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TIMON OF ATHENS: AN EXISTENTIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

John Libby Campbell

A dissertation presented to the
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May, 1976

<u>TIMON OF ATHENS</u>: AN EXISTENTIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

TIMON OF ATHENS: AN EXISTENTIAL
AND PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

by John Libby Campbell

Timon of Athens, compared with other of Shakespeare's plays, is seldom performed, seldom read, and seldom considered as the object of favorable critical discourse. Critical attention previously paid *Timon* has focused on *Timon*'s structure, and the temper of that criticism has been largely negative. Investigators have sought to explore *Timon* as a play which is not the work of Shakespeare alone, as a play which Shakespeare did not complete, and as a play which is notably atypical among Shakespeare's works. Little effort has been made to consider *Timon* in a more positive way. Recently, however, critics of Shakespeare have grown increasingly amicable toward the use of depth psychology and existential philosophy as critical tools for investigating Shakespeare's work. Such criticism suggests hitherto unexplored avenues of inquiry into Shakespeare's work which are, in *Timon*'s case, more positive than any previous investigations. The purpose of this study is to reconsider *Timon* in the light of recently accepted psychological-philosophical

critical techniques, to suggest that such an investigation, in contrast to previous studies, reveals Timon to be a play which is entirely Shakespeare's, which is complete in the sense of possessing a consistent, well-executed dramatic pattern, and which is clearly related to other, less enigmatic of Shakespeare's works, and to establish in the critical literature a more positive reading of Timon than has been heretofore rendered.

Chapter I explores the enigma which has marked Timon. It examines the play's editions, its text, and its stage history. Chapter II surveys the major criticism of Timon and the major critical attitudes developed toward the play from its appearance in the First Folio to the present.

Chapter III has two major thrusts. The first portion of the chapter introduces and defines the psychological-philosophical technique used in this study as a basis for reconsideration of Timon. The latter portion of the chapter applies this method of critical investigation to Timon through a close, interpretative reading of the play.

Chapter IV, using the method of the previous chapter, establishes similarities among Timon, King Lear, and Coriolanus. By demonstrating Timon's kinship with King Lear and Coriolanus, two plays less enigmatic than Timon and related to Timon historically, chapter IV asserts Timon to be one of a cluster of plays which develop according to a dramatic pattern uniquely Shakespearean.

John Libby Campbell

Chapter V reconsiders major, recurrent questions to which critics of Timon have addressed themselves in their investigations--the question of divided authorship, the question of apparent incompleteness, and the question of atypicality among other of Shakespeare's works. The chapter concludes by suggesting ways in which a psychological-philosophical reading of Timon provides answers for these questions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to Professors John N. McDaniel and William R. Wolfe for the guidance they gave me while the writing of this dissertation was in progress. The advice they offered was direct, clear, and considered. I was fortunate to have the perspective their practical wisdom and scholarly insight provided.

I also wish to thank Mrs. Bernice A. Burns, who typed the final draft of the dissertation. Without her patience and understanding, readying my final copy would have been extremely difficult.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

I. AN OVERVIEW OF THE LIFE OF _TIMON_ _OF_ _ATHENS_ . . . 1

EDITIONS 2

THE TEXT 6

STAGE HISTORY 12

II. A REVIEW OF CRITICISM AND CRITICAL ATTITUDES FROM THE FIRST FOLIO TO THE PRESENT 22

III. A RECONSIDERATION OF _TIMON_ _OF_ _ATHENS_ USING THE PRINCIPLES OF DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY AND EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY 42

IV. AN EXAMINATION OF CORRESPONDENCES AMONG _TIMON_ _OF_ _ATHENS_, _KING_ _LEAR_, AND _CORIOLANUS_ . . . 94

V. CONSIDERATION OF MAJOR RECURRENT CRITICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT _TIMON_ _OF_ _ATHENS_ AND AND HOW A PSYCHOLOGICAL-PHILOSOPHICAL READING OF _TIMON_ _OF_ _ATHENS_ ANSWERS THEM 132

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED 145

Chapter I

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LIFE OF *TIMON OF ATHENS*

Any study of William Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, and in particular an interpretative study, must recognize that the play poses difficulties. *Timon* is marked by enigma, as is illustrated by the controversies and problems generated by the most basic questions about the play. For example, *Timon*'s place in the chronology of Shakespeare's canon is uncertain. Further, the text in the First Folio, sole authority for all subsequent editions, is flawed: it is not divided into acts and scenes; the verse scans inconsistently, and there are agglomerates of verse, prose, and rhyme; the characters and the spellings of their names are confused. The stage history of the play, moreover, reveals another source of controversy. *Timon* was not acted in Shakespeare's time, nor was it performed on the English stage in its Folio version until 1851. It has been acted rarely since and, when presented, was not a popular success. Yet it is the first of Shakespeare's plays to be presented in modern dress. Also, during World War II, Wilson Knight selected passages from *Timon* for his performance of scenes from Shakespeare which he presented as patriotic inspiration.

Criticism of Timon, owing partly to these conditions, is divided. Until recently, critics generally arranged themselves into two opposite camps. They coldly condemned the play, or they warmly praised it; but Charlton Hinman suggests a move toward middle ground. "It seems folly," he says, "to regard the play either as one of the very best of Shakespeare's tragedies or as so bad that it cannot even be thought of as wholly his." He goes on to argue for the study of Timon as a "whole play."[1] What needs exploration in the play is not the question of placing the play in a category by deciding whether Timon is "good" Shakespeare or "bad" Shakespeare or "non-existent" Shakespeare, but the question of how one may best approach it to hone his perceptions of the play as a whole. To approach Timon this way, one must be cognizant of certain historical information about the play. For this reason, a brief overview of editions, textual problems, staging, and difficulties attendant to these matters is appropriate here.

EDITIONS:

New editions of Shakespeare's works have appeared periodically in single-play volumes or collections. H. J. Oliver, in the New Arden Edition of Timon of Athens, includes

[1] "The Life of Timon of Athens," in Alfred Harbage, ed., William Shakespeare: The Complete Works (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 1136.

in his introductory materials a useful listing of Timon editions since Rowe's edition in 1709. With Sisson's Complete Works (1953), Oliver's list stops.[2] Editions of Timon published after 1955 are of better quality than those published before that date. The excellence of the more recent editions is attributable to technological advancements in bibliographical research techniques and to the more balanced view of the play that these editions present. As a general rule, Timon's editors, until the mid-fifties, tended to press issues which arose from various major difficulties found in Timon's structure. This emphasis on structural matters concentrated scholarly concerns about the play in this narrow band of the critical spectrum. Little attention was given to Timon as a "whole" play. The modern editions avoid this problem. They more accurately reflect Shakespeare's intention as it is recorded in the Folio text, and they make available to the scholar through their introductions, notes, and other critical apparatus more extensive information about variant readings and interpretative matters.

Five important editions of Timon have appeared since the mid-fifties: the Cambridge (1957), the New Arden (1959), the one-volume Pelican Edition (1969), the Signet Edition (1972),

[2] Timon of Athens (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. ix-x.

and the Riverside Shakespeare (1974).[3] Each of these editions illustrates a shift in emphasis from concerns about Timon's structure as the focal point of critical interest to matters which better serve broader critical investigations. The Cambridge Edition stresses lexical matters in its notes and supplemental material; the New Arden aims at the restoration of many "uncertainties" of the Folio Timon; the Penguin Edition, edited by a leading expert on the First Folio, Charlton Hinman, stresses the consideration of Timon as a whole play exemplifying Shakespeare's maturity and economy of presentation; the Signet Edition is accompanied by Maurice Charney's notes, which, in stressing the word-play, contribute greatly to interpretation; and the Riverside Shakespeare provides a text which is a collation of all major texts since Rowe's.

The Riverside Shakespeare epitomizes the quality of the recent editions. Reviewers of it have noted the excellence of its text. E. J. Carpenter, reviewing the work for The Library Journal (1 May 1974, p. 1304), says that the "primary strength" of the Riverside Shakespeare is "the excellence of its text." Dennis Donoghue, reviewing the volume for the New York Times Book Review (7 April 1974, p. 23) concurs.

[3] G. Blakemore Evans, "Shakespeare's Text," in G. Blakemore Evans, ed., The Riverside Shakespeare (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974), pp. 35-36.

G. Blakemore Evans, general editor of the Riverside Shakespeare, explains why the text is outstanding. "The present text," he says, "is based on a new collation and study of the early substantive editions and a consultation of all major edited texts from Rowe's onward."[4] Yet another fact which adds weight to the authority of the Riverside Shakespeare is that Marvin Spevack, prior to the Riverside Shakespeare's publication, chose its text as the basis for his Complete and Systematic Concordance to the Works of Shakespeare. Published in six volumes from 1968-1970, Spevack's Concordance is "the first that in any definitive sense deserves the term 'complete.'"[5] The Riverside Shakespeare, then, may be taken as the best available text for working with Timon of Athens.

I have chosen the Riverside Shakespeare as my reading text. These final points are pertinent: the copy text for the Riverside Shakespeare is the First Folio. Act and scene designations follow those of the Globe edition (1864), and numbering of lines is according to Hinman's through-line-numbering system. Block TLN notation is used to locate lines.

[4] Ibid., p. 39.

[5] Ibid.

THE TEXT:

The date of the writing of Timon cannot be established with certainty. Scholars take three positions on the matter. One group believes Timon was written early in the period of Shakespeare's tragic productions, circa 1602. Another chooses the later period of 1605-1608. A third asserts a date of 1610 or later.

Among those supporters of the earliest date, Paul A. Jorgensen is the most recent. He joins Dixon Wecter[6] in believing that the character of Timon resembles the Earl of Essex. Shakespeare, a sympathizer of Essex, may have been influenced by proceedings at court. He probably felt, as Essex did, quite keenly about the proliferation of flattery and its corruptive influence there. Using the Essex-Timon resemblance as his premise, Jorgensen suggests that Timon was written about 1602 and later altered (Essex attempted rebellion and was executed in 1601) to hide references that could be construed as made to Essex.[7]

Those who support the latest date are generally the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics. For example, Edmund Malone (1790) argues for a date of 1610, on the basis

[6] "Shakespeare's Purpose in Timon of Athens," PMLA, 53 (1928), 701-721.

[7] Shakespeare's Military World (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), pp. 267, 269.

that Shakespeare would have discovered Timon prior to that date while studying Plutarch's life of Antony and that Shakespeare's fear of the plague (one occurred in 1609) accounts for the many references to plague in the play.[8] Hermann Ulrici (1846), arguing on the basis of style, believes _Timon_ was one of the last tragedies and therefore subscribes to the 1610 date.[9]

By far the most popular range of dates favored by more modern scholars is 1605-1608. E. K. Chambers believes _Timon_'s date is 1608, which should place the play, according to Chambers, between _Coriolanus_ and _Pericles_.[10] Oliver also says that _Timon_ belongs with _Coriolanus_ (1607-1608), as does Hazleton Spencer.[11] Others, namely Una Ellis-Fermor and Hardin Craig,[12] agree. Frank Kermode, although he is

[8] _The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare_, I, 372-373. Quoted in Francelia Butler, _The Strange Critical Fortunes of Shakespeare's Timon of Athens_ (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1966), p. 172.

[9] _Shakespeare's Dramatic Art_, trans. Alexander J. W. Morrison, p. 238. Quoted in Butler, p. 172.

[10] _William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems_ (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), p. 483.

[11] Oliver, p. xlii; see also Hazleton Spencer, _The Art and Life of William Shakespeare_ (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1940), p. 73.

[12] _The Jacobean Drama: An Interpretation_ (London: Methuen and Co., 1936), p. 264; see also Hardin Craig, _An Interpretation of Shakespeare_ (Columbia, Mo.: Lucas Brothers, 1948), p. 103.

reluctant to fix a specific date, concurs with the 1607-1608 period. In his introductory remarks on Timon for the Riverside Shakespeare, he writes that "without any certainty . . . one may conjecture 1607-8."[13]

Besides the uncertainty over dating, the location of Timon in the First Folio has caused confusion. W. W. Greg raises the possibility that Timon would likely not have been included in the First Folio but for the printer's difficulties, probably involving copyright, with Troilus and Cressida. "It must be borne in mind," he says, "that Timon was inserted at the last moment in the place long reserved for Troilus and Cressida, and it is quite possible that the editors did not in the first place intend to print it at all, and only decided to do so when something was needed to fill the gap."[14] Oliver's view is more moderate. He asserts that "the conclusion that Timon would not have appeared at all in the First Folio if there had been no difficulties over Troilus and Cressida can . . . not be drawn with full confidence, since there is nothing to show that Timon was not originally intended for a later place in the volume."[15]

[13] Riverside Shakespeare, p. 1442.

[14] The Shakespeare First Folio: Its Bibliographical and Textual History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 411.

[15] Oliver, p. xiv.

Such a position is quite reasonable. It coincides, too, with the view of Kermode.[16]

As Harold Wilson[17] has stated at some length, there are textual problems in Timon which are quite apparent. Oliver summarizes the problems concisely: "Even before the days of modern bibliography," he writes, "editors and readers of Timon were puzzled by what seemed to be loose ends in the play or even false starts, by certain inconsistencies in the naming of characters or the spelling of their names, and by the exceptional irregularity of the versification, which more often than in any other play by Shakespeare refused to scan according to the regular iambic pentameter pattern."[18] These problems are most often referred to as "loose ends or false starts." For example, the appearance of one of the characters in the play, Ventidius, has raised difficulties for some readers and spectators. This character appears in the opening scene of Act I as an important recipient of Timon's generosity; however, after he receives money from Timon, he disappears and is heard from only once more, and only incidentally. Contrary to what an audience might expect, he does

[16] Riverside Shakespeare, p. 1441.

[17] On the Design of Shakespearean Tragedy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 139.

[18] Oliver, p. xiv. Oliver's discussion of these matters is persuasive and I follow him closely.

not reappear in a key scene with a refusal to return to Timon's generosity. Another problem occurs in the case of Alcibiades--especially in Act III, scene v, in which he is banished by the Senate. The scene appears to be unrelated to the rest of the play, but at the same time it is one of the most "textually finished" scenes in the entire play.[19] Still another problem is that the character of Timon appears loosely developed throughout the play. He does not, for example, seem to merit his steward's admiration of his prodigality.

Inconsistencies in the names of characters and the spellings of their names present problems as well. Ventidius, at various times, is spelled "Ventiddius" and "Ventidgius"; Apemantus is sometimes spelled "Apermantus"; Phrynia on at least one occasion becomes "Phrinica"; and Timandra shifts to "Timandylo." The naming problem is most evident in the case of the steward. His name at first appears to be Flavius (II.ii.155), but later (III.i) he is ambiguously referred to, and one is led to believe that he and Flaminius, who is sent to a noble to ask for money, are one and the same. The characters Phrynia and Timandra are problems too. In one instance (IV.iii) they are whores (comforting Alcibiades) to whom Timon gives gold and the charge of mankind's destruction.

[19] Greg, p. 409.

But in another place (V.i) they appear to be merely passers-by who are recipients of Timon's gold-giving.

Versification problems arise from the extremely free verse used in the play, the large proportion and capricious occurrence of prose, and the many rhymings in unusual places. A good example of this difficulty is found in a speech by Apemantus early in the play:

> I scorn thy meat, 'twould choke me; for I should
> ne'er flatter thee. O you gods! 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,
> and all the madness is, he cheers them up too.
> I wonder men dare trust themselves with me.
> Methinks they should invite them without knives:
> Good for their meat, and safer for their lives.
> 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'as been prov'd. If I were a
> huge man, I should fear to drink at meals,
> Lest they should spy my windpipe's dangerous notes:
> Great men should drink with harness on their throats.
> (I.ii.38-52)

The speech begins with prose, shifts to verse, returns to prose, and concludes with a rhymed couplet. Portions of Alcibiades's speech to the Senators show similar difficulties, but perhaps the most frequently cited example of faulty verse is the steward's soliloquy:

> O, the fierce wretchedness that glory brings us!
> Who would not wish to be from wealth exempt,
> Since riches point to misery and contempt?
> Who would be so mock'd 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 varnish'd friends?
> Poor honest lord, brought low by his own heart,
> Undone by goodness! Strange, unusual blood,

> When man's worst sin is, he does too much good!
> Who then dares to be half so kind again?
> For bounty, that makes gods, do still mar men.
> My dearest lord, blest to be most accurs'd,
> Rich only to be wretched, thy great fortunes
> Are made thy chief afflictions. Alas, kind lord,
> He's flung in rage from this ingrateful seat
> Of monstrous friends; nor has he with him to
> Supply his life, or that which can command it.
> I'll follow and inquire him out.
> I'll ever serve his mind with my best will;
> Whilst I have gold, I'll be his steward still.
> (IV.ii.30-51)

As Oliver correctly observes, the speech is halting, coarse, and jumbled.[20]

Timon harbors problems, then, for those who study it. Finding and using the best available reading text helps a great deal. The _Riverside Shakespeare_ clears an adequate path through the tangle of textual difficulty.

STAGE HISTORY:

The stage history of _Timon_ is curious. Most recent scholars believe Shakespeare wrote the play in 1607-8 at the same time he was also completing _Coriolanus_ and _Pericles_.[21] However, _Timon_ was not published until William Jaggard brought out the First Folio. There is a puzzling interval between _Timon_'s date of composition and its publication, and an equally puzzling interval between _Timon_'s publication and

[20] Oliver, pp. xiv-xvi.

[21] Evans, "Annals, 1552-1616," _Riverside Shakespeare_, p. 1886.

its staging. For over fifty years after its publication, Timon was not staged. Hazleton Spencer points to this fact in his consideration of Timon's stage history in The Art and Life of William Shakespeare. Considering the possibility of Timon's being performed in the years just prior to and immediately following its publication, Spencer says that there is "no contemporary performance . . . on record."[22]

In 1678, Thomas Shadwell staged the first performance of Timon. He billed it as The History of Timon of Athens, The Man Hater.[23] But Shadwell's production was not the Timon of the First Folio. Shadwell's adaptation acknowledged Shakespeare's authorship but little else. It is evident, however, that Shadwell appreciated Shakespeare's play. In the dedication to his version of Timon, Shadwell uses Shakespeare's name as a tool for flattering Prince George, Duke of Buckingham, but gives himself credit as well, saying of Timon that he had "made it into a play."[24]

Shadwell's alterations of Timon are major. In deference to his own ideas about the meaning of the play and to his feelings about public taste, he tampers with the play's

[22] Spencer, p. 354.

