> Herself's a bawd. (IV, iii, 112)

Simultaneously, he links it all back to the concept of illusion and reality, echoing the painting symbol again, as he claims the outer garments of a nun to be the false trappings of respectability that hide a corrupt inner self.

Phrynia and Timandra also request gold from Timon, and he gives it to them bidding them too to go off and destroy men: with their sexual diseases, rather than physical arms:

> Plague all,
> That your activity may defeat and quell
> The source of all erection. There's more gold. (IV, iii, 164)

Thus, Timon wants only to buy destruction with his gold, whether it be by military or sexually diseased means. Alcibiades exits and goes off to raise an army against Athens. Just before Apemantus enters, Timon makes a speech in which he justifies and explains his hatred of sex as an integral part of his philosophy of misanthropy. He talks about the Earth as the mother who has brought forth detestable mankind: thus, conception is responsible for the presence of the object of his hatred. Then the second part of the scene begins as Apemantus, the cynic, enters to confront Timon, the misanthrope.

It emerges from their dialogue that each hates what the other stands for. In spite of his hatred of mankind that has strong

similarities to Apemantus' feelings, Timon detests the cynic before all else. Similarly, Apemantus cannot fully understand Timon's state of mind, and considers it absurd. Apemantus begins the conversation by indicating the similarities, rather than the differences between the actions and words of the two men:

> men report
> Thou dost affect my manners, and dost use them.
> (IV, iii, 200)

He then goes on to express surprise at the state that he finds Timon in. As a true cynic he has a low opinion of man, but simultaneously, his philosophy also allows him to exploit those men in order to survive; if the lords are treacherous then the cynical reaction is to be equally ruthless and dishonest:

> Shame not these woods
> By putting on the cunning of a carper
> Be thou a flatterer now, and seek to thrive
> By that which has undone thee; hinge thy knee
> And let his very breath whom thou'lt observe
> Blow off thy cap; praise his most viscious strain
> And call it excellent. (IV, iii, 209)

In fact, Timon despises this particular attitude to life, as much as he does that of the lords. Timon indicates how much he loathes the negative nature of cynicism that can only mock and emulate all that is bad:

> Were I like thee, I'ld throw away myself.
> (IV, iii, 220)

From these beginnings to the dialogue the audience begins to realize the essential differences between the misanthrope who hates mankind and wants to remain apart from it, and the cynic who hates mankind but is willing to feed upon it. The conversation continues with Apemantus

scorning the barren, wild nature that Timon has given himself up to. He ends the speech, lines 240-49, by saying that Timon should desire death, as he has nothing but misery in his life. Timon throws the taunt back at him, saying that one who is even more miserable has no right to advise like that. Timon then comes to what he sees to be the central difference between Apemantus and himself. Timon stresses the difference between the hardened cynic who has never known any better life, and himself who once had the world at his feet:

> But myself,
> Who had the world as my confectionary,
> The mouths, the tongues, the eyes and hearts of men
> At duty. (IV, iii, 260)

Significantly, Timon reverts again to the image of summer and winter, as he describes what has now become of the life:

> That numberless upon me stuck, as leaves
> Do on the oak, have with one Winter's brush
> Fell from their boughs, and left me open, bare
> For every storm that blows. (IV, iii, 261)

In these ways, the scene continually juxtaposes opposites, and concentrates on them during the subsequent process of conflict. The philosophical contrasts now replace the character contrasts of the earlier scenes. The conflict between the two concepts of hatred, cynicism and misanthropy, is a part of the overall pattern of the opposition of different extremes. In a parallel movement, Apemantus recognizes that Timon himself in the embodiment of the clash between polarities; he too has moved from one absolute to another, just as the play is divided into separate parts that refuse to allow a middle or a compromise:

> The middle of humanity thou never knewest, but
> the extremity of both ends. (IV, iii, 303)

Toward the end of their dialogue, after having discussed the animal cruelty of the world, the sophisticated argument breaks down into a blatant expression of hatred. The dialectical progression is once more robbed of a final synthesis, and the result is verbal and emotional chaos. As in all previous conflicts, nothing has been solved:

> Timon: When there is nothing living but thee, thou
> shalt be welcome. I had rather be beggar's dog
> than Apemantus.
> Apemantus: Thou art the cap of all fools alive.
> Timon: Would thou wert clean enough to spit upon!
> Apemantus: A plague on thee! thou art too bad to curse.

After Apemantus has exited, there is a quick shift of dramatic rhythm in the scene as three bandits enter, and again in the play we have the presence of characters who are alienated or outlawed from Athenian society. In this brief interlude Timon offers them gold, with the same intentions with which he offered it to Alcibiades and the courtesans, and tells them to go off to Athens to steal and destroy as much as they can. The three bandits, like the three strangers, reveal the sheer scope of the play, that includes men of all ranks and classes. As they exit, there is the final irony of the third bandit's speech, that shows how the passion and force of Timon's words almost produce the exactly opposite effect to that which is required:

> Has almost charmed me from my
> Profession by persuading me to it. (IV, iii, 452)

When they have gone, the audience knows that Timon has reached the ultimate depths of misanthropy, in which all moral and ethical values have been extinguished: his ambition is now only to cause destruction,

chaos and death.

The scene ends with a final interview that again contrasts sharply with those that have gone before. Flavius enters and attempts to convince Timon of his, Flavius', own honesty and loyalty. As he comes in the wake of Alcibiades and the bandits, his intentions seem difficult if not impossible to achieve. The audience knows that this must be positively the last attempt to make Timon aware of anything outside his total darkness and despair; Flavius is the only man who stands any chance of moving Timon. The sheer simplicity, and openly compassionate honesty of Flavius does, for a very brief moment, affect Timon. There is a faint glimmer of light as Timon eventually, begrudgingly says:

> Forgive my general and exeptless rashness,
> You perpetual-sober gods! I do proclaim
> One honest man. (IV, iii, 498)

That one gentle, momentary pause stands out vividly against the vast mass of darkness and universal hatred. Almost as soon as it glows, it flickers eternally out, and Timon will accept this new revelation only as the single exception to the rule; Timon will not recognize the possibility that one good man could represent many more. Thus, he ends that last speech:

> One honest man -- mistake me not, but one. (IV, iii, 500)

This momentary pause is then swallowed up into the final tirade against man, at the end of the Act. Timon has to cast off this one remaining memory of goodness, before the final meeting with the poet, painter and the senators, that will bring the circle around to where it began in Act One:

> If thou hat'st curses
> Stay not; fly, whilst thou art blest and free;
> Ne'er see thou man, and let me ne'er see thee. (IV, iii, 538)

The wheel has again turned full circle, and the last Act, like the first, begins with the poet and painter. This time, however, Timon sees and hears them as they discuss their plans and deceptions. The poet and painter decide that Timon has been pretending to be poor in order to test his "friends", therefore, they will seek him out and profess loyalty to him. Timon listens as the poet boasts how his false poetry will mock Timon by telling a disguised story concerning Timon's stupidity:

> It must be a personality of himself: a satire against the softness of prosperity, with a discovery of the infinite flatteries that follow youth and opulency. (V, i, 31)

Ironically, the painter uses the same recurrent imagery of light and darkness, as he urges the poet to hurry on to Timon, not realizing that the time has already progressed from day into night, and that the sun has already set:

> When the day serves, before black-cornered night,
> Find what thou want'st by free and offered light. (V, i, 42)

As Timon greets them as "honest men", the poet praises Timon at great length. As the two visitors continue to express their loyalty toward him, Timon continually stresses the word "honest", in much the same way as Anthony repeats the word "honourable", when he speaks of Brutus in Julius Caesar. The tone of the conversation between the three men is heavily ironical, as Timon plays verbal games as he feigns innocence. Timon then makes them agree to go and kill any dissembling villains, in return for which he will give them gold; once they have agreed to

the bargain, Timon lets them know that of course he is referring to them:

> Timon: Look you, I love you well: I'll give you gold.
> Rid me of these villains from your companies.
> Hang them or stab them, drown them in a draught,
> Confound them by some course and come to me,
> I'll give you gold enough. (V, i, 98)

The irony is intensified once again by the audience knowing what Timon really means. Finally, Timon drives them away and the interlude ends. Then, the episodic manner of the first Act repeats itself as other characters enter to visit Timon at his cave, instead of his wealthy home. The patterns of the first Act are also paralleled in the way that each suitor has the same ends, but uses different means to attain them. Thus, the poet and painter blatantly lie, whereas the senators feign apology.

Flavius brings in two senators who have come to ask Timon to return to Athens. It seems that they now need Timon, and his gold, to hold back the attack of Alcibiades. Again, Timon plays a series of verbal games, and then reiterates his hatred for Athens. In this way he declares that he can provide a solution to the problems of the people of Athens, but ends the dialogue by saying that the best solution is for them all to hang themselves. In this manner of sardonic humour, the ironic suspense of the scene is continued. The tone changes abruptly for Timon's last speech, when the final note becomes tragic and serious as he announces his departure from the world:

> Come not to me again, but say to Athens,
> Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
> Upon the beached verge of the salt flood,
> Who once a day with his embossed froth

> The turbulent surge shall cover; thither come,
> And let my grave-stone be your oracle.
> Lips, let four words go by, and language end:
> What is amiss, plague and infection mend!
> Graves only be men's works, and death their gain!
> Sun, hide thy beams; Timon hath done his reign.
> (V, i, 213)

In the words "lips, let four words go by, and language end", Timon aptly indicates that in his death there is an end to all, and there is little or nothing else to say; language, and the drama itself, have no further use in the face of death. Effectively, the play ends at this point. All that remains are the few words that are necessary to finish the workings of the sub-plot. Before the play can be fully over, Alcibiades must be briefly looked at, so that the parallels and contrasts can all be brought to a unified conclusion.

The play ends with three short scenes that are concerned with the reporting of Timon's death, and the taking of Athens by Alcibiades. Act Four, scene two is simply there to show a messenger informing the senators that Alcibiades has sent to Timon for help, and that Timon is not coming to help the city of Athens. In these brief conversations, the oncoming crisis and climax are brought abruptly closer; economy is now of the essence if the play is not to end with bathos after Timon's death.

The second scene is merely a device to allow Timon's epitaph to be read at the very end of the play. An illiterate soldier attempts in vain to read the inscription on Timon's tomb; instead, he takes a wax cast of it, so that someone else can read what it says. The device is to some extent clumsy, but it occurs so rapidly that this would not be noticed. Dramatically, it enables the most effective positioning of

the epitaph reading at the end of the play; in this respect the device is convenient and successful. The presence of an illiterate soldier on stage is also interesting when it is remembered that he is one of Alcibiades' men who is to take over Athens; the characterization of this soldier could be used to act as a comment on the quality and nature of Alcibiades' army, but this would depend how the character was handled by an individual director.

The play then moves on to the fourth and last scene of Act Five. This scene opens with the warlike Alcibiades standing outside the city with his army, whilst two senators appear on the walls and listen to Alcibiades' condemnation of the corruption in the city:

> Till now you have gone on and filled the time
> With all licentious measure, making your wills
> The scope of justice. (V, iv, 3)

As has already been suggested earlier in this chapter, certain essential ambiguities surround Alcibiades' character; he is not perhaps as pure or morally steadfast as his speeches imply, and he has an unhealthy obsession with military concerns. In a similar way, the last few moments of the play have comparable ambiguities, as Alcibiades is persuaded to enter the city without causing any bloodshed or seeking revenge. The ambiguity lies in the fact that Alcibiades is quickly persuaded into new actions by dubious arguments, put forward by dubious characters: the senators. The senators claim that they had tried to make amends to Alcibiades and Timon. However, the evidence in the play suggests no such attempted reconciliation with Alcibiades, and the offer of amends to Timon was totally selfishly motivated when they needed his help to hold off Alcibiades' attack. Therefore, their professed goodness seems to have

little or no foundation in reality. Similarly, the two senators claim to have been unconnected with the causes of Alcibiades' discontent when he left the city, although there is again no proof in the play that they have been any different from the other senators who they now claim to be dead.

Finally, having watched a play that focuses continually on corrupt lords and senators, it is difficult for an audience to accept any senator as being innocent only on the evidence of his own word. The senators' desperate attempts to take away from Alcibiades the desire for revenge are impossible to accept as the genuinely altruistic acts of men who care for their people; enlightened self-interest is also felt to be a part of their desire to spare the "innocent". Although their arguments concerning the value of mercy are to an extent valid, there is an overall feeling of suspicion generated, as the senators succeed in appealing to Alcibiades' compassion. Therefore, when Alcibiades agrees to their demands, without in fact one word of challenge to what they say, there is a sense that Alcibiades is not as wise as he believes himself to be. The senators know that his intense pride and belief in his own nobility are his weak points; in appealing to these weaknesses they cannot fail to stop him taking bloody revenge:

> Alcibiades: Then, there's my glove;
> Descend and open your uncharged ports;
> Those enemies of Timon's, and mine own,
> Whom you yourselves shall set out for reproof,
> Fall, and no more; and to atone your fears
> With my noble meaning, not a man
> Shall pass his quarter, or offend the stream
> Of regular justice in your city's bounds,
> But shall be rendered to your public laws
> At heaviest answer. (V, iv, 55)

There is something in this egocentric, excessively self-confident tone of speech that, although seemingly well intentioned, suggests the same mixed feelings as that other line of Alcibiades:

> Soldiers should brook as little wrongs as gods.
> (III, v, 119)

There is certainly enough in this scene, and some of the earlier ones, to suggest all will not necessarily be well in Athens now that Alcibiades is in power. This same feeling is increased by the very suddenness of the attempted harmony; only moments before, Timon has gone off to die in despair.