[23] Butler gives the title as Timon of Athens or The Man Hater (pp. 119, 147). Oliver gives the title as The History of Timon of Athens the Man Hater (p. 152).

[24] Thomas Shadwell, "Dedication to the Duke of Buckingham." Quoted in Butler, p. 148.

structure. By so doing, he shifts the emphasis from the dramatization of a deeply philosophical position to the more plebeian focus of domestic tragedy.[25]

Butler compares the two plays, thoroughly discussing their differences. Her summary is useful:

> . . . While making changes in the structure which may be sound dramaturgy from the neoclassical point of view, Shadwell is not concerned with possible deeper meanings of the play. Rather, his objectives seem to be: making the play more of a domestic tragedy (by reducing Timon from an ideal figure to an ordinary man); spicing the play with light contemporary satire of women (through the added character of Melissa); making thrusts at heroic poetry (through his extensive additions to the lines of the Steward); and indulging in political criticism (through jabs at corruption which he adds to Shakespeare's characterization of Apemantus).[26]

Although Shadwell correctly observed and recorded his alterations, the fact remains that he had made the play "better" only according to his own standards, with the result that Timon had become more his play than Shakespeare's. Nevertheless, it seems that Shadwell was content to arrogate Shakespeare's reputation and authority as selling points for his version.

Shadwell's play is important because it was considered for some time as an acceptable rendering of the First Folio

[25] Butler, pp. 122-127.

[26] Ibid., p. 133.

play. The Folio Timon did not in fact reach the English stage until 1851,[27] when Phelps gave a performance of it at Sadler's Wells; thus, for a long period, Shadwell's Timon in its various adaptations was considered by all but a few to be Shakespeare's. In 1768, Shadwell's version of Timon was adapted, published, and performed with some favor by James Dance, whose stage name was James Love. Dance added to Shadwell's modernization of the play with heavy doses of sentiment.[28] Three years later, Richard Cumberland, the "arch sentimentalist," presented yet another version of Timon. He follows Shadwell in the main, his major change being the addition of even more sentiment than Dance. Cumberland makes Evanthe, who, as Evandra in Shadwell's play, was Timon's faithful mistress, Timon's daughter. She and Alcibiades fall in love, and Timon's final act is the joining of their hands. Timon becomes a doting father rather than a misanthrope. This alteration took matters a bit far, and it prompted an interesting comment from David Garrick. Garrick wrote to Cumberland, "The alterations have great merit in the writing part, but they do not add greatly to the pathos of the play, and break into its simplicity, I really believe

[27] Oliver, p. 152. Oliver notes that Timon was performed in Dublin in 1761. His implication is that the Folio version was used.

[28] For a discussion of these performances, see Spencer, pp. 354-355, and Butler, pp. 119-121, 134.

that the lovers of Shakespeare would condemn us for not giving them the original. I think that excellent rule for writing as it is laid down by Horace, simplex et unum, was never more verified than in Shakespeare's 'Timon.'"[29] Butler notes Garrick's praise of Timon's unity of structure and meaning and ponders why it was never attended to by critics.[30] Perhaps one could conjecture that it was because Garrick referred, correctly, to the First Folio Timon as the "original." If he was familiar with Shakespeare's original, he may have noted a quality unacknowledged by its adaptors; in his way, then, perhaps he tried to remind them of what he rightly felt to be Shakespeare's primary intention.

Abroad, the play was appreciated. The Kantians viewed the play as a study of a man who refused to accept the limitation of matter in the laws of nature. Frederick Schiller commented that "no piece is closer to my heart, nor in any did I learn more wisdom of my life than from Timon of Athens."[31] Timon was translated into German by Weiland and, although the translation was a poor one, the play was produced by F. J. Fischer at Prague in 1778.

[29] David Garrick, "Letter to Richard Cumberland." Quoted in Butler, p. 135.

[30] Butler, p. 135.

[31] Quoted in Butler, p. 140.

In the period 1778-1820, two more versions appeared. Thomas Hull staged Timon at Covent Garden (1786). Although Inchbold, a noted actress of the time, played Melissa (Timon's unfaithful mistress created by Shadwell), it was not well received. George Lamb revived the play in 1816. His version was somewhat closer to Shakespeare, yet he "bowdlerized in conformity to the refinement of manners."[32] Lamb's production was apparently more successful than Hull's. Shortly thereafter, in 1839, Timon, in an adapted version, was brought to the United States, but little is known about how it fared. One may assume from its previous record that its run was not long.

At long last, the first production of the original Shakespeare Timon was performed at Sadler's Wells in 1851. It could be counted a moderate success since it did not fold immediately but played forty times in a four-month period. Thereafter, until the turn of the century, the play seems to have been staged only very occasionally. Charles Calvert's Timon (Manchester, 1876), Benson's Timon (Stratford, 1892), and J. H. Leigh's Timon (Court Theatre, 1904) appear to be the only recorded professional performances.[33] The play's tendency to be staged on widely separate occasions is

[32] Butler, p. 137.

[33] Spencer, p. 355.

exemplified by its German production after the turn of the century. The Germans became interested in the play again after Paul Heyse translated and produced the Folio _Timon_ in 1910. Carefully avoiding the embellishments of those who had altered _Timon_, he did not change the text in any appreciable way. What he did, though, was to stage the play innovatively. Some of the action was staged before curtains which were raised immediately after certain scenes were completed. This technique created the feeling of simultaneous action and relieved the difficulties of interruption and disconnection apparent in sequential performances.[34] Eugen Kilian, who saw the play, commented that despite its "unevenness in value," Heyse's production proved the play could be "produced with honor to the German stage."[35]

Aside from _Timon_'s inclusion in the repertoire of Frederick Warde's company for a United States tour (1910), its revival at London's Old Vic (1922), and its performance at Westminster (1935), the play apparently was not acted in its totality until the late 1940's. In 1947, however, _Timon_ had the distinction of being the first Shakespearean play to be acted in modern dress at Stratford-on-Avon (Birmingham Repertory Theatre). In 1948-49, G. Wilson Knight staged the

[34] Butler, p. 141.

[35] Eugen Kilian, "_Timon von Athen auf der Buhne_," _Shakespeare Jahrbuch_, _59 (1913)_, _123_. Quoted in Butler, pp. 141-142.

play at Leeds and Harrogate. Scholar, actor, and critic, Knight is most sensitive to Shakespeare's intent in Timon. His long discussions on the staging of the play help one appreciate how careful treatment of the relations of character and setting could minimize critical difficulties arising from other, less sensitive productions of the play.

Timon returned to London's Old Vic in 1952.[36] Tyrone Guthrie produced the play, which starred André Morel, a noted actor of the time. Even so, it was not favorably reviewed. Harold Wilson commented: "The director and his cast did as much . . . as can be done, but they could not transcend the dramatic conditions of the text itself."[37]

In the 1960's, the play was performed at the Kammerspiele in Munich (1963) and twice in England. It was presented at the Chichester Festival Theatre by the Stratford, Ontario, Company (1964). Reviews of this performance were divided. One reviewer, sensitive to the play's structure, wrote: "While the first part strikes home--the banqueting scene with tired businessmen twisting with hostesses is magnificent--the second part, with Timon in the wilderness, comes properly to life only after his death."[38]

[36] Oliver, p. 154. He notes it returned again in 1956 with Sir Ralph Richardson in the lead. And, according to Butler (p. 142), it played again in 1958.

[37] Wilson, p. 147.

[38] Quoted in Butler, p. 145.

Another reviewer, engaged by the play's import, said: "Like *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*, it belongs to that harsh section of the Shakespeare canon that modern audiences respond to with so much more instinctive sympathy than their grandfathers did. If this is because dramatic expression of disillusion and cynicism is better understood today, then *Timon of Athens*, most disillusioned and cynical of Shakespeare's plays, is also most of and for today."[39] *Timon* was performed again in 1965 by the Royal Shakespeare Theatre,[40] and it received a critical response similar to the Chichester Festival presentation.

Timon, on the stage, has not been "popular" Shakespeare --a condition that sharpens the enigma surrounding the play. *Timon*'s general lack of success is attributable to stigmas created by textual meddlings, questions about the play's artistic legitimacy, and perhaps its misanthropic theme. These difficulties lead one to the conclusion that *Timon* is a poor play and little else. But *Timon*, albeit occasionally, has been well received. Thus, if *Timon* is generally regarded as poor, how may one account for its moments of excellence? The answer lies in historical perspective. Until this century, scholars were engaged by the problems of producing

[39] Ibid., p. 146.

[40] Ibid., p. 147.

editions with accurate texts. These problems have only recently been solved through modern technological advancements in bibliographical research. Moreover, it is conceivable that audiences--especially when one considers their tastes prior to the twentieth century--were reluctant to accept and deal with *Timon*'s cynical theme. Modern audiences, by contrast, are much more amenable to the play, perhaps because it dramatizes a theme which today is both topical and familiar.

Before one attempts an interpretative study of *Timon*, then, he must recognize the problematic atmosphere which enfolds the play. He must be aware of the difficulties attendant to *Timon*'s editions: the deplorable condition of the Folio play and the resultant emphasis placed on *Timon*'s structure by its editors. He must consider the problems of the text: its uncertain date, its position in the Folio, its problems created by inconsistencies and irregularities in verse, characters' names, and so forth. He must be aware of *Timon*'s stage history: the alterations made to the play by its early producers such as Shadwell and Dance, the unevenness of its production history, and its generally unfavorable impression on audiences. With these matters considered, one is in a better position to explore other ways of understanding the play.

Chapter II

A REVIEW OF CRITICISM AND CRITICAL ATTITUDES FROM THE FIRST FOLIO TO THE PRESENT

Much criticism of _Timon of Athens_ is vitiated because many scholars think it of prime importance to attend to the play's structure. This concern is understandable because _Timon_ certainly has its structural problems. We have seen that the play's text is poor in the First Folio, and the problems created by that condition have justified the plethora of studies of its structure--mostly by editors, not critics. Editorial concern over the Folio version's lack of division into acts and scenes and the play's rough versification laid the groundwork and provided the impetus for critical curiosity about _Timon_'s structure.

Gerard Langbaine, not an editor of Shakespeare but a literary historian, in _An Account of the English Dramatick Poets_ (1691), pointed to _Timon_'s absence of act divisions in the First Folio: "The play is originally Shakespeare's, but so imperfectly printed, that 'tis not divided into acts."[41]

[41] _An Account of the English Dramatick Poets_, p. 451. Quoted in Butler, p. 10. Butler's discussion of _Timon_ criticism contains material unavailable elsewhere in convenient form. I rely heavily upon the information Butler provides.

Langbaine's comment is important. English Dramatick Poets was a widely used source book for eighteenth-century scholars (his commentary would not have been taken lightly); and he very early calls attention to the relation of the condition of the text and the play's structure.

In the eighteenth century, five editors of Shakespeare--Rowe, Pope, Johnson, Capell, and Steevens--set the shape of Timon criticism for the years to come. They satisfied themselves with their divisions of the play by acts and concerned themselves with structural defects.

Nicholas Rowe, the first editor of Shakespeare's plays, divided Timon into five acts, as he divided each of the other tragedies. Rowe's acts had long scene divisions. His editorial principle appears to have been to divide the play according to unity of place rather than unity of action. His first divisions--Acts I, II, and III--stand, but his division of Acts IV and V do not. The division of Acts IV and V, in fact, remained a point of contention until Capell's edition some fifty years later. Rowe's long scene divisions dictated that he begin Act V with the Steward's soliloquy. The previous act begins with Timon in exile and develops through a long series of visitations--from the Steward, Alcibiades, prostitutes, Apemantus, and the bandits. When the bandits exit attention moves from Timon to them and their conversation. Rightly enough, Rowe divided the final two acts here

because attention shifted from Timon. But the shift was very brief. The procession of visitors to Timon's cave in the wood was rendered incomplete. The Poet and the Painter enter, followed by the Steward and the Senators--all encounters which help build the play's climax. Later editors were troubled by the emphasis that Rowe's division forced on the building of tension prior to the climax of the play. They felt that Rowe's division weakened the climax unnecessarily since it broke the sense of procession created by the visitors. His division was regarded, therefore, as dramatically unsatisfactory.

Fourteen years after Rowe, Pope paid even more attention to the structure of the latter portion of the play. Pope's act divisions corresponded with Rowe's, but his scene divisions did not. Pope adopted the French system of scene division. As each new character appeared, a new scene was created. The result was that each act contained several short scenes, giving the whole play a very choppy effect. The important alteration that Pope made, however, was his removal of the visit of the soldier to Timon's tomb in the woods from the text (V.iii). He placed the entire scene (eleven lines) in a footnote. This emendation took major editorial liberty with the play's structure. Pope's rationale for the change, moreover, suggested that the structural problem he saw in the scene's inclusion was the result of

transcribing the play from an ill-written prompter's book or the imprecise writing-out of parts for the actors' use.

After Pope, little new ground was turned until Samuel Johnson's edition appeared in 1765. Johnson pointed out structural problems which have endured. Always the level thinker, he understood the arbitrariness of act divisions. This understanding left him free to deal with more refined determinants of structure. He identified three circumstances which came to be regarded as structural problems in the play. The first structural problem, according to Johnson, was to be found in the scene between Apemantus and the Fool (II.ii). Johnson saw this scene as structurally defective because of the corruption of the text. He also objected to the dialogue of the Poet and the Painter, which later became accepted as the opening scene of Act V. His explanation of the difficulty involved here was simple and direct: it was bad writing on Shakespeare's part. Finally, he questioned the soldier-in-the-woods scene for what he thought to be its exemplary bad writing. In addition to these specific comments, Johnson added that general observation whose negative quality and bluntness have plagued _Timon_ since: "In the plan," he stated, "there is not much art."[42]

[42] Quoted in W. K. Wimsatt, _Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare_ (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960), p. 99.

Within three years of Johnson's work, Edward Capell's edition of Shakespeare was finished (1768). With this edition, all major work on the division of the play into acts ceased. No new attention was drawn to the play's text until just prior to the turn of the century when George Steevens' edition of Shakespeare (1793) appeared. Steevens' editorial contribution was his identification of rough, irregular lines and his attempt to "regularize" them. His editorial decision to do this and the effect it had on the reading of the *Timon* text cleared the way for scholars in the next century to argue the position that *Timon* was not solely the work of Shakespeare.

Timon came into the nineteenth century with critics and editors squarely confronting the problems it offered. They came quickly to grips with the proposition that *Timon*, which was a late Shakespearean play and which should have evidenced Shakespeare's maturity and greatness, was fraught with problems. How could one account for the structural difficulties? Was the play a result of bad writing on Shakespeare's part or could another explanation be postulated? In view of the counts against it, could there be any redeeming qualities in the play? As a result of this inquiry, *Timon* criticism in the nineteenth century divided into three related areas of concern, according to three prevailing attitudes. The largest group of critics, made up of editors,

concentrated on structure. Another, somewhat smaller group of critics, even though its members approached the play from a structural perspective and considered it flawed and poor, nevertheless acknowledged Timon's depth of meaning. Still another--a very small group in comparison with the others--concentrated on the meaning of the play and found it to be quite satisfying; to it the structural problems were peripheral matters. These divisions occurred because two sets of critical standards were being applied to the play. The many scholars who considered structural integrity as a prerequisite to the gleaning of any meaning from the play (and who came at the play with this consideration uppermost in their minds) took one of two positions: they felt, as Johnson did, that Shakespeare had written a bad play; or they excused Timon's inconsistencies by attributing its inferior portions to other authors. The other group looked first at meaning and then at structure. To get at the play's meaning, they disregarded the structural difficulties entirely, minimized them by asserting that Timon was left unfinished, or praised the structure as a significant outgrowth of Shakespeare's use of an experimental form.[43] Thus, two theories dominated the respectable explanations of Timon's condition. Scholars who stressed structure concluded that its

[43] Butler, p. 157.

difficulties were best explained by divided authorship. Those who stressed meaning concluded that Shakespeare--since he was a man and fallible on occasion--left the play unfinished.

The first substantial suggestion of divided authorship came from Charles Knight in his 1839 edition of Shakespeare's complete works. Carefully weighing the scenes Johnson had identified as troublesome, Knight observed that they contained stylistic elements--rough lines that, typically, fused prose and verse--uncharacteristic of Shakespeare. Putting this observation together with Steevens' work on "regularizing" Shakespeare's lines (and *Timon* contained no small number of examples of lines Steevens deemed irregular), Knight concluded that *Timon* was not the work of Shakespeare only. In the introductory notes to *Timon* in *The Pictorial Shakespeare*, Knight wrote: "The differences in style, as well as the more important differences in the cast of thought, which prevail in the successive scenes of this drama, are so remarkable as to justify the conclusion that it is not wholly the work of Shakespere."[44] Knight goes on to suggest that Shakespeare had taken an older play, originally produced by an artist of inferior abilities, and redone it, particularly in the parts

[44] *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare* (New York: P. F. Collier, 1881), p. 333. This edition is the American printing of Knight's 1839 text (London: Charles Knight, 1839).

of the play dealing with the character of Timon (which Knight considered wholly the work of Shakespeare).

Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, Knight's work was seminal to other conjectures about divided authorship as an explanation of the problems of the play. Indeed, the theory of divided authorship, operating in a cyclical fashion during the period, moved from the realm of certainty to that of uncertainty and back again. By 1875, the mythical author of the original play for whom Howard Staunton, Alexander Dyce, and Gulian Verplanck had searched during the fifty years after Knight's work appeared, was thought, without reasonable doubt, to exist. To Grant White, who edited Shakespeare in 1875 and who followed Knight's reasoning, he was as real as could be. White says of Timon: "Shakespeare wrote a large part, and all the more important parts of Timon; but the rest, not inconsiderable in bulk, is the work of an inferior artist."[45]

Three years later, Frederick Gard Fleay, in his Shakespeare Manual, attempted to offer the final word in favor of divided authorship. Unlike Knight, Fleay asserted that Shakespeare left Timon after beginning it. It was subsequently finished by a second, inferior author whom Fleay

[45] Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies Histories Tragedies and Poems, Riverside Edition, ed. William Grant White, V (1883), 319. Quoted in Butler, p. 19.

identifies as Cyril Tourneur. Fleay identifies Tourneur not on the basis of his elaborate metrical tests (which he explains and uses elsewhere in the _Manual_) but on the basis of a few lines in the problematic fourth act which betray Tourneur's style. Erroneous though it was, Fleay's study did push the divided authorship argument to an extreme. Fleay therefore provoked more considered opinion of the problem. Under close scrutiny, the influence of the divided authorship theory began to wane.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, editors were again considering the idea of an inferior author's hand in _Timon_ as uncertain theory. Israel Gollancz, editor of the Temple Edition of _Timon_ (1899), was the last editor who strongly supported the possibility of divided authorship. By the twenties, the theory was just that--theory and little more. Stanley Williams, editor of the Yale Edition of _Timon_, thought that Shakespeare wrote all major portions of the play and that there was little doubt that _Timon_ was mostly his.