The play ends as the illiterate soldier brings the wax imprint of Timon's epitaph for Alcibiades to read. The epitaph reminds the audience of Timon's bitterness before his death; even when he is buried, he wants no man to remain near his body:

> Here lie I, Timon, who alive all living men did hate;
> Pass by and curse thy fill, but pass, and stay not here
> thy gait. (V, iv, 73)

Immediately after this poignant reminder, Alcibiades attempts a final reconciliation between the various opposing forces of the play. He tries to bring together the concepts of peace and war as he symbolically attempts also a final harmony of all opposing forces in Athens:

> And I will use the olive with my sword,
> Make war breed peace, make peace stint war, make each
> Prescribe to other, as each other's leech. (V, iv, 82)

These final words, taken together with the ambiguities surrounding Alcibiades' character, and all the events that have been seen in the course of the action, end the play on a most uncertain note.

At the end of the play, the focus has come back again to the problems of conflict. The battle between idealism and reality, and all the other pairs of opposing concepts, characters, values and forces, are merged into that final attempt at reconciliation. The focus of the play has always been on the process of conflict, rather than on any solution that might emerge. As in Sophoclean drama, it is this clash of opposites that produces the subject matter of the play. At the very centre of these conflicts is Timon himself, who is a man perpetually torn apart by extremes. From these polarized forces in him, and in the play as a whole, emerge chaos and destruction. The end attempts reconciliation, but ultimately fails as it seems to have little or no place in a play concerned essentially with disharmony. It could well be said that the play itself is born from the same conflict that Apemantus recognizes in Timon, when he says:

> The middle of humanity thou never knewest,
> but the extremity of both ends. (IV, iii, 303)

## CHAPTER THREE

## PSYCHOLOGY, POLITICS AND FOOD

This chapter will explore three aspects of the play that seem particularly dominant presences throughout the work. The first one considered is the political echo that lingers in the background at all times. Secondly, there are the questions surrounding Timon himself: why does he act as he does, and how does he function as a character in relation to those around him? Finally, there is the food imagery that is used so frequently in the play and is associated closely with the attitudes toward Athenian society that are expressed in Timon of Athens. Seen together, these three areas of interest allow an interesting insight into the play as a whole and help us to understand the general directions in which the play seems to go.

If ever the understanding of a play was dependent on the analysis of one character, then it is Timon of Athens. The actions of one man, Timon, dominate the play so strongly that an investigation into his symbolic role, and his psychological make-up, immediately defines the way in which we respond to the play as a whole. Therefore, this chapter will consider how and why Timon acts as he does, and the ultimate consequences of those actions.

The most obvious comment to make on first reading Timon of Athens is that there seems to be an extreme change in the character of Timon that divides the play into two distinct halves. At the beginning

he is generous and content with his fellow human beings, by the end he is violently bitter and misanthropic. The consequent focus of the play is on both the process of change, and the circumstances that cause it. It is also possible, however, to see more consistency of character than is at first apparent; the polarization can in itself be seen as a unified manifestation of a special type of psychology. If for a moment we consider Timon as a schizophrenic, who is such mainly because of his interaction with his society, and because of his position as a lord in that society, we can see some of the comments the play makes on those external causes, through the vehicle of a disturbed psyche combined with a naive refusal to recognize the political realities that affect any lord.

When we turn to Machiavelli, we find a suggestion of one reason why a schizophrenic or dualistic attitude to life can sometimes evolve. In the Prince, his manual of political advice for men who have or desire power, Machiavelli discusses the importance for the ruler of having a dual nature; it is worth remembering that in many ways Timon is a lord or prince in the Machiavellian sense of the word. His wealth seems to be founded in land, as indicated by Flavius who talks of his estate; he is, like any prince, a soldier of repute and like a prince he refers to his own reign: "Sun, hide thy beams; Timon hath done his reign".[1] Finally, Timon is a noble who comes from a great house. All these details are quite different from those applying to the Timone in the Boiardo version of the story whose wealth originates with his father, who is a usurer.[2]

In the Prince, when considering men who like Timon wish to appear

good, Machiavelli advises as follows:

> It is therefore necessary for a prince to know well how to use both the beast and the man. This was covertly taught to rulers by ancient writers, who relate how Achilles and many others of those ancient princes were given to Chiron the Centaur to be brought up and educated under his discipline. The parable of this semi-animal, semi-human teacher is meant to indicate that a prince must know how to use both natures, and that the one without the other is not durable.
>
> A prince being thus obliged to know how to act as a beast must imitate the fox and the lion, for the lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten wolves.[3]

Now if we compare this to Timon's words when he is resisting Apemantus, who is trying to make him aware of a difference between man and wild beasts, we can see how Timon now has a cynical attitude to the world not so far from that of Machiavelli.

> Timon: What wouldst thou do with the world, Apemantus, if it lay in thy power?
> Apemantus: Give it the beasts, to be rid of the men.
> Timon: Wouldst thou have thyself fall in the confusion of men, and remain a beast with the beasts?
> Apemantus: Ay, Timon.
> Timon: A beastly ambition, which the gods grant thee T'attain to! If thou wert the lion, the fox would beguile thee; if thou wert the lamb, the fox would eat thee; if thou wert the fox, the lion would suspect thee when peradventure thou wert accused by the ass; if thou wert the ass, thy dulness would torment thee, and still thou livedst but as a breakfast to the wolf;...
> (IV, iii, 328)

Therefore, Timon does in one way seem to understand that survival in the society he lives in is dependent on existing as a combination of different animal qualities, although his actions deny that same knowledge. At the beginning of the play the mild qualities only are present in his actions, which in Machiavellian terms we can call the

'human' aspects, and at the end he is only the lion. Ultimately, his own description of single animals that cannot survive alone is the explanation of why he too will not survive, for as Apemantus then retorts: "The commonwealth of Athens is become a forest of beasts." In that forest neither the lion nor the mild lamb can survive alone; as Machiavelli says:

> Thus it is well to seem merciful, faithful, humane, sincere, religious and also to be so; but you must have the mind so disposed that when it is needful to be otherwise you may be able to change to the opposite qualities. (p. 93)

Thus only a being that is a mergence of the lion and the fox can survive.