Critics, however, were not as ready as the editors to put the matter aside. Some remained convinced that divided authorship was the major question about _Timon_ to be investigated. Ernest Hunter Wright, in a monograph titled _The Authorship of Timon of Athens_ (1910), declared, "Scholars are all but finally agreed on double authorship in _Timon_, and, roughly speaking, fairly well agreed on what each author

wrote."[46] Wright is confident of his position, and he argues that Shakespeare wrote the original play, which was later embellished by a second, inferior author. But confidence does not guarantee a reasonable argument, and Wright's is flawed in many places.[47] Like his predecessor, Fleay, to whom he gives much credit, Wright carried the argument to its extreme. Wright's argument is, at best, minimally effective.

The last buds of interest in the divided authorship theory opened seven years later. Several scholars wished to present their nominees for the second author. In 1917, J. M. Robertson named his candidate. Arguing on the basis of inconsistencies in the value assigned to the monetary units (talents) discussed in the play, Robertson concluded that George Chapman was the second author. Chapman, he asserted, knew the value of a talent; Shakespeare, on the other hand, did not. Close on the heels of Robertson were Thomas Marc Parrott and H. Dugdale Sykes. Parrott, in _The Problem of Timon of Athens_, agreed with Robertson on Chapman, but he gave the argument a new twist. Unwilling to assign Chapman an "inferior" place, Parrott postulated that a third author

[46] _The Authorship of Timon of Athens_ (1910; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1966), p. 24.

[47] Butler, p. 33. Butler shreds Wright's argument with a devastating assessment of his major points.

was involved and that it was he who contributed the most badly written passages. According to Parrott, Shakespeare began the play and laid it aside. It was then finished by Chapman and a third, unknown author. Sykes, a year later, suggested that an earlier play by John Day and Thomas Middleton had been revised by Shakespeare. His conjectures are mildly interesting, but his evidence is as tenuous as Fleay's and Wright's.

By the thirties, the theory of divided authorship had, for the most part, been abandoned. A few persons, namely Hardin Craig and Winifred Nowottny, still subscribe to it, but the theory has little support at present. We should also note, however, that the concern with structural difficulties gave impetus to the theory that the text had been left unfinished. Although the so-called "unfinished theory" had been put forward in the nineteenth century, it was overshadowed by the divided authorship theory.

Shortly before Knight's investigations spurred interest in the divided authorship theory, a German Romantic critic, Hermann Ulrici, suggested that the structural problems of _Timon_ could be accounted for by considering the play as one which Shakespeare simply did not finish. From almost the same store of information that Knight had used, Ulrici drew a different conclusion: "These defects," Ulrici wrote of the structural problems in _Timon_, "force me to conjecture that

the piece may have wanted the author's last finishing touch."[48]

Initially Ulrici's theory gained only a small following, and not until the twentieth century was the cogency of his position fully realized. The unfinished theory took hold in the early twentieth century as a result of E. K. Chambers' work. Chambers recognized its merits and strongly supported it. In an early paper (1907) reprinted in Shakespeare: A Survey, Chambers wrote: "I should be sorry to dismiss the second hand as altogether out of the question, but it does not seem to me that its presence is rigidly necessitated by the conditions of the problem. May not Timon of Athens have been left unfinished still? The soliloquy of the Steward . . . gives me the impression of being not so much un-Shakespearean as incompletely Shakespearean."[49] Chambers persisted in his support of the unfinished play idea. By 1930, when the divided authorship theory had ceased to arouse professional interest, Chambers could assert with confidence, "I believe that the real solution to its [Timon's] 'problem,'

[48] Shakespeare's Dramatic Art, trans. Alexander J. W. Morrison, 1846, p. 238. Quoted in Butler, p. 45.

[49] Shakespeare: A Survey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 482.

indicated long ago by Ulrici and others, is that it is unfinished still."[50]

Chambers' confidence and prestige made his support of the unfinished play idea important to its rapid and general acceptance. In 1936, G. L. Kittredge agreed with Chambers in his edition of Shakespeare's works. He said, "Flaws and irregularities, as well as the defective interweaving of the two major strands of plot, the Timon story and the Alcibiades story, are adequately explained by the obvious fact that Shakespeare never really finished the play."[51]

In 1942, Una Ellis-Fermor followed Chambers' lead with her "_Timon of Athens_: An Unfinished Play." In the article, Ellis-Fermor cites Chambers' "customary pithiness" and emphatically agrees with his view that _Timon_ is unfinished.[52] In the same decade, Hardin Craig, although expressing some sentiment for the divided authorship theory, toes the mark drawn by his predecessors. "_Timon of Athens_," he asserts, "is a play which contains some of Shakespeare's best writing

[50] _William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems_, p. 482.

[51] _The Complete Works of Shakespeare_ (1936; rpt. New York: Grolier Inc., 1958), p. 1045.

[52] "_Timon of Athens_: An Unfinished Play," in Kenneth Muir, ed., _Shakespeare the Dramatist and Other Papers by Una Ellis-Fermor_ (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961), p. 159.

but, on the most probable hypothesis, was left by its author incomplete."[53]

The scholars of the fifties agreed with the consensus of their immediate predecessors that the play is unfinished. W. W. Greg, arguing from his examination of stage directions in the First Folio, concludes that the "directions are reminiscent of what may have been jottings in the author's original plot."[54] J. C. Maxwell, who edited Timon for Cambridge, follows suit, as does H. J. Oliver, Timon's editor in the New Arden Edition. Like the divided authorship theory in the late nineteenth century, the unfinished theory became accepted as fact. And it became so in light of close, careful scrutiny backed by technological advances in textual criticism such as Pollard's clarification of the problem of the Quarto texts (1909), Greg's theory of "numerical reconstruction" (1910), Wilson's investigation of spelling forms (1923), various analyses of printing-house procedures, Willoughby's exploration of stop-press correction (1932), Hinman's study of the order of the plays in the First Folio and the plays dependent on the Folio as their copy text (1943-1963), and the use of mechanical devices--Hinman's collating machine and computers--to verify, sort, and

[53] An Interpretation of Shakespeare (Columbia, Mo.: Lucas Brothers, 1948), p. 246.

[54] Greg, p. 410.

integrate materials. Guided by such information, scholars in the seventies--for example, Richard D. Fly and Frank Kermode--regard Timon as unfinished but wholly Shakespearean.[55]

Thus, over the years, critical thought based on considerations of structure has moved from assertions of divided authorship to an acceptance of Timon as unfinished but entirely Shakespeare's. Now we must consider a third major strain in critical investigation which, although it appears to be a minor one, is quite important for modern assessments of Timon.

The third strain of critical thought which developed is represented by scholarship which emphasizes Timon's meaning, as distinguished from its structure. Varied Romantic studies emphasized the play as an extension of Shakespeare's mind and focused on it as an organic unit of meaning. These readers developed views which are generally more positive than those of editors and critics who attended only to the structural problems in the play. Hazlitt, for example, spoke of Timon as illustrative of Shakespeare's design. "It is one of the few," he wrote, "in which he seems to be in earnest throughout, never to trifle nor go out of his way. He does not

[55] Richard D. Fly, "The Ending of 'Timon of Athens': A Reconsideration," Criticism, 15 (1973), 242-252. See also Frank Kermode, "Timon of Athens," in Riverside Shakespeare, p. 1441.

relax in his efforts, nor lose sight of the unity of design. It is the only play of our author in which spleen is the predominant feeling of the mind."[56] Coleridge saw Timon this way: "It is a Lear of the satirical drama, a Lear of domestic or ordinary life--a local eddy of passion on the high road of society, while all around are the week-day goings on of wind and weather. . . ."[57] Gervinus regarded Shakespeare as an ethical teacher. His comments on Timon indicate that he viewed Shakespeare's use of Timon as a character through which Shakespeare extolled the virtues of moderation by exploring the futility inherent in excess.[58] And Edward Dowden, in 1874, observed: "Shakespere was interested in . . . Timon, not merely as a dramatic study, and not merely for the sake of moral edification, but because he recognized in the Athenian misanthrope one whom he had known, an intimate acquaintance, the Timon of Shakespere's own breast."[59]

[56] William Hazlitt, The Round Table and Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1964), p. 210.

[57] T. M. Raysor, ed., Coleridge's Shakespeare Criticism (1811-1834) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), I, 108-109.

[58] G. G. Gervinus, Shakespeare Commentaries, trans. F. E. Bunnett. Quoted in Arthur M. Eastman, A Short History of Shakespearean Criticism (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 122-124.

[59] Edward Dowden, Shakespeare, His Mind and Art. Quoted in Arthur M. Eastman and G. B. Harrison, eds., Shakespeare's Critics from Johnson to Auden: A Medley of Judgments (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), p. 210.

These readers sought keys to meaning, the first consideration of *Timon* in studies which view the play as formally experimental or as a complexity of recurrent themes and images.

Certain twentieth-century critics (who accept the play as unfinished) see *Timon* as an experiment in form. An exponent of this view is Una Ellis-Fermor. In her *The Jacobean Drama* she calls the play atypical among Shakespeare's plays, especially *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*. Contrasting the opening scenes of *Timon* with the more conventional plays, she finds *Timon*'s opening "highly individual" and labels it as "experimental." She observes that *Timon* is "more revolutionary in form" than any of the other plays with which she compares it.[60] A. S. Collins calls the play "the most striking of his [Shakespeare's] experiments."[61]

By the fifties, *Timon* was regarded, more often than not, as a complete play. Charles Jasper Sisson called it "finished"[62] and others agreed. Perhaps Oliver's comment typifies thinking about *Timon* in the late fifties. By stressing the play's experimental quality, he implies its completeness as well. Oliver says: "The play is indeed

[60] *The Jacobean Drama: An Interpretation* (London: Methuen and Co., 1936), pp. 34-34.

[61] "*Timon of Athens*: A Reconsideration," *Review of English Studies*, 22 (1946), 97.

[62] *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), p. 910.

. . . a most interesting experiment in dramatic technique; and the technique used is very far in advance of his own day and is very like that of certain modern novels."[63]

The most notable advantage of studies of theme and image in Timon is that they serve, perhaps better than any of the aforementioned studies, to reveal the play's unity and to link it with other of Shakespeare's works. Caroline Spurgeon's investigation (1935), which focuses on the candy-fawning dogs as a key image, is an example.[64] Her meticulous tracing of Shakespeare's images helped convince critics that the play was dominantly Shakespeare's and all of a piece with his other works in his use of recurrent images. Equally pertinent is Willard Farnham's work, which is typical of recent imagistic studies. In The Shakespearean Grotesque, Farnham uses the study of animal imagery--images of predatory animals preying upon helpless and unsuspecting creatures--to point out the dramatist's emphasis on human suffering. The use of these images is common to King Lear and Timon.[65] It is, in fact, a dominant theme in all of Shakespeare's tragedies. Farnham's ideas underscore the "holding together" value of investigations of image and

[63] Oliver, p. xlviii.

[64] Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), pp. 198-199.

[65] The Shakespearean Grotesque (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 107.

structure. The significance of these studies is that they generate cohesiveness in widely diverse materials by allowing the reduction of a complex whole to a single feature or unifying principle which may then be linked with others of similar type.

While it is not well known to theater-goers or to the general reader, *Timon of Athens* is interestingly problematic. Much criticism has been written about it, and, as we have seen, much of that criticism is one-sided. Except for the Romantics and contemporary scholars, those interested in *Timon* have been satisfied to focus their critical energies on the play's structure. It is unfortunate that a great many of these critics have dismissed the play as poor because of its structural problems without looking beyond these problems. The negative critical atmosphere has stifled those who have deep feelings about the play's worth and who wish to discover new approaches to the play to sound out these feelings.

Anticipating Chapter III, below, where the newest critical thinking about *Timon* will be applied in its interpretation, we profit by considering this fact: Criticism should serve the interests of those who wish to discover new ways of understanding a work of art. This is especially true in the case of *Timon*. Critical investigations of the play should not seek fixed judgments and absolute solutions.

Rather, they should have as their purpose adding to one's cumulative knowledge of the work. If one looks past those already identified difficulties and toward more positive investigations, a richer understanding of both the work and its place in Shakespeare's canon may be realized. Recent critics are making progress in discovering new ways of looking at Shakespeare. In *Timon*'s case, their invention and enthusiasm are both refreshing and inspiring.

Chapter III

A RECONSIDERATION OF TIMON OF ATHENS USING THE PRINCIPLES OF DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY AND EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY

As we have seen, critical readings of Timon of Athens are composed of formal studies which stress the play's structure and thematic studies which stress its meaning. Of these studies, the structural investigations dominate. A result of their dominance has been the development of attitudes toward Timon which are decidedly negative. Ellis-Fermor's assertion, for example, that Timon is "unfinished" is typical of this trend. She understands the play's lack of finish not in the sense that the play is complete and wants refinement, but in the sense that the play (despite the experimental quality she sees in it) is a hodgepodge of jottings and rough sketches. Her view does little to encourage positive approaches to Timon.

Historically, readers of Timon appear unable to get past the problems they see in the play's structure. Their tendency, in fact, is to remain caught up in these considerations--considerations that unnecessarily restrict their investigations. This condition is unfortunate, for it

discourages attempts to achieve a more complete understanding of Timon. It is true that the play has problems, and we are indebted to investigators of structure for pointing them out and helping us to understand them. But, sadly, their efforts leave the modern reader with the view that Timon is a Shakespearean play which has many difficulties and little, if any, merit. What is not needed in Timon criticism, then, is the perpetuation of structural investigations and their negative implications. What is needed in Timon criticism is for investigators to open up new, more positive avenues of inquiry which consider Timon as a whole play that reflects the enduring value of humanistic insight that Shakespeare's dramas provide.

Harry Levin observes that "Shakespearean drama has continually renewed itself through adaptation to changing times. It has adapted not only to modern dress but to current issues; thus the conflicts of the Roman plays have been sharpened by the political issues of the twentieth century."[66] In the light of recent social, governmental, and environmental disorder and the consequent disillusionment, men are becoming increasingly receptive to investigations that explore the nature of their own characters. Certainly Timon is sharpened by current issues involving the psychological and philosophical condition of modern man. Recently, some Shakespearean

[66] "Introduction," Riverside Shakespeare, p. 1.

scholars have become more amenable to psychological-philosophical inquiries directed to the understanding of Shakespeare's characters, not so much as literary characters but as persons who experience difficulties similar to those real men face today. Such studies connect Shakespeare's thinking with present-day psychological and philosophical preoccupations with the self and with the self's function as the determiner of an individual's moral and social character.

Critics who study Shakespeare from a psychological-philosophical perspective draw the terms of their criticism from the findings of more general, non-literary theories developed in recent years to explain and treat psychological conditions. Contemporary theories about mental disorder center on questions about the self. More specifically, they focus on the tension that exists between one's self and the persona he projects. For an individual to be in a stable mental condition, i.e. normal, his self, which is that integrating core of personality that makes an individual aware of his own identity or being, and his persona, which is the surface one presents to others, and to himself, must be congruent. When this occurs, one is able to answer the Oedipal question, "Who am I?"--a pivotal concept in one's psychological evaluation of his mental condition. When the Oedipal question is answered, the individual can be said to thoroughly know himself. He is whole.

Treatment of mental disorder centers on helping develop an individual's awareness of the unique self within and on encouraging the individual to allow the self to perform its integrative function. Therapies developed to deal with integrative disorders, such as humanistic-existential therapy, interpersonal therapy, and group-encounter therapy, involve role-playing as an important component of treatment. Persons engaged in such therapies act out roles which allow them to isolate and recognize incongruencies between the self and the persona (or personas). For example, in psychodrama (a psychotherapeutic technique devised by J. L. Moreno), one acts out problem situations in a theater-like setting. By placing himself in various roles and by performing them, one is able to discover a persona which corresponds to the self he is otherwise unable to identify. Existential therapy proceeds in a similar way. The significant difference is that the therapist offers his self as a model to the person he is treating. The therapist refuses to allow the person to respond to him as anything other than what he really is. The person suffering from integrative disorder, by confronting the constancy of the therapist's self, is forced to clarify and choose his own alternative ways of being. He is encouraged to cast off personas which represent him as anything other than what he really is, just as the therapist does. By

stripping off the layers built up by the unintegrated personas, the person eventually discovers his own unique self.

The underlying assumption of these therapies is that role-playing--that is, acting things out in therapy sessions--is the best test of hypotheses about the self. Psychologists, psychiatrists, and, recently, literary critics recognize the close correspondence of diagnostic and theraputic technique and the principles of art formation in the drama. "The principles . . . of art," writes psychiatrist Daniel E. Schneider, "form an implicit interpretation of a dream world turned inside out, with all the principles of dream formation at work in art formation, for each spectator to 'walk in dreams' and wake at the end of the play."[67] The significance of Schneider's statement is that he suggests the origin of the creative genius at work in the production of the drama is similar to the origin of one's mental conception of his self--the source of problems of disorder. It seems fair to say that greater understanding of the enduring, universal qualities of Shakespeare's drama might come from the use of certain modern psychological and philosophical concepts in criticism.

Shakespeare persistently dramatizes the condition of mental disorder. His characters, particularly in the tragedies but in the comedies and histories as well, suffer the

[67] _The Psychoanalyst and the Artist_ (New York: Mentor Books, 1962), pp. 224-225.

frustration, the anxiety, the pain, and the despair of self-loss. Alex Aronson, a recent critic, in establishing a connection between Shakespeare's work and the techniques developed by modern psychologists, observes in Psyche and Symbol in Shakespeare that "what strikes the reader most in . . . professionally informed diagnosis [applied to Shakespeare], is the conspicuous emphasis on some intrinsic sickness of the human soul."[68] In Aronson's view, Shakespeare's characters are people torn in halves by the disjunction of self and persona. A bit later, Aronson clarifies this point in a discussion of the similarities of the thinking of Jung and the attitudes reflected in Shakespeare's plays:

> Both Shakespeare and Jung thought of man's divided nature as akin to that of the actor compelled to play a part not necessarily of his own free choice. Thus he is invariably tempted to adjust his ego to the mask he is wearing rather than to make the mask conform to his self. Some of Shakespeare's most intriguing plays represent the tension arising from the unresolved conflict between man's unconscious and his persona, between opposing demands made upon his psyche and the public role he is made to play. In such figures no self-realization is possible until the true face beneath the assumed mask has been revealed.[69]

It is part of the critical lore that Shakespeare viewed the stage as a metaphor for life. Aronson draws attention to Shakespeare's theater metaphor in his commentary on the

[68] Psyche and Symbol in Shakespeare (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 11.

[69] Ibid., p. 44.

tension between self and persona. As one reads Aronson, he recalls the words Shakespeare puts into the mouths of his characters. One remembers, for example, Jaques: "All the world's a stage / And all the men and women merely players"; and Macbeth: "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, / And then is heard no more." In these metaphors, Shakespeare identifies his own terms and his own arena for his investigation of man's struggle for wholeness, for identity. Since this is so, the literary critic may dispense with much of the specialized vocabulary of the modern psychologist, but still make good use of psychological principles and practice in studying Shakespeare.

Shakespeare has been called a psychologist. One thinks of Goethe's often-cited statement, "Shakespeare is a great psychologist and whatever can be known of the heart of man may be found in his plays." But Shakespeare was not a psychologist, despite the appropriateness of Goethe's figure of speech. Shakespeare was a dramatist. Neither was Shakespeare an existential philosopher. But his emphasis on the individual and on the negative aspects produced by a lack of self-knowledge has an existential temper. Shakespeare dramatized life as a struggle for the actualization of self, for identity. Rolf Soellner points to Shakespeare's penchant to raise the question of self-knowledge. In the introduction

to Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge, Soellner notes that the classical invention to "know thyself" was a pre-occupation of the Renaissance mind and that it is a concept inclusive of a variety of Shakespeare's considerations of man's condition. As a result, the question of a character's self-knowledge became an important element of Shakespeare's method of characterization.[70] Walter Kaufmann's notion coincides with this idea: "The prime source of any feeling of futility, frustration, and anxiety," he writes of Shakespeare's people, "lies in the self."[71] Hamlet's words, "to be or not to be," reveal a lack of self-knowledge in the most basic existential terms. They reverberate in Sartre: "Once a man has seen that values depend upon himself, in that state of forsakenness he can will only one thing, and that is freedom as the foundation of all values. . . . Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what life is."[72] One remembers that "free choice" is integral to the difficulties which Shakespeare's characters confront and that they become

[70] Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge (Athens, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1972), p. xv.

[71] From Shakespeare to Existentialism (New York: Anchor Books, 1960), p. 38.

[72] Jean Paul Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Methuen and Co., 1948), p. 41.

free to choose to the extent that the self is recognized. In the light of this philosophical stance, one can perceive more clearly that the difficulties experienced by Shakespeare's characters are often existential. Long ago, Shakespeare seems to have grasped the essence of the position supported by Thomas Szasz in his recent assessment of mental disorder. Szasz concluded: "Mental illness is not something a person has, but something he does or is."[73]

Shakespeare's characters, more often than not, fail to realize their potential. They fail because they act contrary to their essential natures. Like actors, who sometimes become the people of the roles they play, Shakespeare's people develop personas which disguise their real selves. Each one's self is buried under a geometrically increasing weight of contrivance. They cannot become complete men. Only when one of them somehow solves the problem of his identity, only when he comes to know who he really is, does he fully exist--an existential premise that Shakespeare seems to have developed long before existentialism.

Readers who are unaware of or insensitive to the psychological-philosophical possibilities in the interpretation of Shakespeare's works pass over _Timon_ without seeing the play's place in the design of his dramatizations of man's

[73] _The Myth of Mental Illness_, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 267.

struggle for wholeness. Mark Van Doren's comment about _Timon_ in his book, _Shakespeare_, is typical: "If Aristotle was right when he called plot the soul of tragedy, 'Timon of Athens' has no soul. . . . The play does without complications. Its action is the simplest that can be imagined. Upon the refusal of four friends to give him money when he needs it Timon passes from the extreme of prodigality to the extreme of misanthropy."[74] Van Doren and those who agree with him limit their critical view by their fast hold on the dictum of Aristotle. _Timon_ does have a soul. Timon's extremes of life are underpinned by the soul of the man Timon once was and still is at core. Timon suffers abuse and despair because his self--his true nature--is suppressed by personas it can neither integrate nor overcome.

What Shakespeare does in _Timon_ is create a character who suffers from mental disorder--a character who does not recognize the self within and who, as a consequence, cannot be precisely who he is. In this context, Shakespeare's figure of Timon becomes every man who despairs over the disjunction that lack of self-knowledge causes. Kermode's view of the play suggests this idea. To Kermode, _Timon_ "is a tragedy of ideas. . . . Shakespeare is trying not to focus attention on the fall of greatness, but to explore the

[74] _Shakespeare_ (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1939), p. 249.

affinity between the image a great man may see of himself in the magnanimous glass of the flatterer, and the misanthropy that colors the world as he sees it in the mirror of his own avoidable misfortune."[75] Kermode's statement needs amplification. To begin with, one might consider Kermode's suggestion of a "fall of greatness." Certainly "greatness," and the fall from it, as understood in Macbeth, for example, does not apply here, since Timon does not dramatize a fall from greatness. Given the approach suggested here, "greatness" is definable not in terms of high position but in terms of what makes any one man different and distinct from others--what gives him *his* identity. If one imagines "greatness" as an attribute one acquires by being who he is, then José Ortega y Gasset's commentary on "heroism" (made in assessment of Don Quixote) suggests Timon's "greatness." Consider Ortega's words:

> . . . It is a fact that men exist who are determined not to be contented with reality. Such men aim at altering the course of things; they refuse to repeat the gestures that custom, tradition, or biological instincts force them to make. These men we call heroes, because to be a hero means to be singled out, to be oneself. If we refuse to have our actions determined by heredity or environment it is because we seek to base the origin of our action on ourselves and only on ourselves. The hero's will is not that of his ancestors nor of his society, but his own. This will to be oneself is heroism.[76]

[75] "Timon of Athens," in Riverside Shakespeare, p. 1444.

[76] "The Nature of the Novel," Hudson Review, 10 (1957), 32-33.

Timon's "greatness," his "heroism," is evident in the play. His life dramatizes a pattern of existence which moves from a shallow, partial self-knowledge to self-loss to a deeper, more complete self-knowledge. "Greatness" rises from Timon's struggle to discover a meaning for his existence--to establish an identity uniquely his own.

A second very important point that Kermode suggests involves Timon's "image." Because Timon does not know himself, he allows those who surround him to construct his identity. The image of extreme prodigality, generated by the sycophantic courtiers, Timon accepts as a reflection of his real self. J. Leeds Barroll, in a chapter titled "Man's Rage for Image," explains: "Timon's _volte face_ has comprehended two diametrically opposed perceptions of reality just as his two different senses of self have generated radically differing analyses of the objective world about him. Behind his benevolence lay the self-portrait of 'benefactor to mankind' until disillusionment with what the world really is produced the internal picture of 'prophet of universal corruption.'"[77] Barroll's observation points to Timon's "two different senses of self." Because Timon lacks that constancy which knowledge of self would give him, he cannot perceive the external world through the personas he adopts--

[77] _Artificial Persons: The Formation of Character in the Tragedies of Shakespeare_ (Columbia, S. C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1974), p. 96.

and therefore the self is not allowed to perform its integrative function.

The key to Kermode's observation about Timon is that Timon's misfortune is "avoidable." The existential notion of "authenticity" is an essential element of the play. The authentic man knows himself, and he is free. He creates his own identity and, in doing so, achieves greatness. Moreover, he encourages the same quality in others. Timon's difficulty is that his authentic self is overshadowed, and therefore suppressed, by unintegrated personas. The authentic Timon, as we shall see, is a good, noble man who possesses a sincere love for his fellow man. This Timon is hidden under the guise of a flatterer and a misanthrope. The authentic self emerges only once, for a brief moment, before the end of the play, but it pervades the entire play.

Suggestions of Timon's goodness--the central quality of his authentic self--recur throughout the play. Very early, the Merchant speaks of Timon as "a most incomparable man" of "untirable and continuate goodness" (I.i.9-10). The Merchant, whose interest is in the use of flattery for his personal gain, mistakenly equates Timon's wealth with Timon's goodness. Such a mistake is most fitting for a man like the Merchant. One of Shakespeare's insights into the problems of disorder involves the Elizabethan concept of "commodity." Although it had many unfavorable connotations for Elizabethans, prime

among them was that of "interest," in the sense of profit or gain at another person's expense. Interest meant, at that time, not only money lending, but any attempt by a man to profit at another's expense, to gain advantage for himself by capitalizing on another's weakness or need. The Merchant uses Timon's benevolence as a means of exploiting him. Viewed from an existential perspective, the Merchant's action, which he regards as a principle of business, deprives Timon of his individuality and, therefore, his freedom. Timon is encouraged to adopt a persona which does not accurately reflect his authentic self. Timon's benevolence, on the other hand, however misdirected it may be, is at base not pointed toward "using" other people, but toward "freeing" them. He seeks to relieve them from financial obligations which subject them to use by others. Two passages make this point. Early in the play, Timon is confronted by an old Athenian whose daughter is being courted by one of Timon's servants, Lucilius. The Athenian petitions Timon to forbid Lucilius to see his daughter since the servant is a man of low birth. In response, Timon calls the lovers to the hall. After having them publicly affirm their love for each other, Timon announces that because his servant is an honest man he will match the dowery offered by the old Athenian. He says:

> This gentleman of mine hath serv'd me long;
> To build his fortune I will strain a little,
> For 'tis a bond in men. Give him thy daughter;

> What you bestow, in him I'll counterpoise,
> And make him weigh with her.
>
> (I.i.142-146)

It is Timon's attitude that is important here. It is a man's duty to help other men. In this case, Timon is offering his servant freedom to choose the course of life he wishes. Timon's gesture is not motivated by gain. He does not solicit a promise from the servant to repay the money--the substantial sum of three talents. He simply gives Lucilius money so that he can do what he wishes to do--marry the Athenian's daughter. The second passage, which occurs just a bit later, further illuminates the intention of Timon's giving. Ventidius, to whom Timon has given money to keep him from jail, offers to pay Timon's generosity by doubling the original gift. In short, he offers Timon interest. Timon's reply, although it comes through a persona characterized by magnificant prodigality, actually reveals the real self obscured within. It is against the natural order to take interest--to engage in commodity. Consider his words to Ventidius:

> Honest Ventidius. You mistake my love;
> I gave it freely ever, and there's none
> Can truly say he gives if he receives.
>
> (I.ii.9-11)

It is not prodigality which prompts Timon's action; rather, it is the desire to help his fellow man, the desire to free him from any sort of bond imposed by someone other than himself. It is Timon's real self attempting to operate, yet

he does not recognize it. And so, very early, the Merchant's misapprehension of Timon's character and the irony involved in it (which, as we have seen, unfolds as the play progresses) drives home the point that Timon is, at core, a man of "continuate goodness."

The point is made again in the dialogue between the Poet and the Painter. The Poet and his companion, both sycophants, agree on Timon's "gracious nature" (I.i.56). But they, too, make the mistake of the Merchant; they equate wealth and goodness:

> His large fortune,
> Upon his good and gracious nature hanging,
> Subdues and properties to his love and tendance
> All sorts of hearts.
> (I.i.55-58)

The Poet and the Painter see Timon as being like themselves. But in their flattery, they help identify the real self of Timon as being of "a good and gracious nature."

Even though Timon's fortunes fail, we are given several instances of his essential goodness. A Stranger, who knows Timon only through reputation, admires the ruined man's "right noble mind, illustrious virtue, / And honorable carriage" (III.iii.80-81). Timon, then, appears to be admired even in circles outside his own for what he really is. His actions have created his identity. At yet another point, Timon's servant, Flavius, reflects his master's authenticity. Timon has lost everything. His servants have

been turned into the streets. As they wander aimlessly about, Flavius meets them--but rather than commiserate with them, Flavius shares what little personal wealth he has in Timon's name. "For Timon's Sake," he says, "let's yet be fellows" (IV.ii.24-25). By his act, Flavius carries on the spirit which characterizes what he appreciates in his master--a sincere concern for one's fellows. What Timon has done is communicate to Flavius by his actions the importance of freedom. Flavius's unselfish act, reminiscent of one of Timon's, frees his companions to make their own choices, even if it is only for a short time.

Finally, the meaning of Timon's name suggests the ideas of honor and value--two ideas implicit in Ortega's statement of heroism cited above. The Greek word <u>timè</u>, or <u>timos</u>, means "personal honor" and "value." <u>Timoria</u> means "assistance." Kermode's assertion that "Timon is exploring the etymology of his own name"[78] is a useful one. Bound up in the etymology of Timon's name is the idea of Timon's quest for meaning and the suggestion that, deep within, Timon's self is struggling to integrate those personas which keep it suppressed.

We also discover early some discrepancy between what Timon intends to say and what he in fact communicates to an audience. This discrepancy clearly shows that Timon's self

[78] "Timon of Athens," in <u>Riverside Shakespeare</u>, p. 1443.

is hidden beneath a persona he has unwittingly contrived. The revelation of Timon's disjunctive condition is prepared for in the conversation of the Poet and the Painter before Timon enters in the first scene. At this point, Shakespeare suggests to his audience that Timon's appearance (his persona) does not accurately portray the inner man (his self). The Poet and the Painter have each done a work for the express purpose of flattering Timon. Because they wish to flatter Timon, they have created in their works the sort of image Timon wishes to see of himself. Commenting on the Painter's work, the Poet plays with words in his lavish praise of his companion's efforts. The Poet praises those outward qualities of Timon which the Painter's portrait exaggerates:

> Admirable! How this grace
> Speaks his own standing! What mental power
> This eye shoots forth! How big imagination
> Moves in this lip! To th' dumbness of the gesture
> One might interpret!
>
> (I.i.30-34)

These words are meant to flatter the Painter--to acknowledge the portrait's exaggeration of Timon--not to describe in any substantial way the basic, inner qualities of Timon which the portrait might suggest. The Poet's words are idly spoken. Ironically, however, his words do suggest to an audience qualities, as one later discovers, which are indeed harbored in Timon's self--qualities which are blurred by the persona Timon has adopted. The Painter accepts the Poet's praise

offhandedly. "It is a pretty mocking" (I.i.35), he says, perhaps acknowledging the hollowness and insincerity of the Poet's lavish praise. At the same time, however, perhaps the Painter's words suggest to an audience the blurring of qualities possessed by Timon's self--a blurring which occurs when those qualities are filtered through the persona Timon has adopted. The Poet and the Painter err in their acceptance of the portrait as an accurate representation of what Timon is. What Shakespeare has them do in their exchange of superficial amenities is suggest to an audience basic qualities of Timon's self--qualities which are, at this point in the play, blurred because Timon and the characters around him equate his "goodness" with the excessive material generosity of his persona.

A bit later, Shakespeare has Timon himself call attention to such a misapprehension. Timon gives a servant a large sum of money to free the servant to marry as he chooses. The gift frees the servant to do as he wishes. However, the point of Timon's giving is blurred because everyone, including Timon (who does not, at this point, know himself), construes this act of "goodness" in a material way. Timon, like the sycophants, assumes that his persona represents him accurately. After he deals with the problems of his servant, Timon turns to the Poet and the Painter and takes the works they have created for him. Timon comments on the portrait

the Painter has done. His words indicate that he feels the painting accurately represents what he is. As Kermode observes, Timon "endorses the view that painting represents not the false outside of a man, but his true nature."[79] Timon makes the same error that those around him make. Moreover, his words suggest the presence of an unconscious disguise. "Painting is welcome," he says in a grand manner appropriate for the persona he has assumed:

> The painting is almost the natural man;
> For since dishonor traffics with man's nature,
> He is but outside; these pencill'd figures are
> Even such as they give out.
> (I.i.157-160)

Here, Shakespeare has Timon think himself the epitome of generosity. He acknowledges the persona he has assumed, and he accepts the portrait the Painter has done as an accurate representation of what he is. In terms of his persona, the portrait does represent Timon. But Shakespeare, by having Timon use the words "almost" and "nature," suggests to an audience that what Timon says is not quite true. Timon does think that the portrait accurately represents what he is. But the Painter's work is shaped to fit Timon's persona, not his self. The phrase "pencill'd figures" serves to emphasize this. A Renaissance audience would have most certainly understood its implications. The mistake is clear. Shakespeare

[79] Ibid.

has Timon accept appearances as realities. Timon does not know himself.

That Shakespeare reveals Timon's disjunctive condition by presenting discrepancies between what Timon says, does, or thinks, and what is so, is evidenced at other points. The generous gesture Timon makes in refusing to accept repayment of the loan he has extended to Ventidius has been mentioned earlier. In terms of his persona, Timon's act emphasizes his prodigality; and that, of course, is how Ventidius and the others construe his generosity. But deep within, in the self, Timon is not a usurer. The real Timon could not give for the purpose of personal gain because personal gain is at the base of flattery--one gets something for nothing. Timon's self deplores flattery; his persona revels in it. Shakespeare allows the view of Timon's self to emerge momentarily when Timon speaks of "ceremony" in a derogatory way as a device to "set a gloss of faint deeds" (I.ii.15-16). But Timon's persona dominates. Timon's house abounds in flattery. Timon's persona allows him to be the subject of flattery and to be used by those who flatter him. "More welcome are ye to my fortunes / Than my fortunes to me" (I.ii.19-20) is his pronouncement.