These Machiavellian echoes in the plot recur in relation to Timon's unlimited generosity, which is his particular way of appearing good. This is closely allied to some words attached to the previous extract from the Prince: "If men were all good this precept would not be a good one but as they are bad . . .". This begins to suggest how it is a particular society that necessitates certain behaviour patterns; if the society is corrupt the men that live in it must adapt to that reality if they are to survive. Machiavelli extends this precept further when discussing the problems of generosity:

> For it may be said of men in general that they are ungrateful, voluble, dissemblers, anxious to avoid danger, and covetous of gain; as long as you benefit them, they are entirely yours; they offer you their blood, their good, and their children, as I have said, when the necessity is remote; but when it approaches they revolt. And the prince who has relied solely on their words, without making other preparations, is ruined; for the friendship which is gained by purchase and not through grandeur and nobility of spirit is bought but not secured, and at a pinch is not to be expended in your service. And men have less scruple in offending one who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared; for love is held by a chain of obligation which, men being selfish, is broken whenever it serves their purpose. (p. 90)

Machiavelli warns that when you are surrounded by selfish and deceitful people you must alter your actions away from pure goodness, generosity and naivety, in order to survive. When Timon disobeys this rule of conduct he brings about his own downfall. His lack of perception, in relation to his society, is an important critical fault in his character. Whilst Timon is vulnerable the characters of Lucius, Lucullus, Sempronius, Ventidius and Lucilius, in addition to various minor nobles, act exactly as predicted by Machiavelli. These words of the first lord and of Lucilius in Act One, reflect the professions of love and duty warned against in the Prince:

> First Lord: Might we but have that happiness, my lord,
> that you would once use our hearts, whereby
> we might express some part of our zeals, we
> should think ourselves for ever perfect.
> (I, ii, 84)
>
> Lucilius: Humbly I thank your lordship; never may
> That state or fortune fall into my keeping
> Which is not owed to you! (I, i, 149)

By the end of Act Three they have all, as warned by Machiavelli, betrayed him. Timon's fall therefore seems to be the inevitable consequence of uncontrolled prodigality; as summarized in the Prince:

> There is nothing which destroys itself so much as liberality, for by using it you lose the power of using it, and become either poor and despicable, or, to escape poverty, rapacious and hated. (p. 88)

Timon moves from lover to hater of man through his interaction with a dishonest society. As Machiavelli finally emphasizes: "A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good" (p. 84). His final movement away from that society is when he learns a Machiavellian

consciousness of how corrupt it is. His death at the end is because that recognition comes too late, by which time the dark side of his personality has completely taken over. Significantly, it is Alcibiades, who has learnt to play the lion and the fox, who does survive at the end of the play when he also plays the lamb in his granting of mercy. He has learnt his Machiavelli more thoroughly than Timon and allows mercy when it is "politic" to do so. Alcibiades is able to move from one pose to another as circumstances demand, unlike the inflexible Timon; and this might provide one explanation of how at the end the sub-plot connects to the main plot. Whilst Alcibiades, through his broad, balanced dual nature, can survive in a world where, "Policy sits above conscience", Timon with his narrow vision must die. In the society of Athens survival is dependent on a simultaneous combination of extremes; Timon cannot recognize the world for what it really is at the beginning of the play and is, ironically because of his generosity and goodness, the unnatural element in Athens. In Athens, normal Christian morality is reversed, or as Lucullus says: "Every man has his fault and honesty is his" (III, i, 29).

From this understanding of Machiavelli we can see how the problems of generosity and power are closely interwoven, and how any action in either of these areas is linked inseparably to the state of society as a whole. Thus, in a corrupt society of "flatterers" and "usurers", unlimited generosity is a political fault that will lead to a noble's downfall. From this we see that such limitless generosity is not just a cause of his own suffering, but, in a prince, an irresponsible attitude that can even add to the corruption of the state.

In particular, in Timon's case, it is because he uses material generosity to manifest his goodness, rather than spiritual qualities. To say that he plays the lamb, does imply that he is playing or acting out a role: that is he likes the idea of acting out Christ the holy lamb. He seems to enjoy with pride the position of the magnanimous, ever-generous noble, admired by all for his wisdom and bounty. Indeed, this view that Timon has of himself is shared by some readers of the play. In a powerful essay on the play Wilson Knight talks of Timon as "the flower of mankind", and he claims that, "The intrinsic and absolute blamelessness of Timon's generosity is emphasised."[4] This is a view that ignores many important factors at work in the play; the Christlike presentation is clearly there, but is severely undercut within the play from very early on.

The first time Timon speaks, his generosity is seen to be peculiarly self-conscious. When hearing that Ventidius is imprisoned, Timon does not quietly and modestly pay the debt to free him, but makes the deed public, just as Lear must make public his daughters love and admiration for him:

> Timon: Noble Ventidius! Well.
> I am not of the feather to shake off
> My friend when he must need me. I do know him
> A gentleman that well deserves a help,
> Which he shall have. I'll pay the debt and free him.

This he supplements a moment later with:

> T'is not enough to help the feeble up,
> But to support him after. (I, i, 99)

This last comment is a condensed paraphrase of Jesus' words and actions in the parable of the Good Samaritan.[5] In a similar way he is proud to

be thought of as somewhere between Christ and Solomon, when the old Athenian comes to him to resolve the problem of his daughter, who wants to marry poor Lucilius, against her father's will. Timon does seem to settle the dispute to their satisfaction, and Timon, in another public gesture, has solved a problem, with his normal solution of money.

> This gentleman of mine hath served me long,
> To build his fortune I will strain a little.
> (I, i, 142)

Solomon, we remember, when presented with conflicting parties, resolved the dispute by subtle psychological tactics with the threat to divide the child in two; from this course of action he discovers which of the two women is speaking the truth. Timon, however, replaces spiritual talents with material ones. In this scene Timon is being set up, as of course they all know that money will be his method of help. The old Athenian does not take any chances, and guides the conversation clearly towards the financial rather than moral objections to Lucilus. Timon's obsession with giving away money and possessions is as unhealthy as the spiritual void inherent in the actions of the usurers, who are obsessed with gaining wealth.

It is also typical of Timon, the aspirant Christ, to celebrate the end of his "reign" with a Last Supper, disguised as a feast. As usual, the Christ parallel is made by Shakespeare intentionally uncomfortable; in this Last Supper there are, dramatically speaking, twelve evil men who will betray Timon, instead of the twelve good men surrounding Christ. As Timon remarks -- and this also connects to his hatred of women to which we will come back to later --

> Let no assembly of twenty be without a score of villains. If there sit twelve women at the table, let a dozen of them be -- as they are. (III, vi, 77)

Apemantus, paradoxically the one good man in that he at least does not betray Timon, has already looked ahead to this moment when in Act One, during the first feast, he says: "It grieves me to see so many dip their meat in one man's blood" (I, ii, 40). And, moments later:

> There's much example for't; the fellow that sits next him, now parts bread with him, pledges the breath of him in a divided draught, is the readiest man to kill him: 't has been proved.

This is very close to the gospel accounts of the Last Supper in Mark and Matthew:

> And as they sate at table and did eate, Jesus saide, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me which eateth with me.
>
> Hee that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, hee shall betray me.[6]

The language is very similar to Apemantus' warning, and the sentiments are identical, so that in the second feast, the final ritualistic enactment of Christ, the good man being betrayed, we see Timon's obsession with a role played out to its bitter end. His next role is to be that of the misanthrope.

The pressures of political reality are then one cause of a duality in Timon's nature; to cope with the problems of being a Prince, a man must have two sides to his character. A duality of vision can also emerge from psychological causes. Therefore, if we also begin to look at Timon from a psychological standpoint, we can understand more clearly parts of his unusual character and behaviour. The character of Timon seems to conform very closely

to the type of person that would in modern psychological terms be described as schizophrenic.[7] If we see Timon in this way, and consequently are able to recognize the clear psychological unity of his character, we can also see more precisely the play as an artistic oneness moulded around Timon. To understand Timon is the key to understanding the play as a whole.

We can begin this process by looking at a comment by R. D. Laing, whose special area of research is schizophrenia. In his book The Divided Self Laing says:

> The schizophrenic is desperate, is simply without hope. I have never known a schizophrenic who could say he was loved, as a man, by God the Father or by the mother of God or by another man. He either is God, or the devil, or in hell, estranged from God.[8]

This applies exactly to Timon when he plays the role of Christ, and then the devil, whose existence like Timon's is only to torment and destroy man. The schizophrenic is always one who plays out roles in order to protect himself from reality. In a corrupt society the extent of the desire to separate from that society becomes greater. The fear of being hurt by other men blinds Timon from the belief that some men are good. When he is confronted by his honest servant Flavius his entire role as the misanthrope is being questioned. He says to Flavius, "I do proclaim one honest man -- mistake me not, but one" (IV, iii, 506); but before he will admit even this Timon turns his hatred against Flavius, and even when he has said that one honest man can exist he still suspects that Flavius has other motives: "Is not thy kindness subtle-covetous?" When he is finally able to acknowledge Flavius' goodness, he is still unable to believe in the possibility of it in any

other men, so he reverts to the old evil of money and offers it to Flavius: "Go, live rich and happy." Timon tells Flavius to use the money to help act out his own hatred against mankind. Therefore Timon can only accept Flavius' love in the terms of belief in his own justified hate. Typically, Timon uses money as a vehicle for this end, so that by this stage of the play the same money that Timon used to make men happy he now wants to use to bring them misery.

In much the same way, the schizophrenic will do everything he can to resist an offer of love from a fellow human being. Timon fears the love of Flavius that might dent his protective psychological armour of total misanthropy. If he admits Flavius' ability to love without selfish motive his identity, now manifested only in misanthropy, will be shattered, as for example in this typical case history of a modern patient:

> For nearly a year after his transfer to the Lodge he was -- as he was reported to have been for years -- vengefulness personified. He apparently spent most of his waking hours in plotting revenge upon numerous figures, now including me [the doctor]. In his therapeutic sessions he viciously described the terrible retaliation that would be wrought upon all who had abused him. His facial expression was usually one of tautness, with narrowed eyes as he directed vengeful warnings to me, or of vindictive triumph as he bellowed a vivid description of the destruction that would be brought upon me and his other tormentors when the tables were finally turned.[9]

This could easily be a director's notes for certain moments in the play:

> Timon: Hate all, curse all, show charity to none,
> But let the famished flesh slide from the bone
> Ere thou relieve the beggar. Give to dogs
> What thou deniest to men. Let prisons swallow 'em
> Debts wither 'em to nothing; be men like blasted woods
> And may diseases lick up their false bloods!
> And so farewell and thrive. (IV, iii, 536)

> Timon: There's nothing level in our cursed natures
> But direct villainy. Therefore be abhorred
> All feasts, societies and throngs of men.
> His semblable, yea, himself, Timon disdains.
> Destruction fang mankind. (IV, iii, 20)

Timon, in true schizophrenic fashion, turns his inner fears of being touched by cruel reality into a protective shell of fear. His whole psyche urges against belief in the love that he once worshipped. Timon does what Laing claims to be typical of such a man: "To turn oneself into stone becomes a way of not being turned into stone by someone else" (p. 51). Similarly, when Timon is forced to recognize Flavius as one who does love him, Timon fears that love and ultimately can only accept it in terms of a hatred. As Laing says:

> To be understood correctly is to be engulfed, to be enclosed, swallowed up, drowned, eaten up, smothered, stifled in or by another person's supposed all-embracing comprehension. It is lonely and painful to be always misunderstood, but there is at least from this point of view a measure of safety in isolation.
>
> The other's love is therefore feared more than his hatred, or rather all love is sensed as a version of hatred. (p. 40)

Isolation is the positive in which Timon always stands. Unlike most other Shakespearian protagonists he has no family, no lover, no wife. He has but friends, most of whom are such for politic motivations. He is absolutely the man on his own, who, like most schizophrenics, operates in his own illusionary world. He has always, until the final personality divergence, pretended in a highly general way that all about him were good; thus when he sees any Athenian, even Apemantus who appears unpleasant and malicious, he says: "Thou art an Athenian, therefore welcome" (I, ii, 34). When Flavius is trying to warn him of the oncoming financial crises he is too far removed from reality to

listen. Flavius speaks to him at a time when even Timon, through the pressure of the servants sent to him by the nobles to whom he owes money, has to recognize the financial problems; Flavius tells how Timon would never listen before:

> Timon: Go to.
> Perchance some single vantages you took
> When my indisposition put you back,
> And that unaptness made you minister
> Thus to exercise yourself.
> Flavius: O my good lord,
> At many times I brought in my accounts,
> Laid them before you; you would throw them off,
> And say you found them in mine honesty...
> Timon: Let all my land be sold.
> Flavius: 'Tis all engaged, some forfeited and gone,
> And what remains will hardly stop the mouth
> Of present dues. (II, ii, 138)

Timon's retort to sell his land is the supreme example of a man removed from reality. His generosity has for a long time been allowed only by the use of borrowed wealth. Thus he too is a part of the corruption that he later turns against with hatred. The part of his psyche that does know, refuses to allow the knowledge through to his conscious mind, so that as long as he is playing the role of Christ it does not matter to him what the reality of Athens really is. The test of the extent of the final shift to hatred comes in that confrontation with Flavius when he is allowed a last chance of recognizing the existence of some goodness and love in the universe. Then we see that Timon must die, because he rejects this last chance of coming back from the darkness of despair, which is another way of hiding from reality. He rejects this offer of the ten just men, embodied in Flavius, who can save the cities of Sodom and Gommorah; firstly he mistrusts that love and finally he transfigures

it to hate. It is only the balanced minds of men like Alcibiades who can, as advised in the Prince, combine the lion and the love of the lamb, and the multiple parts of man that come in between. Alcibiades allows the mercy rejected by Timon, as he understands that love and hate and goodness and evil should never be totally polarized as in Timon's perverse vision of the universe. Thus Alcibiades unites the lion and the lamb to restore harmony when at the end he says:

> Bring me into your city,
> And I will use the olive with my sword,
> Make war breed peace, make peace stint war, make each
> Prescribe to other as each other's leech. (V, iv, 81)

Timon's hatred of humanity is due to personal and social causes; he hates man because everything man seems to represent he sees to be corrupt, and because he, Timon, wants no relationship with man. In his disturbed thoughts he merges the two hatreds, so that his deliberate withdrawl from society and isolation from human relationships become one and the same focus of hate. He is at the beginning alone and without love; by the end his loneliness is transformed and comes out as a hatred against any form of love, even that which does not concern him. As Laing says:

> If there is anything the schizoid individual is likely to believe in, it is his own destructiveness. He is unable to believe that he can fill his own emptiness without reducing what there is to nothing. He regards his own love and that of others as being as destructive as hatred. (p. 93)

Timon, in metamorphasizing in his mind Flavius' love into hatred, is then able to accept it. His coldness and fear of human relationships is a fear of the warmth that might alter his cold feelings toward man. All externals must be refused if the inner self wishes to remain

secure. In this way a vicious circle is set up in the interaction between Timon and society from which only evil and destruction will emerge, even though the hesitation over Flavius' offer of love suggests somewhere in Timon a longing for that which he denies. As Laing says:

> The dread of taking in anything or anyone thus extends to good as well as bad. The bad will destroy the self, the self will destroy the good.
>
> The self is therefore at the same time empty and starving. The whole orientation of the self is in terms of longing to eat, yet destroying the food or being destroyed by it. (p. 93)

Therefore, from the very beginning of the play the audience is presented with a man who is in the earlier stages of what seems to be schizophrenic consciousness. This distorted vision is aggravated by the pressures of the society he lives in. As the play progresses, Timon moves closer to the final breaking point, and then at the play's climax he crosses the narrow line that had hitherto separated him from the dark abyss of total hatred. When Timon realizes how he has been betrayed, his obsessive love turns to hatred and he has entered into the final stage of schizophrenia.

It is interesting that the particular image of food, mentioned in the last extract from Laing, often connected with such discussion of schizophrenia, is present throughout the play of Timon of Athens. In a way, the animal symbolism frequently associated with Athenian society, combines with the idea of one man devouring another to survive. Just as between Timon and society we can see a vicious circle at work in which both he and they are threatened with being devoured by each other, so that all good is either destroyed or becomes a threat, so in the

structure of that society itself we can see a parallel pattern. The society of Athens is like a natural food-chain in which every creature has to eat another before he can survive; again we are back to the fox and lion circle in Machiavelli. Often this chain is manifested in the play through the symbol of gold, when each man metaphorically eats the wealth of his neighbour through the system of usury, which, if we accept the views in one of John Draper's essays on the play, is an interesting comment on Elizabethan society in which great men were frequently broken and destroyed overnight through the evils of usury.[10]

The play carries animal food-chain imagery further, however, until it affects many central moments of the play. Through Apemantus, in particular, the language portrays a literal suggestion of the metaphoric theme; if we focus just on Act One we can see the distinct form this takes. Moments after Apemantus has first entered he declares publicly that he is not a part of the chain, although paradoxically as the cynic he should be, due to the associations between cynics and dogs. When Timon invites him to the first banquet Apemantus replies: "No, I eat not lords" (I, i, 206). Therefore, immediately he indicates the nature of his role as outsider and critic. Significantly, he twists the same suggestion into a reference to the greed of sexuality when in reply to Timon's warning that he will anger the ladies, Apemantus says: "O, they eat lords; so they come by great bellies" (I, i, 209). The tone is exactly that adopted by Timon in Act Four, when meeting Alcibiades in the company of Timandra and Phrynia. Timon also links the diseases of sex to the other disease present in the society of usurers, as when he says to Alcibiades, when talking about Phrynia:

> This fell whore of thine
> Hath in her more destruction than thy sword.
> (IV, iii, 61)

In the speeches that immediately follow he offers gold, the other symbol of corruption and disease, to the whores, so that they will go off and destroy men with their diseases. In the conclusive speech to this encounter, just after they have gone, Timon extends the idea of the women as elements of corruption and evil destruction until it includes the very earth itself; so that in his mind the act of sex means the inevitable birth of evil; without original sin mankind would never have been born. Again, Timon links the sexual appetite of the whore, which, since she is payed for her services, also includes the other corrupting symbol of gold, to the appetite of the men and beasts who devour one another:

> That nature, being sick of man's unkindness,
> Should yet be hungry! Common mother thou,
> Whose womb unmeasurable and infinite breast
> Teams and feeds all; whose selfsame mettle,
> Whereof thy proud child, arrogant man, is puffed;
> Engenders the black toad and adders blue
> The guilded newt and eyeless venomed worm,
> With all th'abhorred births below crisp heaven
> Whereon Hyperion's quickening fire doth shine,
> Yield him, who all thy human sons doth hate,
> From forth thy plenteous bosom, one poor root.
> Ensear thy fertile and conceptious womb;
> Let it no more bring out ungrateful man.
> (IV, iii, 178)

Timon now wants the destruction of all life; he looks forward to the moment when the food-chain strangles itself and dies. Thus, when Alcibiades offers him gold, it is now for Timon a dead symbol because, while he has it, it cannot have the power to destroy; so he replies: "Keep it, I cannot eat it."

If we return again to Act One we can trace the use and growth of this food imagery. When Alcibiades enters he uses this image when he says to Timon:

> Sir, you have saved my longing, and I feed
> Most hungerly on your sight. (I, i, 257)

Alcibiades, although he is using the same loaded diction, does so in innocence, as he, unlike the other lords, feeds not on Timon's body but on the "sight" of him. In contrast, the other lords are even at this early stage in the play concerned with "tasting" Timon's bounty. In scene two we are shown the central manifestation of the food image, in the banquet. Here Timon is surrounded by men who, according to Apemantus, "dip their meat in one man's blood." Again Apemantus is apart from the chain as he must have, "a table by himself", because, as he expresses it: "I scorn thy meat; 'would choke me, for I would never flatter thee." Significantly, when he says "meat" he means literally Timon's own body: "O you gods, what a number of men eats Timon, and he sees 'em not!" Apemantus follows through the imagery to his reflection on health, as he then says that the health of the lords, that is the nourishment they are receiving from the meat and drink, is due to a parasitic process rather a symbiotic one, in that Timon withers as they grow strong and that they give nothing in return: "These healths will make thee and thy state look ill Timon" (I, ii, 56).