Before scene two of Act I ends, Timon again demonstrates the discrepancy that the incongruency of his self and his persona causes. Timon is deluded by his persona. At a

banquet, the gracious host, Timon, praises his sycophantic companions. Because Timon's magnanimous persona dominates at this point, he does not consider the people surrounding him enemies. But Shakespeare has shown us that Timon does not really know himself--or his friends. Thus, a cautious audience is alert to the discrepancy that exists between what Timon says and what is actually so. Timon's lavish praise of his guests informs the audience that his companions are parasites who prey upon Timon--fat ticks glutting themselves on the flesh of their host. Timon accepts their flattery and takes his guests for something other than what they are:

> I have told
> more of you to myself than you can with modesty
> speak in your own behalf; and thus far I confirm you.
> O you gods, think I, what need we have any friends,
> if we should ne'er have need of 'em? They were
> the most needless creatures living, should we ne'er
> have use for 'em; and would resemble sweet instru-
> ments hung up in cases, that keeps their sound to
> themselves. 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 like brothers
> commanding one another's fortunes.
> (I.ii.92-105)

Through Timon's figure of speech, Shakespeare has Timon expose the sycophants for what they really are. Further, Shakespeare, by the metaphor, suggests to us that this knowledge is available to Timon's self. Timon's companions are indeed like "instruments hung up in cases." Their most secret notes

are locked away. Poor Timon. The sweet music that he imagines might be played by those instruments is not, however, of a lyric strain. It is rather the music of hypocrisy and waste and decimation--the ruinous, grating discord of a Pandora's box. Once again, Timon is locked into the frame of his superficial conception of himself. Persona dominates self. In the magnanimity of his persona, he imagines his statements to be praise of his companions, but to an audience, they characterize the duplicity in all of them.

Timon sees in his companions' appearances what he wishes so terribly to see. But, alas, they are not authentic. Timon's ideas of men being free to share and to experience brotherhood are dashed again and again against the cold, smooth rocks of despair. When a Senator hears that Timon's wealth is depleted, he sends his servant (he will not go himself) to Timon for collection of debts--debts which Timon's deeds have paid in kind many times over. The Senator's words suggest the hypocrisy so characteristic of those who have used Timon. He says, "I love and honor him, / But must not break my back to heal his fingers" (II.i.23-24). In Act III, when Timon sends for help, he is refused. In each case, one is reminded that Timon's friends have parlayed his beneficence to their advantage. They have used him. Lucullus carps to Timon's servant Flaminius:

> Alas good lord! a noble gentleman, 'tis, if he
> would not keep so good a house. Many a time and
> often I ha' din'd with him, and told him on't,
> and come again to supper to him of purpose to have
> him spend less, and yet he would embrace no counsel,
> take no warning by my coming. Every man has his
> fault, and honesty is his. I ha' told him on't,
> but I could ne'er get him from't.
> (III.i.22-28)

Another friend, Lucius, feigns financial difficulty of his own (III.ii.50-57), and still another, Sempronius, argues illogically that his honor is impugned when Timon does not come to him for help before any other (III.iii.20-26).

By the end of the third act, Timon is a broken man. Ironically, however, in this state of forsakenness Timon's awareness of self and its relation to his persona is sharpened. He sees his former companions as they really are, and he comes to hate them and all mankind for what they have done to him. He realizes that he has allowed them to dictate his identity. At a mock banquet (a play within the play), Timon reveals that "all"--including himself--are "covered dishes" (III.iv.48). But Timon is the only one with substance. "You knot of mouth friends!" he rages, "Smoke and lukewarm water is your pefection" (III.iv.89-90). Their substance is smoke, a symbol of illusion, disguise, concealment, and insubstantiality. The lukewarm water is a reinforcing symbol. It has no individual quality of its own; it adapts itself to whatever happens to contain it; and it has no capacity (as it is used here) for being characterized by

anything other than its lack of any positive quality. As such the lukewarm water suggests the insubstantial character of the men identified with it. Perhaps the symbol may be explored further. Shakespeare knew the use of water could emphasize a decidedly negative quality, and he is careful to have Timon link water and smoke as indicators of his banquet guest's insubstantiality. It is possible that Timon's choice of water as an instrument for castigating his guests reflects not only his hatred of them for what they have done but the abhorrence Timon's self harbors for what they are--inauthentic sycophants. Sartre's commentary on the symbolic value of water helps make this clear. In Being and Nothingness he says:

> A drop of water touching a sheet of water is immediately changed into a sheet of water. . . . It is like a . . . de-individualization of a particular being, which dissolves itself in the great wholeness from which it sprang. . . . This symbol . . . seems to have a great importance. . . . It reveals a particular type of relationship between being and being . . . like the refusal of an individual who does not want to be annihilated in the whole of being. . . . In the unseizable character of water there is a pitiless hardness. . . . The viscous is docile; only at the very moment in which I think I possess it, it possesses me. In this appears its essential character. . . . I open my hands, I want to drop the viscous, but it clings to me, it pumps me, it sucks on me. . . . There is a poisonous possessiveness. . . . The viscous is the revenge of the being-in-itself. . . . To touch the viscous means to risk being diluted into viscosity. This

> dilution is dreadful, because it is in the absorption of the being-for-itself by the being-in-itself.[80]

Deep within, in the subconscious world of Timon's suppressed self, Timon is affected by the fact that his sycophantic companions have come close to depriving him of his freedom to create his own identity. They have almost made him what they are.

Especially appropriate at this point is disease imagery. The initial mention of it occurs in these lines: "Of man and beast the infinite malady / Crust you quite o'er" (III.iv.98-99). Timon's words suggest venereal disease, a common affliction of those who prostitute themselves. W. I. D. Scott smugly proclaims Timon's difficulties--his dementia--to be the result of syphilitic infection in its terminal stages.[81] Scott takes the notion of disease too literally. Such disease imagery suggests the basic idea of prostitution--the selling of one's integrity for low or base purposes. Prostitution, in this sense, is linked with commodity and usury, ideas central to the play. The flatterers who encircle Timon prostitute themselves. Timon, however, does not. In the last scene of Act III (III.vi.106-102),

[80] Quoted in Alfred Stern, Sartre: His Philosophy and Psychoanalysis (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953), pp. 168-169.

[81] Shakespeare's Melancholics (London: Mills and Boone, 1962), pp. 127-130.

the Senators and Lords are described as leaving Timon's house blithely unaware of what Timon's mock banquet has meant. Their concern is with material things. One worries about his jewels, another worries about his hat, and another worries about his gown. Consider their remarks:

> 1. Lord. How now, my lords?
> 2. Lord. Know you the quality of Lord Timon's fury?
> 3. Lord. Push, did you see my cap?
> 4. Lord. I have lost my gown.
> 1. Lord. He's but a mad lord, and nought but humors sways him. He gave me a jewel th' other day, and now he has beat it out of my hat. Did you see my jewel?
>
> (III.vi.107-114)

They think that material things are Timon's worries, too. They think him overwrought because of his financial condition. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Shakespeare prepares us for Timon's actions in Act IV by having Timon say in Act III:

> What, are my doors oppos'd against my passage?
> Have I been ever free, and must my house
> Be my retentive enemy? my jail?
>
> (III.iv.79-81)

Timon's words suggest the root of his difficulty--the entrapment of his self by his persona. In Act IV, Timon leaves Athens and goes to the forest. He rejects the appearances which have thus far identified him. Aronson, writing of Timon's move to the forest, sees it as a return to "maternal darkness," a symbolic plumbing of the depth of one's identity.

He suggests that the return to "maternal darkness" may either enable a person to reach self-knowledge or deprive him of his identity and lead him into madness.[82] Timon does not succumb to madness. Instead, he succeeds in identifying his authentic self.

Thereafter, Timon rapidly closes with his real self and, in the process, becomes more and more authentic. He begins to achieve constancy. His words here are pivotal:

> Who dares? who dares
> In purity of manhood stand upright
> And say, "This man's a flatterer"? If one be
> So are they all; for every grize of fortune
> Is smoothed by that below. The learned pate
> Ducks to the golden fool. All's obliquy;
> There's nothing level in our cursed natures
> But direct villany. Therefore be abhorr'd
> All feasts, societies, and things of men!
> His semblable, yea, himself, Timon distains;
> Destruction fang mankind! Earth yield me roots!
> (IV.iii.13-23)

Timon here rages against what he has been: the guise, the facade--his semblable. But in his fury he continues to suppress his authentic self. Timon's castigation of all mankind is a projection. He sees in other men the shadow of what he has been. He perceives his persona in all its baseness, which is precisely what draws out his venomous hatred. In Act V, one recalls Timon's projection of his hatred when he succinctly defines the concept. "Wilt thou

[82] Aronson, pp. 203-204.

whip thine own faults in other men?" (V.i.38) he admonishes himself.

Timon comes to reveal and simultaneously realize his authentic self in his meeting with Flavius, his faithful, enduring servant, at the end of Act IV. Flavius is authentic. Like the bastard Faulconbridge in King John, Flavius is a man of lowly birth, but he is throughout the play the example of constancy. What is more, he has learned to be so from Timon. In his servant, Timon finally sees a reflection of his real self. When Flavius says to him, "Never did a poor steward wear a truer grief / For his undone lord than mine eyes for you" (IV.iii.480-481), Timon's guise as a misanthrope falls completely away for a moment, letting Flavius and the audience see, for the first time, his true self--the Timon he really is. Timon says:

> What, dost thou weep? Come nearer. Then
> I love thee,
> Because thou art a woman, and disclaim'st
> Flinty mankind, whose eyes do never give
> But through lust and laughter.
> (IV.iii.482-485)

"I love thee"--could a misanthrope say such a thing? No, but the real Timon can, even if it is only for a moment. It is a beginning.

In the final act, Shakespeare again has the Poet and the Painter point to the crucial idea of the play. The Painter's words, spoken to the Poet in front of Timon's cave, emphasize the value of authenticity:

> . . . In the plainer and simpler kind of people
> The deed of saying is quite out of use.
> To promise is most courtly and fashionable;
> Performance is a kind of will or testament
> Which argues a great sickness in his judgment
> What makes it.
>
> (V.i.25-30)

What matters is not the "promise" but the "performance" which is "a kind of will or testament." The existential premise that a man becomes authentic by accepting responsibility for his acts is voiced. These words set the stage for Timon's actualization. He has suffered, and through his suffering he has gained knowledge of the self within him. He has experienced the passing of a threshold. Timon has learned the concept that Sartre expresses so well in his maxim that life begins on the other side of despair. Timon tells Flavius:

> Why, I was writing of my epitaph;
> It will be seen tomorrow. My long sickness
> Of health and living now begins to mend,
> And nothing brings me all things.
>
> (V.i.185-187)

The "sickness" of despair, of disjunction, of being what one is not, is past for Timon. At last, he knows himself. He wishes to write his own epitaph. Timon has a strong sense of how he wishes to be remembered. That he does have indicates he has found his identity. He is constant. He has learned what is implied in the meaning of his name--that "personal honor" and "value" and "greatness" are qualities

of his authentic self and that they may be achieved by recognizing the meaning of one's life and being one's self.

Soon after his announcement that he will write his epitaph, Timon makes another gesture which symbolizes that at this point he fully knows himself and that he is in full control of--and responsible for--his actions. One recalls these words of Ortega: "If we refuse to have our actions determined by heredity or environment it is because we seek to base the origin of our action on ourselves and only on ourselves." The senators of Athens have come to plead with Timon to lead the city against Alcibiades. Their argument to Timon is that he is an Athenian above all else and that he has a patriotic duty to help save the city from certain destruction. "Return with us," the senators implore, "And of our Athens, thine and ours, to take / The captainship" (V.i.159-161). Timon refuses. He no longer feels that his actions are dictated by bonds of heredity. "Go, live still," Timon replies, "Be Alcibiades your plague, you his" (V.i.188-189). The only solution he offers the senators is death. They may die in Alcibiades' onslaught, or they may die by their own hands. While he offers this solution to the senators, Timon gives further evidence that he alone is the determiner of his own action. Timon says: "I have a tree, which grows here in my close, / That mine own use invites me to cut down, / And shortly I must fell it"

(V.i.204-206). The important point here is that Timon regards the tree, and more generally the wood, as a non-instrumental force. Just as Timon rejects the notion that hereditary bonds influence his actions, he rejects, also, the bond of environment. The tree in front of his cave is dependent upon him for its existence--not the other way around. Timon is in total control of his actions. Because he is, Timon gains both psychological wholeness (the tension between self and persona is resolved) and existential authenticity (he alone is responsible for his actions and his relations to the things that surround him).

The final words of a major character in Shakespeare's plays, as a rule, represent him most accurately. Shakespeare prepares us for Timon's, found in his epitaph. Throughout the final acts of the play, Timon moves toward _being_, toward psychological completeness and existential constancy. Timon's epitaph, then, may be taken as an indicator of Timon's self. As Timon develops the epitaph, his real self comes to dominate those personas which have suppressed it.

The epitaph is first mentioned during Timon's final encounter with Apemantus. Timon and Apemantus argue. Each confronts the other with arguments about honesty, that is, authenticity. As the argument ends, Timon speaks of his epitaph. Though Apemantus overhears, Timon's words are directed not so much toward Apemantus as toward himself.

"Then Timon," he says, "presently prepare thy grave" and "make thine epitaph, / That death in me at others' lives may laugh" (IV.iii.377,379-380). Timon's actions are still strongly influenced by his misanthropic persona. Ostensibly, the purpose of his epitaph is to vent his hatred, to show his disdain for others. But Timon's self and his persona are at odds. That Timon wishes to be remembered at all reminds us of Timon's growing perception of self. Deep within, Timon's self begins to assert its influence. Timon wants to "make" his epitaph. He wishes to create an identity that will allow others to see him as he really is.

That Timon wishes to "make" his epitaph, that is, to write it down, suggests a growing awareness of the relation of words and deeds. Timon begins to grasp the idea that one way of asserting his identity, his authenticity, is to make words and deeds coincide. What a man says he is, he must be. Until this point, Timon's words have been ineffective. He rages, he rants, and he hurls invectives to little avail. But that condition begins to change. Within a few lines of Timon's revelation that he wishes to make his epitaph, the Banditti appear. Timon's encounter with them stresses two important points: constancy and the power of language.

The visit of the Banditti gives Timon insight into the value of constancy, of authenticity. Timon recognizes the Banditti for what they are and refuses to allow them to be

anything other than that. Despite their meager protests to the contrary, Timon sees them as common thieves whose identity depends upon others. Their existence, their profession, dictates that they prey on other men. After the Banditti weakly protest that they are not thieves, Timon says to them:

> You must eat men. Yet thanks I must you con
> That you are thieves profess'd, that you work not
> In holier shapes; for there is boundless theft
> In limited professions.
>
> (IV.iii.425-428)

Timon's suggestion is that the Banditti, because they do, albeit tacitly, admit to their profession, are more "authentic" than their counterparts in "limited professions." As his example, Timon uses the physician. "Trust not the physician," Timon tells the Banditti, "His antidotes are poison, and he slays / Moe than you rob" (IV.iii.432-433). To be a thief and to admit to it is less disgusting in Timon's view than to be a thief while professing to be a practitioner of an accepted, respectable profession.

The visit of the Banditti also gives Timon an awareness of the power of words. Through the Banditti's reaction to what he says to them, Timon sees that truthful, sincere words representing what a man really feels are powerful tools. By offering examples of thievery, Timon indicates to the Banditti that they follow his view of mankind's natural order:

> The sun's a thief, and with his great attraction
> Robs the vast sea; the moon's an arrant thief,
> And her pale fire she snatches from the sun;
> The sea's a thief, whose liquid surge resolves
> The moon into salt tears; the earth's a thief,
> That feeds and breeds by a composure stol'n
> From general excrement; each thing's a thief.
> (IV.iii.436-442)

The Banditti come close to grasping what Timon says to them. They almost recognize that they are parasites feeding upon other men. One of the Banditti admits that he is moved to give up the profession which identifies him. "H'as almost charmed me from my profession, by persuading me to it" (IV.iii.450-451), one says. By forcing the Banditti to recognize themselves for what they are, Timon nearly effects a change in them.

When the Banditti depart, Flavius enters. As we have seen, Timon's self here emerges for the first time and is revealed to Flavius (IV.iii.482-485). Flavius, because he is himself authentic, recognizes Timon's authenticity and encourages him to it. Flavius credits Timon's true self with giving him an example to follow:

> That which I show, heaven knows, is merely love,
> Duty and zeal to your unmatched mind,
> Care of your food and living; and believe it,
> My most honor'd lord,
> For any benefit that points to me,
> Either in hope or present, I'd exchange
> For this one wish, that you had power and wealth
> To requite me by making rich yourself.
> (IV.iii.514-522)

Flavius acknowledges that he reveres Timon's "unmatched mind," the seat of Timon's self. Moreover, he sincerely offers to give up any of his benefits to see Timon whole again. Shakespeare makes careful choices in the words he gives to Flavius. Spoken by a lesser man, by one who is not authentic, words such as "power," "wealth," and "rich" would likely be construed as directing attention toward material things. But when they are uttered by Flavius, they point to Timon's well-being, his substantiality, and his wholeness. Flavius encourages Timon to be authentic.

In the first scene of Act V, Shakespeare has Timon (and the audience) overhear the Painter's conversation with the Poet in front of Timon's cave (V.i.25-30). Again, one is reminded of constancy, language, and the relations between them. The Painter tells the Poet that the proper action for a man is to promise but not act in accordance with his promise. "Promising is the very air o' th' time" (V.i.25), he says. Yet to Timon, who overhears, the Painter's words emphasize what he has come to know. A man's promises must coincide with his performance, which is, as the Painter says, "a kind of will and testament" (V.i.28). Acts are the substance of a man, or as Sartre would put it, his history and his identity. Further, a man's words, to be effective, must be accompanied by acts. For the authentic man, the whole man, words and acts must be congruent.

Timon again speaks of his epitaph during the visit of the senators (V.i.185). As we have seen, the epitaph is Timon's declaration of his authenticity and his example to those who would be authentic. After Timon explains to the senators that a man controls and is responsible for his actions--his commentary on the tree before his cave (V.i.204-206)--he tells them to heed his words. Only by following his example can they become whole men. "Let my gravestone be your oracle" (V.i.219), he instructs them.

Timon's final statement of self-assertion is the epitaph, and, as we have seen, Shakespeare has carefully prepared us for its presentation. The epitaph is brought to Alcibiades by a messenger, who, because he is unable to read it, has taken the impression of the epitaph on a wax tablet. That the epitaph is impressed on the wax tablet is noteworthy. When Timon wrote it and carved it into his gravestone, he knew himself. The epitaph, then, represents Timon's authentic self. The fact that Shakespeare has it presented in solid materials, stone and wax, suggests the epitaph's weight and substance. Shakespeare calls attention to the epitaph even more forcefully through Alcibiades' reaction to it. When Alcibiades takes the epitaph from the messenger, he reads it aloud for all to hear:

> Here lies a wretched
> corse, of wretched soul bereft;
> Seek not my name: a plague consume you, wicked
> catiffs left!
> 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.69-73)

Critics argue that the epitaph evidences _Timon_'s incompleteness, since they assert that it contradicts itself. But in the context of the play, as one views it from the perspective of an authentic self achieving congruence with its persona, the epitaph is not contradictory. It is entirely appropriate. The first half of the epitaph states Timon's posture as the misanthrope. The latter portion identifies Timon's authentic self. The epitaph completes the play by dramatically stating that the man who allows his life to be controlled by the values of others rather than those he creates for himself never knows himself. The man who knows himself must, instead of searching for approval in the eyes of others, look ahead with his own clear, self-determined vision. An authentic man, a constant man, assumes the responsibility for what he does and says and thus for what he is. Timon's inclusion of his name in the second part of the epitaph points to the fact that he does indeed assume such a responsibility.

Although Timon is by far the most important character one should attend to in exploring the disjunction of self and persona in _Timon_, two others should be discussed as well--

Apemantus and Alcibiades. They reflect Timon's position throughout the play and therefore have a significant function in allowing one to see Timon as Shakespeare wishes him to be seen.

In the early portion of _Timon_, Apemantus is a contrast to Timon's pose as a flatterer. Apemantus's name (like Timon's) implies his function in the play. His name is a double-edged pun. Read one way, it suggests that Apemantus stands for savagery, simplicity, and beastial concern with individual survival. "Ape" may refer to the beast--a creature which has the appearance of man reduced to his basic character. Thus, "ape" and "man" in the name "Apemantus" suggest all that is elemental in man, particularly his animalistic withdrawal and suspicion of other creatures like himself. Read another way, the name suggests that the character's purpose in the play is to represent a truer reflection of man's nature. "Ape" might refer to imitation. Thus, the name _Apemantus_ suggests that the character "imitates" man. He is a mimic.

The latter reading is most appropriate for Apemantus's role. As a sycophantic senator says, "He's opposite humanity" (I.i.273). For the senator and others who surround Timon, the statement could not be more precise. Apemantus is the opposite of the flatterer. The churlish philosopher constantly points out to Timon--and to everyone else, for that

matter--that all the lords and nobles present nothing more than pictures of superficial, flattering people whose appearance belies their usurious selves. They, like all men who dote on flattery and on the self-serving use of others, are golden caskets, Shakespeare's image for extreme hypocrisy. Early in the play, Apemantus suggests the idea that all men are "knaves":

> Tim. Good morrow to the gentle Apemantus!
> Apem. Till I be gentle, stay thou thy good morrow--
> When they art Timon's dog and these knaves honest.
> Tim. Why dost thou call them knaves? Thou know'st them not.
> Apem. Are they not Athenians?
> Tim. Yes.
> Apem. Then I repent not.
> (I.i.178-184)

Apemantus makes a generalization here. He indicates that he need not know men on a personal basis to perceive their true natures. It is enough for him that the men who surround Timon are Athenians, nobles whose reputation as flatterers is uppermost in Apemantus's mind. A bit later in the same scene, he says that the Merchant, and by implication his fellows, claim usury as their god.

> Apem. . . . art not thou a merchant?
> Mer. Aye, Apemantus.
> Apem. Traffic confound thee if the gods will not!
> Mer. If traffic do it, the gods do it.
> Apem. Traffic's thy god, and thy god confound thee!
> (I.i.235-239)

But the real irony is that Apemantus is no different from the rest. Despite all his chiding and biting and his apparent ability to see the lords and nobles as they are rather than as they present themselves, he is as inauthentic --in spite of his pronouncement that the time of day is "Time to be honest" (I.i.257)--as the flatterers who surround Timon. And he is unaware of the fact. Apemantus does not know himself, as Timon points out when Apemantus comes to his cave in the forest (IV.iii.249-276). Apemantus is angry because Timon has become a misanthrope. He accuses Timon of trying to be something he is not. "This is in thee a nature but infected, / A poor unmanly melancholy sprung / From change of future" (IV.iii.202-204). The exchange of accusations continues for several lines. Then Timon says:

> Thy nature did commence in sufferance, time
> Hath made thee hard in't. Why shouldst thou hate men?
> They never flatter'd thee. What hast thou given?
> . . . .
> If thou hadst not been born the worst of men,
> Thou hadst been a knave and a flatterer.
> (IV.iii.269-271,275-276)

Apemantus is not in control of his own identity. He was born to it. Timon's view is that bonds of heredity have locked Apemantus into a role which is almost as horrible as the role of those nobles he hates. Timon is quite correct when he tells Apemantus: "If thou hadst not been born the worst of men, / Thou hadst been a knave and a flatterer." Apemantus professes to be what he is not.

Timon recognizes that a man's authenticity is revealed in acts and words only as long as they correspond. One remembers the Painter's comment--"To promise is courtly and fashionable; / Performance is a kind of will and testament" (V.i.27-28). Sincere, purposive action is the prime virtue, and the effectiveness of a man's words depend upon his actions reflecting them. If a man is sincere, if, that is, he is constant in the existential sense, it will be revealed in his actions and his words. Shakespeare emphasizes this view through Timon's response to the Poet a bit later in Act V. The Poet, by virtue of his profession, knows the deceptive use of language, and he attempts to flatter Timon as he has done in the past. But hollow words--words not made substantial by actions--no longer have any effect on Timon:

> Let it go naked, men may see't the better.
> You that are honest, by being what you are
> Make them best seen and known.
> (V.i.66-68)

Timon is correct, but the Poet fails to grasp Timon's meaning. "Let it go naked," Timon has told him in reference to his speech. Timon means that the Poet should strip his words of disguise and flattering embellishment. In Timon's view, he must say what is and thus represent what he is. Timon indicates that the Poet can become authentic by doing so and, by his example, expose those who are not. "You that

are honest," Timon says, "by being what you are / Make them best seen and known."

Alcibiades provides yet another way of looking at the same theme. Whereas Apemantus is a man of words, Alcibiades is a man of action. Throughout the play, he, like Apemantus, presents an alternative way of viewing Timon's position. Initially, Shakespeare makes us aware that Alcibiades is the soldier--the man who acts. This is precisely how one sees Alcibiades early in the play. At Timon's house, he alone accepts Timon's generosity in a seemly way. One may infer that, since Timon was a soldier, Alcibiades regards Timon as the soldier he once knew, not as a flatterer like the lords and nobles Timon entertains. With the possible exception of Apemantus, he alone is discomforted by being thrust into the midst of a group of flatterers. Timon senses Alcibiades's discomfort:

> Tim. You had rather be at a breakfast of enemies than at a dinner of friends.
> Alcib. So they were bleeding new, my lord, there's no meat like 'em; I could wish my best friend at such a feast.
> (I.ii.76-80)

Alcibiades yearns for a situation in which actions determine the real mettle of a man. His belief that there is nothing like the action of battle is the central idea sustaining his whole self-concept. In battle, he reasons, a man's motives and his identity are clear-cut. Either a man is an enemy or

he is not. In the company of flatterers, however, a man's identity may be disguised. This knowledge is a source of discomfort to Alcibiades.

However, when Alcibiades meets with the senators (III.v), Shakespeare shows us that even Alcibiades--the soldier, the man of action--is capable of letting others deceive him and, in turn, he is capable of deceiving himself. He is much like Timon. In the company of the senators, Alcibiades allows himself to behave as others would have him behave, not as he himself wishes to behave. In his meeting with the senators, Alcibiades, for a few moments, foregoes his convictions. As we have seen, Alcibiades is a soldier, one who believes that a man is defined by his actions. Even so, when he approaches the senators, Alcibiades first attempts to "use" words rather than actions to present his case (and for that matter himself) to them. What Alcibiades says, at first, is not altogether true, and, because he distorts the case he presents, his words are ineffective. Alcibiades has seen men like the senators he now confronts. He has seen them before at Timon's house, and he is aware of their nature. But he, like Timon, is drawn into their mode of behavior. Alcibiades acts in accordance with their rules, not his own. Seeking pardon for his friend, who has ostensibly killed another man in self-defense, Alcibiades says to the senate:

> I am an humble suitor to your virtues;
> For pity is the virtue of the law,
> And none but tyrants use it cruelly.
> (III.v.7-9)

Rather than approach the senators as Alcibiades the soldier--a captain who is interceding for one of his men who is also his friend--he approaches them as Alcibiades the humble petitioner. He attempts to flatter the senators to achieve his ends. Moreover, in his effort to sway the senators, he misrepresents the case of the man for whom he intercedes:

> He is a man (setting his fate aside)
> Of comely virtues;
> Nor did he soil the fact with cowardice
> (An honor in him which buys out his fault),
> But with a noble fury and fair spirit,
> Seeing his reputation touch'd to death,
> He did oppose his foe;
> And with such sober and unnoted passion
> He did behoove his anger, ere 'twas spent,
> As if he had but prov'd an argument.
> (III.v.15-23)

Alcibiades presents his friend's action as a matter of honor, not as a matter of one defending his person. Alcibiades the soldier considers this act an excusable one. By defending his "reputation," the friend, in Alcibiades's view, has acted in a proper manner. Arguing this way, Alcibiades rationalizes the act which his friend has committed, and thereby hopes to persuade the senators to reverse their judgment. However, Alcibiades only succeeds in deceiving himself. The senators are unmoved by his words. In fact, they expose his rationalization. "You undergo too strict

a paradox, / Striving to make an ugly deed fair" (III.v.24-25), they tell Alcibiades. By their self-righteous inflexibility, the senators force Alcibiades to confront them, not as what they appear to be--wise judges of men and the law--but as what they are--tyrants who use the law cruelly to further their own self-serving ends. A few lines later, the senators again show Alcibiades his error. Moreover, they suggest to him that a man's proper course of action is a passive acceptance of what others impose upon him, not acting as he is and thus asserting his real self:

> He's truly valiant that can wisely suffer
> The worst that man can breathe, and make his wrongs
> His outsides, to wear them like his raiment, carelessly,
> And ne'er prefer his injuries to his heart,
> To bring it into danger.
> (III.v.31-35)

The gospel of passivity is expressed again when one of the senators says, "You cannot make gross sins look clear; / To revenge is no valor, but to bear" (III.v.38-39). The senator's statement offers a position which Alcibiades cannot accept.

Significantly, Alcibiades begins to alter his role as an humble petitioner and becomes more like the Alcibiades we have seen before. He says to the senators: "My lords, then, under favor, pardon me / If I speak like a captain" (III.v.40-41). But he does not completely abandon his role as servile petitioner.

> O my lords,
> As you are great, be pitifully good.
> Who cannot condemn rashness in cold blood?
> To kill, I grant, is sin's extremest gust,
> But in defense, by mercy, 'tis most just.
> (III.v.51-55)

Alcibiades argues that his friend was not responsible for his actions. He was compelled to kill in self-defense. By arguing this way, Alcibiades rationalizes once more. The senators will not allow this argument either. "You breathe in vain" (III.v.59), they say. In response, Alcibiades introduces yet another argument. He asks the senators to judge his friend on the merits of his performance as a soldier. By doing so, Alcibiades suggests that the senators consider the man on the basis of some of his acts, not all of them. His words are uttered in desperation, and they are weak. Such a notion is contrary even to Alcibiades's own ideas about what makes a man. His words have no substance. Accordingly, the senators are unmoved. One of them counters with this statement about Alcibiades's friend. Speaking of the friend's wounds--his badge of military service--the senator says: "He has made too much plenty with 'em. / He's a sworn rioter; he has a sin that often / Drowns him and takes his valor prisoner" (III.v.66-68).

Finally, Alcibiades sees that the only way to give his words substance is to act upon his convictions. He feels that the man he defends, even though he is a reveller, is

a good soldier, and therefore, in his view, a good man. Alcibiades commits himself to action. He links his fortunes with that of his friend:

> Take thy deserts to his, and join 'em both;
> And for I know your reverend ages love
> Security, I'll pawn my victories, all
> My honor to you, upon his good returns.
> (III.v.78-81)

The senators remain inflexible. Although Alcibiades is, at this point, sincere and direct, the saying of the words is not enough. He must act in accordance with them. In a flash of comprehension, he plumbs the depths of Athenian hypocrisy. He acts. Storming from the senate chamber, Alcibiades vows to bring his army to Athens and lay seige to the city. "Is this the balsom that the usuring Senate / Pours into captains' wounds?" the warrior questions.

> Banishment!
> It comes not ill; I hate not to be banish'd,
> It is a cause worthy my spleen and fury,
> That I may strike at Athens.
> (III.v.110-113)

One sees here the contrast between Timon's approach to dealing with the hypocrisy of Athens' lords and Alcibiades's approach. Timon withdraws to the forest. His departing act is to hurl curses at Athens. "Breath, infect breath," Timon curses,

> That their society (as their friendship) may
> Be merely poison! Nothing I'll bear from thee
> But nakedness, thou detestable town!

> Take thou that too, with multiplying bans!
> Timon will to the woods, where he shall find
> Th' unkindest beast more kinder than mankind.
> The gods confound (hear me, you good gods all)
> Th' Athenians both within and out that wall!
> (IV.i.31-40)

Timon retaliates with words which strike Athens' walls like ineffectual raindrops. At this point, Timon does not realize that his words, to be effective, must be certified by acts. Alcibiades, in contrast, has learned this lesson. Even so, he has not, as we shall see, come to act in accordance with his self. When he threatens Athens, he is Alcibiades the soldier. Like Timon, Alcibiades does not yet know himself.

Both Timon and Alcibiades (unlike Timon and Apemantus) move toward an understanding of themselves, toward a recognition of self. In Timon's case, it is significant that he himself imposes the sentence of banishment, not the senators. Timon banishes himself because he imagines that he is like the rest of the citizens of Athens--a creature to be punished for his duplicity. It is possible to assert, owing to the ever increasing control of his self, that he feels compelled to suffer for all mankind. Timon recognizes his own duplicity and makes an example of himself for all mankind to see. To reject duplicity is to be constant, to be authentic, and, therefore, free to be himself. Alcibiades, however, does not recognize his duplicity. In his self, which has not

fully emerged when he confronts the senators, Alcibiades, too, wishes the best interest of his fellows. When he links his fate with that of his friend, he is motivated by the same concern for his fellow man that characterizes Timon's self. Alcibiades wishes to free his friend to be what he is--a soldier. What he attempts parallels Timon's action in behalf of his servant, Lucilius. But Alcibiades's decision to strike Athens is not entirely his own. He does not act on his own initiative when he sets out to punish the senators; rather, he acts in response to the injustice he has been shown. Like Apemantus, Alcibiades has deceived himself. And, like Apemantus, he does not come to recognize his true nature, his self, until Timon points it out to him. Of course, Timon cannot do this until he himself is authentic. His epitaph is his message and his example to Alcibiades because, in it, Timon reveals his self. After reading Timon's epitaph, Alcibiades yields to more rational and humane inclinations. He becomes more aware of his self. Although Alcibiades is a soldier, he is, like Timon, a man who, at core, is concerned about the well-being of his fellows. Thus, Alcibiades (as Flavius did long before) understands his mentor's words when he reads Timon's epitaph.

> Dead
> Is noble Timon, of whose memory
> Hereafter more. Bring me into your city,
> And I will use the olive with my sword. . . .
> (V.iv.79-82)

At last, Alcibiades knows himself fully. He is not a war-monger. He is a man who uses his resources in the interest of others' well-being. Unlike Apemantus, he is not fixed in his course. Like Timon, he can change. He can achieve authenticity. He can allow his actions to represent what he is. Alcibiades becomes like Flavius in that he learns the lesson which Timon's life has taught. A man, if he would be good and noble, must express a responsibility for his actions and his words and temper them with a sincerity and respect for his fellows. "I will use the olive with my sword" is his promise.

When one finishes _Timon of Athens_, he sees Timon, in retrospect, as an intense example of Shakespeare's concept of the whole man. The refraction and disparity which distort our initial view of Timon is resolved. The discordant note of tension between Timon's self and his personas becomes the full, resonant _OM_ of harmony. By arranging his supporting characters about Timon, Shakespeare forms a reflective surface like that of a convex mirror and unwaveringly draws one's attention to Timon's struggle for wholeness and authenticity. Each character, by catching the light of a reader's understanding of a portion of Timon's character and by reflecting that light back upon Timon, helps to intensify Timon's position as the focal point of the play. The words of Apemantus, which appear so substantial at the first of

the play but which are rendered ineffective by Apemantus's failure to make them describe his self, reflect Timon's struggle to express himself in words--to state the identity he creates for himself. Alcibiades's ability to act, his ability to eventually make his words substantial by his acts, and his final discovery of self reflect and intensify Timon's own struggle to achieve self-knowledge and self-assertion. And Flavius's constancy, held before Timon as a mirror image of what he is, reflects Timon's self and its power to influence. When these reflections converge in Timon, he burns for us with sublime intensity. He becomes the pale fire of the focal point--the invisible light of truth.

Chapter IV

AN EXAMINATION OF CORRESPONDENCES AMONG *TIMON OF ATHENS*, *KING LEAR*, AND *CORIOLANUS*

Recent literary criticism that makes use of psychological and existential studies provides, as we have seen, provocative and useful insights into the design and artistry of *Timon of Athens*. However, if *Timon* is a more cohesive play than previous critics have thought it, and if the psychological-philosophical approach is helpful because it synthesizes previous differences in critical thought and firmly establishes *Timon* in Shakespeare's canon, one must consider this question: Is Shakespeare's use of characters who display a disjunction of self and persona in the modern psychological sense--and who resolve this condition "existentially"--the result of a consistent, traceable technique which Shakespeare employed in his dramatic art? The answer is an emphatic yes.