In a slightly different way Alcibiades and Timon reiterate the food imagery moments later in relation to thoughts on war; so that Timon is able to say to Alcibiades: "You had rather be at a breakfast of enemies than a dinner of friends." Again, the irony of his own

situation, surrounded by the lords at his dinner, which is closer to the breakfast he describes to Alcibiades, is extreme. Alcibiades, as though to cap the analogy for us, replies: "So they were bleeding new, my lord; there's no meat like 'em, I could wish my best friend at such a feast." It is ironical that he should refer to his "best friend" at such a feast, which could also be taken to mean in the feast, that is the food itself. The association of this feast with war is another interesting reflection back on the state of society in Athens, in which there exists the war of the jungle, the food-chain existence.

The idea of a military element, that connects strongly with the concept of a rotten society, is used in strangely parallel tones in Act One, scene one of Coriolanus. If we compare the two plays briefly we can see how once again the attention is focused, through the symbol of food, on a corrupt society in which the body-politic is not functioning correctly. The image of food in Coriolanus is changed, as in the banquet scene just looked at, from a physical concept to a metaphorical one. Very early on in the scene the first citizen places the problem of hunger side by side with usury, as in Timon of Athens, and then moves on to an idea similar to that concerned with war in the banquet scene:

> Care for us! True indeed. They ne'er cared for us yet:
> suffer us to famish and their storehouses crammed with grain:
> make edicts for usury, to support usurers; repeal daily any
> wholesome act established against the rich, and provide more
> piercing statutes daily to chain up and restrain the poor.
> If the wars eat us not up, they will; and there's all the love
> they bear us. (I, i, 80)

The words near the end of this speech, "If the wars eat us not up, they will", could well be applied to the society that Timon lives in; in both the body-politic is at fault in its very foundations. The symbol of

food and the metaphor of eating is pursued in the analogy of the body-politic to the human body; but what is particularly interesting is the first speech of Caius Marcus, later Coriolanus, who, although he has just entered, seems instinctively to use the same language that is apt for discussing such a society, although he uses the words to defend the status quo. His speech to the people is filled with the irony that unknowingly his language is looking ahead to his own dissatisfaction with Rome:

> He that will give words to thee will flatter
> Beneath abhorring. What would you have, you curs,
> That like nor peace nor war? The one affrights you,
> The other makes you proud. He that trusts to you,
> Where he should find you lions, finds you hares;
> Where foxes, geese: you are no surer, no
> Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,
> Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue is,
> To make him worthy whose offence subdues him,
> And curse that justice did it. Who deserves greatness
> Deserves your hate; and your affections are
> A sick man's appetite, who desires most that
> Which would increase his evil. He that depends
> Upon your favours swims with fins of lead
> And hugs down oaks with rushes. Hang ye! Trust ye?
> With every minute you do change a mind,
> And call him noble that was now your hate,
> Him vile that was your garland. What's the matter,
> That in these several places of the city
> You cry against the noble senate, who,
> Under the gods, keep you in awe, which else
> Would feed on one another? (I, i, 166)

If we look a little more closely at some of this we can see how peculiarly suitable it is to describe Coriolanus' attitude later in the play, as well as Timon's. Firstly, there is the interesting reference to animals, two of which (the lion and the fox) are mentioned in Timon of Athens and in the Prince: "He should find you lions, finds you hares, / Where foxes, geese". The constant reversals of qualities and

forms are symptomatic of a society based on false qualities itself; that is, as in the comparison with a Machiavellian view of society, if you have a corrupt or misguided body-politic then the people cannot be expected to be any different from that corruption. In all the questions that Coriolanus asks and the accusations that he makes, he is refusing to recognize the falseness of his sense of the term "nobility". By the end of the play he too "curses that justice", and calls "Him noble that was now [his] hate", when he works with Aufidius. He also calls "Him vile that was [his] garland", when he turns against Rome. Similarly, it could well be said of Timon that as the play proceeds he too has "affections" which "are a sick man's appetite" and "desires most that which would increase his evil". The line, "you are no surer no / Than is the coal of fire upon the ice", is exactly parallel to Machiavelli's warning about friends who cannot be trusted that Timon too late discovers to be true, much as does Coriolanus when his new ally Aufidius, betrays him. Finally, there is the supreme irony of that line before the last, that brings us back again into the heart of Timon of Athens, when Coriolanus talks about the people who would if they could "feed on one another". In the speech he is claiming that the powers that be are preventing this, but gradually, as the play proceeds, that those in power are in fact the cause of the food chain. In their observance of only the superficial aspects of elections, embodied in the showing of wounds to the masses, which itself is almost a parody of Christ showing his wounds to Thomas, and which game Coriolanus is unwilling to play, the politicians are denying the more important foundations of the peoples' right to chose their ruler. When this is

added to the citizens' charge of usury we begin to realize all that the people suffer -- they must eat one another in war since Rome always seems to be at war, or because they are literally starving and metaphorically hungry in their alienation from power. Thus, as in Timon of Athens, it is the very roots of society that are bad and a man who rejects such a society is in many ways justified. In a parallel way it would be worth comparing the speeches of Coriolanus when he leaves and condemns Rome, and Timon when he rejects Athens. They have strongly sympathetic thoughts behind them; but for the moment it is only necessary to add that the comparison between the first Acts of each play reinforces the importance of the food-chain image that itself links inseparably to the central political problems of the two plays.

If we turn again briefly to the end of Act One in Timon of Athens we can, with this comparison in mind, understand the full import of Flavius' words, when in the final comment on this theme in the act he says:

> Happier is he that has no friend to feed
> Than such that do e'en enemies exceed. (I, ii, 208)

In this there is the summarizing paradox of the friends whose appetites for Timon's blood and body are greater than those of any enemy. It is the ultimate condemnation of his society in which the food-chain is the central motivating concept. From the usury to the parasitic exploitation of any act of goodness, we can see a society in which naive kindness cannot survive. Thus, honesty itself, as Lucullus tells us, is Timon's fault.

These aspects of Timon of Athens, concerned with the political

undertones, Timon's psychology and the food imagery, are all central to an understanding of the play. In seeing what they all represent we can reach a better understanding of Timon, and subsequently the play itself.

# FOOTNOTES (INTRODUCTION)

[1]My theories on Timon of Athens have also been tried out in the way that is perhaps most important of all. From 7th July to 10th July 1976, my own production of Timon of Athens was performed at the Robinson Memorial Theatre at McMaster University. The production was much enjoyed by the audiences and played to full houses: a rare sight during the summer months at McMaster. The production followed most of the guidelines set out in this thesis.

## FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER ONE)

[1]The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakespeare, ed. Charles Knight (London, 1839), V, 333.

I should also like to mention at this point a general debt to Francelia Butler, The Strange Critical Fortunes of Shakespeare's Timon of Athens (Iowa: Iowa University Press, 1966). I have used, when the material does not effect the concerns of this thesis, some of her economical summaries of critical views, as certain criticism is worth noting even though it does not directly concern my interpretation of the play. Specific points are individually footnoted, but I feel that it is necessary to acknowledge an overall debt.

[2]Butler, ibid., pp. 39-41.

[3]Herman Ulrici, Shakespeare's Dramatic Art, trans. A. J. W. Morrison (London, 1846), p. 238.

[4]E. K. Chambers, "The Disintegration of Shakespeare", Annual Shakespeare Lecture. Proceedings, Br. Acad. (London, 1924), XI, 92-93.

[5]Una Ellis-Fermor, "Timon of Athens: An Unfinished Play", RES (July, 1942), XVIII, 270-283.

[6]Ibid., p. 270.

[7]Timon of Athens, New Shakespeare edition, ed. J. L. Maxwell (London: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

[8]Timon of Athens, Arden edition, ed. H. J. Oliver (London, 1959).

[9]Ibid., p. li.

[10]Quoted by Butler, op. cit., p. 9.

[11]Butler, op. cit., pp. 59-71.

[12]Una Ellis-Fermor, The Jacobean Drama (London: Methuen, 1936), p. 33.

[13]A. S. Collins, "Timon of Athens: A Reconsideration", RES, XXII (1946), p. 98.

[14]E. A. J. Honigman, "Timon of Athens", SHA, XII (1961), 3-20.

[15]Ibid., p. 16.

[16]Ibid., p. 17.

[17]G. Wilson Knight, "The Pilgrimage of Hate", The Wheel of Fire, (London: Methuen, 1967).

[18]G. Wilson Knight, Shakespearian Production (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964).

[19]The Wheel of Fire, p. 207.

[20]Ibid., p. 220.

[21]John Draper, "The Theme of Timon of Athens", MLR, XXIX (1934), 20-31.

[22]John Draper, "The Psychology of Shakespeare's Timon", MLR, XXXV (1940), 521-525.

[23]Ibid., p. 522.

[24]For my own discussion of this question see Chapter Three of this thesis.

[25]Willard Farnham, "The Beast Theme in Shakespeare's Timon", Essays and Studies, Univ. Cal., XIV (1943), 49-56.

[26]See Chapter Three of this thesis.

[27]W. Nowottny, "Acts IV and V of Timon of Athens", SHQ, X (1959), 493-497.

[28]E. C. Pettet, "The Disruption of Feudal Morality", RES, XXIII (1947), 331-336.

[29]Ruth Anderson, "Excessive Goodness A Tragic Fault", SAB, XIX (1944), 85-96.

[30]Ms. Anderson's footnotes to Charron reads as follows: Pierre Charron, Of Widsom, George Stanhope, II., 3 bks., London, 1967, Bk. III, p. 352. The original, De la Sagesse, was printed at Bordeaux in 1601. The translation by Samson Lennard was contemporary with Shakespeare.

She only mentions one essay by Bacon, "Of Simulation and Dissimulation", but does not footnote it with any other information.

She briefly mentions Machiavelli, who would add considerable weight to her argument, but does not explore his works at all. I have treated the possibilities of discussing Machiavelli, in the political connections to Timon of Athens, in Chapter Three of this thesis.

[31]Andor Gomme, "Timon of Athens", Essays in Criticism, IX (1959), 107-125.

[32]Ibid., p. 118.

FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER TWO)

[1]Quoted in Harper's Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities, ed. H. T. Peck (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc.), p. 637.

[2]The Plays of William Shakespeare, ed. Samuel Johnson (London, 1765, quoted by Butler, op. cit., p. 10.

[3]Timon of Athens, New Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), ed. J. Maxwell, 1. i. 14. Further references will appear in the body of the chapter.

[4]For further discussion of Shadwell's version of the play, see Butler, op. cit., pp. 119-134.

[5]There are innumerable examples of this type of dramatic irony in many of Sophocles' plays; he was the first of the Classical dramatists to use this technique. A good example of this is seen in greater detail on page 26 of this chapter.

[6]The word "dog" is associated with cynicism, as "cynus" is the original root of the word cynic, derived from the Greek for dog.

[7]For further discussion of the food theme see Chapter Three of this thesis.

[8]The use of the Bible in Timon of Athens is discussed in fuller detail in Chapter Three of this thesis.

[9]See Chapter Three of this thesis.

[10]This is noticed by H. J. Oliver in the notes to the Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1969).

[11]See Chapter Three of this thesis.

[12]The authorship question is reviewed in detail by Butler, op. cit., pp. 12-24.

[13]Sophocles, Electra, translated by E. F. Watling (London: Penguin, 1967), lines 1201-1250.

FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER THREE)

[1]All references are from Timon of Athens, New Shakespeare, ed. J. Maxwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), V, i, 224. Further references will appear in the body of the chapter.

[2]G. Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare (London: Routledge and Paul, 1964).

[3]All quotations from the Mentor Paperback edition (New York, 1952), translated by L. Ricci in 1903 and revised in 1935. Further references will appear in the body of the chapter.

[4]G. Wilson Knight, "The Pilgrimage of Hate" in Wheel of Fire, (London: Methuen, 1967).

[5]All references are from the Genevan Bible, the Bible most likely used by Shakespeare.

[6]See T. Carter, Shakespeare and The Holy Scriptures (New York: AMS Press, 1905). Mark XIV, 18; Matthew XXVI, 23.

[7]Although of course Shakespeare had no concept of schizophrenia as it is now termed, he must have been aware of the type of personality that we now call schizophrenic. Thus, Timon can be seen as a portrait of a particular sort of man, even though the causes of his behaviour were not fully understood. It is interesting to note that there is in fact evidence that even by Shakespeare's time there were recorded case histories of men who would now be described as schizophrenics. For further discussion of this history of schizophrenia, see Kurt Salzinger, Schizophrenia: Behavioural Aspects (New York: Wiley Press, 1973).

[8]All references are from the Pelican Paperback edition (Baltimore: Penguin, 1965).

[9]H. Searles, Collected Papers on Schizophrenia and Related Subjects (London: Hogarth Press, 1965).

[10]John Draper, "The Theme of Timon", MLR, XXIX (1934).

[11]All references are from Coriolanus, New Shakespeare, ed. J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), I, i, 78.

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