To demonstrate that Shakespeare consistently presented his characters as people who do not know themselves, who struggle for an existential constancy, one may observe how closely other plays reflect Timon's pattern. An initially

apparent disorder, caused by the tension between a character's self and persona, is eventually overcome by the achievement of existential constancy. Shakespeare often dramatizes what modern psychologists might call a disjunction of self and persona, and the Shakespearean play often seems to resolve such predicaments in a way which foreshadows modern existential concerns with human personality.

Two other plays which follow this pattern are King Lear and Coriolanus. These plays, unlike Timon, are of certain authorship and are highly finished. Moreover, Lear and Coriolanus lend themselves to comparison with Timon because of their historical proximity to it. Although the exact date of Timon is uncertain, it was probably written within a period which included the composition of both Lear (1604-1605) and Coriolanus (1607-1608). Modern scholars such as Chambers, Charney, Hinman, Kermode, and Oliver indicate that Shakespeare wrote Timon at some time between 1604, at the very earliest, and 1608, at the latest.[83] If parallel techniques and similar patterns may be identified in Lear, Coriolanus, and Timon, one may assert with confidence that

[83] Chambers, in William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems, offers the date of Timon's composition as 1608; Charney, in The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare, concurs; Hinman, in William Shakespeare: The Complete Works, Penguin Edition, suggests 1605-1608; Kermode, in the Riverside Shakespeare, conjectures 1607-1608; and Oliver, in the New Arden Edition, recommends 1607-1608 as well.

the psychological-philosophical investigation of _Timon_ is even more useful and legitimate. It is by no means applicable to _Timon_ alone.

It is appropriate here to recall the importance of "the disjunction of self and persona." As we have seen in _Timon_, when one speaks of the disjunction of self and persona in the psychologies of Shakespeare's people, he refers to a mental disorder precipitated by a lack of self-knowledge--a condition which results in frustration, pain, anxiety, and despair. Until Shakespeare allows a character to thoroughly know himself--that is, until the character somehow achieves a congruency of his self and his persona--he is not whole. The basic principle of disjunction can be compared to the principle involved in the illusion created by refraction when an object--a steel rod, let us say--is placed in a partially filled glass of water. Before the rod is placed in the water, one perceives its "wholeness." Yet, when a portion of the rod is immersed in the water, the water's refractive effect upon light makes the rod appear broken. Its "completeness," its "oneness," is distorted to the vision. For one to see the rod as it really is, for one, that is, to perceive its true shape, the illusion created by refraction must be destroyed. The water, which distorts one's perception of the rod's wholeness, must be removed--or the rod must be removed from the water. In Shakespeare's plays, disjunction occurs

when Shakespeare allows a character to project a persona which--although it is accepted by the character and those around him--does not correspond to his self. Like the rod partially immersed in the glass of water, the character appears divided. The character's self corresponds to the portion of the rod above the water. His persona corresponds to the portion of the rod immersed in and distorted by the water. When Shakespeare allows a character to know himself, the distortion of the persona is repaired. When a character knows himself, self and persona become apparently integral. The character becomes whole.

Shakespeare is a master of opening scenes. After the first scenes in his plays--assuming one carefully attends to them--there is little doubt in an audience's mind that the major character suffers from difficulties which are traceable to the negative effects of the disjunction of self and persona. Certainly this is true in _Lear_, _Coriolanus_, and _Timon_.

Lear's irrationality and its cause--the fact that he has attempted to assume a persona which is inconsistent with his self--is very early revealed in the opening scene of the play. The idea is introduced indirectly. The first characters to appear--Kent, Gloucester, and Edmund, Gloucester's illegitimate son--are engaged in a conversation which moves from speculation on Lear's affections for his sons-in-law to Edmund's bastardy. On the surface, the exchange between

Gloucester and Kent about Edmund's conception is little more than the eye-winking repartee of two men of the world. But the conversation introduces and explores the suggestive implications of bastardy. Bastardy, as the term is used by Gloucester and Kent, refers to Edmund's illegitimacy. But Shakespeare uses their conversation to introduce bastardy as a metaphor for disguise, for one seeming to be what he is not. The conversation, with its connotations, is about that which is false or counterfeit. In the opening scene of Lear, bastardy is perhaps Shakespeare's means of suggesting the problems of pretending or appearing to be what one is not. Kent's first words emphasize this: "Is not this your son, my lord?" (I.i.8). The question is rhetorical. Kent knows of Edmund. The implication is that Edmund is not what he appears to be--a son to Gloucester. Gloucester answers by acknowledging that Edmund is illegitimate. The acknowledgement holds a potential duplicity, because its ambiguity reminds us of the tension which exists between a man's self and his persona. Edmund is indeed Gloucester's natural son, but legally and socially, he is not. Because he is illegitimate, Edmund can never be considered a personality who is fully integrated. Who he is, his identity, will always be in question. In the eyes of the society in which he moves and in contrast to Edgar, Gloucester's legitimate heir, Edmund can never claim an unequivocal identity for himself. He can

never claim to be Gloucester's proper heir. He will always be understood to be an "imitation" of Gloucester's true heir, Edgar. Against this background, Lear stalks in, followed by his daughters, his sons-in-law, and attendants. He immediately announces his intention to divide his kingdom among his daughters. His first speech is significant because it suggests, the first time one sees him, that within him there are forces at odds:

> Mean time we shall express our darker purpose.
> Give me the map there. Know that we have divided
> In three our kingdom, and 'tis our fast intent
> To shake all cares and business from our age,
> Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
> Unburthen'd crawl toward death.
> (I.i.36-41)

The use of plural pronouns by Lear to refer to himself may suggest that more than one element is embodied by Lear's person. Of course, Lear uses the pronouns "we" and "our" in the context of his kingship, and they are appropriate. But one sensitive to the fact that there may be a "duplicity" in Lear might conjecture, with some diffidence, that the pronouns assume more significance than they ordinarily would. In addition, Lear speaks pointedly of his "darker" purpose. Lear uses the word "darker" to suggest that his purpose is more secret. In Shakespeare's time, "darker" meant "less well-known" or "more secret." For both a Renaissance and modern audience, the word directs one's attention to something hidden. It suggests something removed from plain view and, because it does so, suggests deception.

Further, the suggestion of a darker purpose, besides giving Lear's impending action a negative cast, conveys to a modern audience the idea of Jung's theory of lightness and darkness. According to Jung, darkness indicates disorder and chaos in the inner reaches of the mind. This is the condition which arises when the persona is not congruent with the self. Lear uses "darker" to emphasize his previous secrecy and therefore to make his decision to divide the kingdom more impressive to those in attendance. That it does. But one must also remember that secrecy is linked with disguise, another of Shakespeare's metaphors for people who do not know themselves. Almost in the same breath, Lear announces his intention to give up the responsibilities of kingship and become a figurehead. He wishes only the <u>title</u> of King. His "fast intent" is "to shake all the cares and business" from himself. He wants to have the appearance of a king, not to be one. Less than 150 lines into the play, then, there is evidence that Lear is beset by some inner turmoil. He assumes a persona which does not fit his self. The persona he has invented for himself is that of a benevolent king who has "retired." This conception of himself blots out the Lear who must be the king who recognizes and accepts his responsibility. "Only we shall retain / The name," he says, "and all the addition of a king" (I.i.135-136). Lear deceives himself. He is not constant.

There is much more evidence. Lear precipitates a "love auction" among his daughters. Goneril and Regan hypocritically proclaim their love for the old king. They tell Lear what he wants to hear, not what is in their hearts. Only Cordelia, the youngest, acts in an authentic and constant way. She refuses to indulge her father. "I love your majesty," she says, "according to my bond, no more nor less" (I.i.92-93). But which of his daughters' positions does Lear choose? He chooses the position of his elder daughters, who indulge his projections of his false persona. Methodically, he drives from himself those who are most like his true self. Cordelia he disowns. Kent, his faithful attendant, he banishes. Lear becomes a man who surrounds himself with people who are themselves little more than projections of his persona.

Significantly, the announcement of Lear's condition comes directly only from others. Kent's plainly spoken words cut to the quick of the matter:

> What woulds't thou do, old man?
> Thinks't thou that duty shall have dread to speak
> When power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's bound.
>
> (I.i.146-149)

Majesty, dignity, responsibility--these must not be exploited for flattery. The capstone of the scene is set by the words of Regan. She could not make a more explicit description of Lear's ignorance of himself, even though she attributes the

difficulty to her father's age. "He hath," Regan declares, "ever but slenderly known himself" (I.i.293-294). In this utterance, the problem of the play is set. What is to follow is his struggle for self-knowledge.

The early presentation of a man who does not know himself is just as meticulously structured in _Coriolanus_. The audience is made aware that Caius Martius, later Coriolanus, is a man who suffers from the incongruence of self and persona. In _Coriolanus_, Shakespeare reveals the "disorder" of the central character with perhaps even more dispatch than in _King Lear_. As _Coriolanus_ opens, the citizens of Rome are in revolt because the governors will not open the storehouses of corn to them. They single out Caius Martius, a great but arrogant Roman soldier, as the object of their animosity. In conversation, two citizens reveal Caius Martius's difficulty before he appears. As in _Lear_, secondary figures acquaint the audience with the central character's problem. Martius does not know himself. He has accepted a self-image which he has not consciously chosen. His mother, Volumnia, has tutored him to think of himself as a warrior, which is precisely how Martius has come to see himself. These lines reveal his condition:

> _2_. _Cit_. Would you proceed especially against Caius Martius?
> _1_. _Cit_. Against him first; he's a very dog to the commonality.
> _2_. _Cit_. Consider you what services he has done for his country?

<u>1</u>. <u>Cit</u>. Very well, and could be content to give him good report for't, but that he pays himself with being proud.
<u>2</u>. <u>Cit</u>. Nay, but speak not maliciously.
<u>1</u>. <u>Cit</u>. I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did it to that end. Though soft conscienc'd men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it to please his mother, and to be partly proud, which he is, even to the altitude of his virtue.
(I.i.26-40)

"He did it to please his mother." Cariolanus, soldier of Rome, is not what he is because of his own initiative, but because of his mother's!

Just after the first citizen makes this statement, Coriolanus enters. As they rightly assess, he is proud, contemptuous, and arrogant. He is the epitome of a Roman soldier. Yet he does not know who he is. As he speaks, his persona as a warrior emerges. Coriolanus makes the same sort of mistake that Lear does, for he expresses a wish to be something other than what he is. He wants to be like another warrior, the enemy soldier Tullus Aufidius. Aufidius is a projection of Coriolanus's persona. He is a "noble" warrior --a cold, efficient killing machine. At the news that the Volsces are in arms, Coriolanus ponders the prospects of meeting his old enemy in battle once more:

They have a leader,
Tullus Aufidius, that will put you to't.
I sin envying his nobility;
And were I any thing but what I am
I would wish me only he.
(I.i.228-232)

These are small sentences, uttered in admiration of a worthy enemy, yet they reveal the core of Coriolanus's being. What appears to Coriolanus as admiration is, as he says, envy. Coriolanus covets the "nobility" of Aufidius, his capacity as a soldier. This is a soldier's concept of nobility, appropriate to Coriolanus's persona. He identifies his envy as sin because, deep in the innermost core of his being--in the self--Coriolanus does not want to be the ideal warrior Aufidius is or appears to be. Aufidius, who is the object of Coriolanus's admiration, is also the object of his hate. Although he appears to admire Aufidius as an adversary--"He is a lion / That I am proud to hunt" (I.i.235-236)--he actually hates what Aufidius is and, therefore, what he is himself as well. The image of warrior is a persona his real self cannot accept. At the level of self, Coriolanus cannot be, for all his efforts and his mother's, other than a whole man whose tenacity is tempered and balanced by compassion. He is not just a fighting machine. "Were I any thing but what I am," he says, suggesting a desire to use a persona other than the one he has accepted. Certainly Martius is not, in terms of his real self, the cruel, emotionless soldier he professes so much to be. The point is made later by Coriolanus himself. What he wishes destroyed is not the man, but the image. "Thou / Shalt see me once more," Coriolanus says to Comenius, Menenius, and Titus, "strike at

Tullus' face" (I.i.239-240). It is the "face," the image, the outward appearance, that he abhors.

Turning from King Lear and Coriolanus to Timon, one sees a similar pattern of dramatic development. Conversations of characters in the first scene, as we have seen, suggest the duality which exists in the person of the major character, a duality which makes him untrue to himself. When the major character appears, Shakespeare makes him confirm what the audience already suspects about him. Before Timon enters in Act I, Shakespeare leads the audience to suspect, by virtue of a lengthy conversation between the Poet and the Painter, that Timon, like Lear and Coriolanus, suffers from a disjunction of self and persona. The Painter's portrait of Timon is said to "tutor nature" and to be a "pretty mocking." The emphasis of the conversation is, of course, the outer appearance Timon presents, his persona. Yet, the fawning niceties they utter in fact suggest that Timon, at core, is not the debased, opulent flatterer they see him to be. The Painter's portrait provides a context for the Merchant's earlier remark that Timon is a man of "continuate goodness." Because every character equates Timon's "goodness" with his wealth (the basic goodness of Timon's self is disguised by his persona), the truth must come indirectly from the Poet and from Timon himself. In contrast to the Painter's portrait, the Poet's story is tragic. Although it is presented

to Timon in the guise of a tribute, the Painter's remark, uttered as a bit of tongue-in-cheek flattery directed at his companion, brings the jarring reality of Timon's situation into sharp focus. "Yet you do well," the Painter says, "to show Lord Timon that mean eyes have seen / The foot above the head" (I.i.92-94). The implication, even though it is based on Timon's pretended lack of shrewdness, is that he is not in control of his actions. He does not know himself. And then Timon enters. His first act is to give a servant a large amount of money so that he may marry the woman he loves. His second act is to examine the work of the Painter. Timon's observations about the portrait of himself reveal that he is unaware of the division in his being. To Timon, outer appearance is what matters. It is what he accepts as real. What is within, in the self, he distrusts. His words leave little doubt. He says:

> The painting is almost the natural man;
> For since dishonor traffics with man's nature,
> He is but outside; these pencill'd figures are
> Even such as they give out.
> (I.i.157-160)

Again, as in the other plays, before 200 lines are gone, the problem is presented and the terms of the struggle are set.

The comparison of these opening scenes is the operation of a consistent, carefully constructed dramatic pattern. With a deliberate meticulousness, Shakespeare makes his audience sensitive to the fact that the central character is

not what he appears to be. Further, Shakespeare makes it apparent that this condition is basic to the conflict of the entire play. It is the struggle of a man to find himself; it is the painful struggle of a man to achieve constancy; it is the archetypal struggle of a man to find his identity. The first condition Shakespeare imposes for the self-realization of his characters is this: meaning and purpose in life. To be a man, one must know himself. In Shakespeare, characters are never "real" until they know themselves. They must exist, they must have an identity, before they can be anything--before they can follow Polonius's injunction: "This above all: to thine own self be true."

There is more to support the similarity of Lear, Coriolanus, and Timon. When one considers certain images which occur in the plays, he realizes that they, like the construction of the initial scenes, emphasize the motif of falseness, that a person seems something he is not. For example, the image of the dragon used in Lear and Coriolanus frequently applies to the central characters--and, as we shall see, it is a construction image, an image that a man creates to characterize his appearance for others.

In Lear, very early, the old king so describes himself at a significant point. Just after he has disowned his only honest daughter, Cordelia, he calls himself a dragon. Railing at Kent, who intercedes for Cordelia, Lear shouts:

"Peace Kent! / Come not between the dragon and his wrath" (I.i.121-122). Coriolanus, too, assumes this image for himself. Late in Coriolanus, after Coriolanus has rejected the suit for mercy brought by old Menenius, Menenius says of his warrior friend: "This Martius is grown from man to dragon: he has wings, he's more than a creeping thing" (V.iv.12-14). The important feature of this image is that it suggests unreality. The dragon is a mythical monster, a fantasy of horror. It is a construction of man's imagination. So too is his persona. It is in Timon that what I see as a construction image reaches to the level of its greatest poignancy. In the New Arden Edition of Timon, H. J. Oliver notes that E. A. Armstrong reads the image of Icarus into the Poet's description of the work he has written for Timon.[84] The Poet says:

> I have in this rough work shap'd out a man,
> Whom this beneath world doth embrace and hug
> With amplest entertainment. My free drift
> Halts not particularly, but moves itself
> In a wide sea of wax; no levell'd malice
> Infects one comma in the course I hold,
> But flies an eagle flight, bold, and forth on,
> Leaving no tract behind.
>
> (I.i.43-50)

The image of mythological figure of Icarus (which Armstrong suggests) corresponds to the image of dragon in King Lear and Coriolanus. Icarus tried to be what he was not. Using wax and feathers, he made himself into a monster, not a man. He

[84] Oliver, p. 7.

created a persona which did not reflect his self and, because he believed in it, destroyed himself. Just as Lear and Coriolanus see themselves in terms of construction images--the dragon images they attach to themselves--so too does Timon see himself (in terms of the Poet's perception of Timon's persona) as something he is not. As the Poet's work illustrates, Timon's persona is an image Timon has constructed for himself.

Other images which suggest a common bond among the plays are those of disease. Disease images operate in all three plays for the same purpose. They are Shakespeare's means of indicating the disjunctive, disordered conditions in the central characters. A pertinent fact to recall here is that "disease," as it is used in the plays in the metaphorical sense, identifies the condition of disorder discussed in the preceding chapter. Moreover, it foreshadows the existential notion of "disease." Consider the words of Miguel de Unamuno in his essay "The Man of Flesh and Bone" from _Tragic Sense of Life_:

> A disease is, in a certain sense, an organic dissociation; it is a rebellion of some element or organ of the living body which breaks the vital synergy and seeks an end distinct from that which the other elements coordinated with it seek. . . . Everything in me that conspires to break the unity and continuity of my life conspires to destroy me and consequently to destroy itself.[85]

[85] _Tragic Sense of Life_, trans. J. E. Crawford Flitch (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1954), pp. 10-11.

A few examples illustrate this point. In King Lear, disease is first mentioned when Kent attempts to dissuade Lear from disowning Cordelia. Their exchange builds to the revelation that Lear's being is infected by his incontinent, inconsistent acts.

> Kent. See better, Lear, and let me still remain
> The true blank of thine eye.
> Lear. Now, by Apollo--
> Kent. Now by Apollo, King,
> Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.
> Lear. O vassal! Miscreant!
> [Starts to draw his sword]
> Albany, Cornwall. Dear sir, forebear.
> Kent. Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow
> Upon the foul disease.
> (I.i.157-164)

Kent isolates Lear's "foul disease." It is the king's refusal to recognize and accept a course of action his self knows to be right. An oath to the god Apollo, god of truth, is in Lear's mouth the grossest of falsehoods, and it reflects the infection of his being. Further, Apollo is the god of healing. This is something Shakespeare would have known and to which he would have attached a great deal more significance than modern readers of the play. By rejecting Kent's words, Lear emphasizes his affliction. Also, Apollo is the sun god--the god of light. Kent's point is that Lear is blind--we recall his reference to "darker purpose"--and therefore his appeal to Apollo is vain. Lear is dominated by the persona he has created.

Coriolanus, too, is referred to in terms of disease imagery. The tribunes, in Act III, refer to Coriolanus as a "disease that must be cut away" (III.i.293). The exchange between the tribunes and Menenius sounds the depth of Coriolanus's problem:

> Sicinius. He's a disease that must be cut away.
> Menenius. O, he's a limb that has but a disease:
> Mortal to cut it off; to cure it easy.
> (III.i.293-295)

The distinction of these two points of view is interesting. Sicinius, who dislikes Coriolanus, sees him as a disease of the body politic, as an infection of its being. Menenius, Coriolanus's friend, sees him as one man diseased. The narrowing of the conceptual framework from the whole society to its part--the individual man--brings the audience to a recognition of Coriolanus as just that, a man. As a man, Menenius points out, Coriolanus is diseased. He is so because he does not act in accord with his true nature. On the one hand, Sicinius seems to see Coriolanus in terms of his persona, Coriolanus the ideal warrior. Menenius, on the other hand, seems to see Coriolanus in terms of Coriolanus's self and laments that his friend does not act the man he knows him to be.

The disease imagery is associated with Timon in a similar way. At his mock banquet in Act III, Timon projects his hatred of what he has been onto the flattering lords who

reflect his persona. Throwing water into their faces, Timon curses them (and his own persona as well):

> Live loath'd, and long,
> Most smiling, smooth, detested parasites,
> Courteous destroyers, affable wolves, meek bears,
> You fools of fortune, trencher friends, time's flies,
> Cap and knee slaves, vapors, and minute-jacks!
> Of man and beast the infinite malady
> Crust you quite o'er!
>
> (III.vi.94-99)

Timon's invective suggests that the lords' duplicity brings upon them an "infinite malady"--a phrase that alludes to venereal disease, a common malady of prostitutes--which infects them. They prostitute themselves and in doing so are diseased. Timon sees the lords, and perhaps, to a degree, the persona he has assumed (the persona by which the lords know and accept him), as corrupt, made dissociate by an infection. Others see Timon's difficulties better than he. A bit later, after Timon has banished himself from the society of men, his servants meet. One of them comments to the effect that, even though Timon has become a misanthrope, he is still plagued by his disease--his persona and his self are not yet coincident. The servant says:

> So his familiars to his buried fortunes
> Slink all away, leave their false vows with him,
> Like empty purses pick'd; and his poor self,
> A dedicated beggar to the air,
> With his disease of all-shunn'd poverty
> Walks, like contempt, alone.
>
> (IV.ii.10-15)

The connection of "self" and "disease" is important. Timon's servant suggests that his master, even in his rejection of the society of men, has assumed yet another persona. Timon's self remains obscured. True, Timon has thrown off one persona and become a "dedicated begger to the air," but he has assumed another which is just as far from his self as the first. Timon is still encumbered by his "disease of all-shunned poverty." In the context of the whole play, the servant's words suggest the relation of disease and the disjunctive condition of Timon's being--the disjunction of self and persona. In fact, it is clear that Shakespeare uses disease imagery in all three plays to show the disjunction in each central character. His imagery points to the root of the conflict within each of them.

Another way in which the dramatic techniques of the three plays are similar is that, in each case, Shakespeare carefully provides a character who reflects the central character's true nature. Each of these characters is constant, therefore authentic, since in each of them self and persona integrate. Perhaps Sartre's comment in "The Pursuit of Being," from _Being and Nothingness_, helps clarify and emphasize this point. Sartre says of the authentic man:

> We can equally well reject the dualism of appearance and essence. The appearance does not hide the essence, it reveals it; it is the essence. The essence of an existent is no longer a property sunk in the cavity of this existent; it is the

> manifest law which presides over the succession of its appearances, it is the principle of the series. . . . But essence, as the principle of series, is definitely only the concatenation of appearances; that is, itself an appearance. . . . The phenomenal being manifests itself; it manifests its essence as well as its existence, and it is nothing but the well connected series of its manifestations.[86]

For the authentic man, there exists no duality of essence and appearance. As we have said, when a man is constant, his persona and his self are one. Because these become one, the constant man creates his wholeness. He *is*, and he appears to be what he is.

Kent is the authentic person in *King Lear* who reflects Lear's true nature. Throughout the play, he exhibits a responsibility for his actions which Lear does not. Kent, from the beginning, knows himself. He is a man who acts in accord with what he himself determines to be the proper course. In defense of Cordelia (another responsible person), he makes his position clear. Kent says to Lear:

> . . . be Kent unmannerly
> When Lear is mad. What would'st thou do, old man?
> Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak
> When power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's
> bound,
> When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state,
> And in thy consideration check
> This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgment,
> Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,
> Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds
> Reverb no hollowness.
> (I.i.145-154)

[86] Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. xlvi.

Kent's "life" is his "judgment." He is as he acts. But Lear does not recognize the value of Kent's statement until the end of the play when he, too, comes to know himself. When Lear comes to know who he is, when he knows himself, when he is constant, he can recognize the constancy of others, especially his daughter Cordelia. Lear's recognition of Cordelia in Act IV is significant. Lear says to her (and to Kent as well, since he is standing by):

> Methinks I should know you, and know this man,
> Yet I am doubtful: for I am mainly ignorant
> What this place is, and all the skill I have
> Remembers not these garments; nor I know not
> Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me,
> For (as I am a man) I think this lady
> To be my child Cordelia.
>
> (IV.vii.63-69)

Cordelia confirms Lear's recognition of her. Since she is honest, she can recognize honesty in her father. Her reply, "And so I am; I am." (IV.vii.69) emphasizes the point. Their mutual respect for what each of them _is_ shows itself again in Act V. As Lear and Cordelia are being taken to prison by Edmund's soldiers, Lear says:

> Come, let's away to prison:
> We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage;
> When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
> And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live,
> And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
> At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
> Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too--
> Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out--
> And take upon's the mystery of things
> As if we were God's spies. . . .
>
> (V.iii.8-17)

Later, Lear sees Kent as authentic as well:

> Lear. Are you not Kent?
> Kent. The same:
> Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?
> Lear. He's a good fellow, I can tell you that;
> He'll strike, and quickly too. He's dead and rotten.
> Kent. No my good lord. I am the very man--
> Lear. I'll see that straight.
> Kent. That from your first of differences and decay,
> Have follow'd your sad steps--
> Lear. You are welcome hither.
> (V.iii.283-290)

Lear recognizes and understands Kent. Further, Kent's revelation that he is also Caius, and Lear's grasp of what Kent has done, emphasize the fact that they are not king and servant, but rather men who know and accept each other for what they are.

Menenius, Coriolanus's friend, serves, in a more subtle manner, a function comparable to that of Kent in Lear. He, too, is an authentic man. It is Menenius who defends Coriolanus on every occasion because he recognizes and values the true nature of Coriolanus just as Kent recognizes and values Lear's true nature. Because Menenius knows himself, he can cut through the personas of others. This is made clear in Act II. Sicinius and Brutus regard Menenius as a fumbling old fool. As they attempt to make sport of him, he expresses his constancy. "What I think, I utter," Menenius tells them, "and spend my malice in my breath" (II.i.53-54). A few lines later, he retorts, "You know neither me, yourselves, nor any thing" (II.i.67-68). Then, he defends Coriolanus:

> You must be saying Martius is proud; who, in a
> cheap estimation, is worth all your predecessors
> since Ducalion, though peradventure some of the
> best of 'em were heridiitary hangmen.
> (II.i.90-93)

In the next scene, Menenius tries to tell Coriolanus how to deal with others. In essence, his advice is to "be yourself." Coriolanus, however, does not listen. When he is made consul, Coriolanus is required by ceremonial custom to address the citizenry. But he is hesitant to discharge this responsibility of his office. He says:

> I do beseech you,
> Let me o'erleap that custom; for I cannot
> Put on the gown, stand naked, and entreat them
> For my wounds' sake to give their suffrage.
> (II.ii.135-138)

Because Coriolanus so fully accepts his persona as a warrior, he is reluctant to engage in the ceremony. Coriolanus feels their ceremony demeaning since it requires him to face the citizenry as one man speaking openly and honestly for his fellows, to his equals. To "put on the gown" of humility, to "stand naked" before the common people, is not the mien of a Roman soldier. Furthermore, he does not wish to "entreat them for my wound's sake." This statement, too, suggests that Coriolanus does not want to subject himself to the people's approval. To do so would minimize <u>his</u> honor as a soldier and imply that his wounds were acquired in the service of the people, not for the warrior's glory.

As we have seen before, Shakespeare has Sicinius and Menenius respond to Coriolanus's disjunctive "diseased" condition. Sicinius, who dislikes Coriolanus and resents his power, wants the soldier to bend to custom, ostensibly in the interest of the body politic. "The people / Must have their voices; neither will they bate / One jot of ceremony" (II.ii.139-141), Sicinius tells Coriolanus. However, Menenius, Coriolanus's friend, believes in him and suggests that the speech is an opportunity for Coriolanus to reveal his true nature. Menenius tells Coriolanus:

> Pray you go fit you to the custom, and
> Take to you, as your predecessors have,
> Your honor with your form.
> (II.ii.142-144)

Menenius urges Coriolanus to speak and thereby assume his responsibilities as a leader--as a man who can lead others by his example. Menenius wants his friend to "be himself." But Coriolanus will not accept a view of himself which reflects anything other than his warrior image. He replies:

> It is a part
> That I shall blush in acting, and might well
> Be taken from the people.
> (II.ii.144-146)

Coriolanus suggests that his embarrassment in speaking to the people will, rather than inspire confidence, show them instead a warrior's weakness--a weakness they would be better off not to see. Coriolanus will not budge. He acts in accord with his warrior persona. By doing so, he rejects

Menenius's candor in a manner which recalls Prince Hal's rejection of the candid wisdom of his friend Falstaff.

In Act V, however, Coriolanus comes to recognize what Menenius, throughout the play, has exemplified for him: a man must know himself and be himself. When Menenius goes to Coriolanus to ask mercy for Rome, he is barred by the Volscian watch, and he is questioned about his identity and his association with Coriolanus. Menenius says to one of the Volscian guards:

> I tell thee, fellow,
> Thy general is my lover. I have been the
> Book of his good acts, whence men have read
> His fame unparallel'd.
> (V.ii.13-16)

The guard remains unmoved. Suddenly, Menenius spies Coriolanus, who enters with Aufidius, and says to the guard, loudly enough for all to hear:

> Now, you companion! I'll say an arrant for you.
> You shall know now that I am in estimation; you
> shall perceive that a Jack guardant cannot office
> me from my son Coriolanus.
> (V.ii.60-63)

Then Menenius shouts out to Coriolanus his petition for mercy. Coriolanus's answer is "Away!" (V.ii.80). Perhaps reinforced by the presence of Aufidius, Coriolanus's warrior persona continues to dominate. It would seem that Coriolanus is insensitive to Menenius, the reflector of his true self; but, on the contrary, Menenius's visit has moved Coriolanus. The observation of the guard at the close of the scene calls

attention to Coriolanus's treatment of Menenius and to Menenius's constancy.

> Menenius. I neither care for the world nor your general; for such things as you, I can scarce think there's any, y' are so slight. He that hath a will to die by himself fears it not from another. Let your general do his worst. For you, be that you are, long; and your misery increase with your age! I say to you, as I was said to, "Away!"
> 1. Watch. A noble fellow, I warrant him.
> 2. Watch. The worthy fellow is our general. He's the rock, the oak not to be wind-shaken.
> (V.ii.101-111)

The guards, common people, have seen evidence of Menenius's constancy, and the first watch has appreciated it. He sees Menenius's constancy as "noble." The second watch disagrees. He thinks the "worthy fellow" is Coriolanus, whom he knows only in terms of Coriolanus's warrior persona. To this guard, Coriolanus is "the rock, the oak not to be wind-shaken." This estimate, however, is incorrect. The visit of Menenius does move Coriolanus. Before he sends Menenius away, Coriolanus hands him a letter saying, "Yet for I loved thee, / Take this along, I writ it for thy sake, / And would have sent it" (V.ii.89-91). The letter is not mentioned again. Given the words which accompany it, the letter may contain some explanation of Coriolanus's behavior and reveal something of Coriolanus's self to Menenius. The closeness of Menenius and Coriolanus is emphasized in the next scene. Coriolanus's comment to Aufidius hints at the fact that Coriolanus learned something of himself from Menenius. With

genuine sadness, Coriolanus comments to Aufidius on his treatment of Menenius:

> This last old man,
> Whom with a crack'd heart I have sent to Rome,
> Lov'd me above the measure of a father,
> Nay, godded me indeed.
> (V.iii.8-11)

Coriolanus feels compassion for Menenius. Moreover, he says that Menenius "godded" him. Menenius could not hold Coriolanus in such esteem if unaware that Coriolanus, at core, is other than the warrior persona he projects. Moreover, Coriolanus could not feel compassion for Menenius unless he is something other than the warrior he appears to be. In Menenius, Coriolanus has seen a reflection of what he really is.

Shakespeare has prepared us for Coriolanus's act of mercy. He has come to know himself. When his mother, his wife, and his child come to plead for Rome, Coriolanus asserts that he stands "As if a man were author of himself, / And knew no other kin" (V.iii.36-37). Speaking to his family, Coriolanus says: "Like a dull actor now / I have forgot my part" (V.iii.40-41). He has given up his persona as a warrior.

In Timon, there again occurs a dramatic comparison between a major character's inauthenticity and another character's authenticity. Shakespeare uses Flavius, the faithful servant of Timon, in the same way that he uses

Kent and Menenius in the other plays. Flavius respects the true nature of his master, and he does not waver in telling Timon of his inconstancy. As we have seen, at the beginning of the play Timon conceives himself in terms of the persona he has adopted. His wealth, his material possessions, are his "greatness." At the end of Act II, Flavius suggests to Timon that not all people regard nobility in terms of one's material wealth. When Flavius speaks to Timon, calling him noble, worthy, and royal, he refers to his master's qualities as a man, not his title or his wealth. Unlike others around Timon, Flavius is not an idle flatterer. He tries to explain to Timon:

> Great Timon! noble, worthy royal Timon!
> Ah, when the means are gone that but the praise,
> The breath is gone whereof this praise is made.
> Feast-won, fast-lost; one cloud of winter show'rs,
> These flies are couch'd.
> (II.ii.168-172)

But Timon, like Lear and Coriolanus, fails to grasp the intention of what is said to him. His answer almost ignores the steward's point:

> Come, sermon me no further,
> No villainous bounty yet hath pass'd my heart;
> Unwisely, not ignobly, have I given.
> (II.ii.173-175)

Timon's attention is on the business of giving, not on that spark of the true self within that has prompted that giving. Flavius, however, is not deterred from following the course of action he deems proper. After Timon's complete ruin,

Flavius is left with very little. But he still shares, as he has learned to do from Timon, with his fellows. What resources he has, he distributes in Timon's name (IV.ii.1-29) and vows to "serve his [Timon's] mind with my best will (IV.ii.49). In Act IV, Flavius visits Timon in the wood, and Timon recognizes his honesty. "I never had an honest man about me" (IV.iii.477), Timon protests at first. Then, he begins to see the example Flavius sets in his unselfish acts:

> I do proclaim
> One honest man--mistake me not, but one;
> No more, I pray--and he's a steward.
> How fain I would have hated all mankind,
> And thou redeem'st thyself.
> (IV.iii.496-500)

Yet, he applies one last test:

> But tell me true
> (For I must ever doubt, though ne'er so sure),
> Is not thy kindness subtle, covetous,
> If not a usuring kindness, and, as rich men
> deal gifts,
> Expecting in return twenty for one?
> (IV.iii.506-510)

to which Flavius answers, "no." Then, in keeping with his true nature, Timon gives Flavius gold. But unlike the gold he gives to others (Alcibiades and the Banditti), Timon's gift to Flavius is not bound by corruptive conditions of the gifts made to others. Timon tells Flavius:

> Thou singly honest man,
> Here, take; the gods out of my misery
> Has sent thee treasure. Go, live rich and happy,
> But thus condition'd: thou shalt build from men.
> (IV.iii.523-526)

Timon's desire is for Flavius to remain unfettered and constant. Timon admonishes Flavius to "build from men." Perhaps Timon suggests that Flavius must rely on himself, on his honesty, for his freedom--not on others. That Timon can openly advise Flavius to be constant, despite Flavius's newly acquired wealth, is evidence that Timon has almost learned to know himself.

The links among Lear, Coriolanus, and Timon are that in each play the characters come to know themselves in terms which might be described as existential. The disjunction of self and persona--that is, the disorder, which influences each of them until late in the plays--is resolved only when Shakespeare allows the characters to know themselves, when they are able to allow their selves to determine their personas. They achieve this congruence by understanding and exercising a quality which may, in existential terms, be called authenticity.

In King Lear, the old king must be jarred into recognizing a principle he has but slenderly known for his eighty-one years: constancy. One cannot help thinking of an early exchange between Lear and Cordelia in terms of an existentialist's conception of authenticity. "What can you say," Lear asks, "to draw / A third more opulent than your sisters'? Speak." Cordelia responds:

Cor. Nothing, my lord.
Lear. Nothing?
Cor. Nothing.
Lear. Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.
Cor. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth. I love your majesty
According to my bond, no more nor less.
(I.i.85-93)

Indeed, words, unless given substance by acts, are ineffective. Lear would have Cordelia be inconstant, like her older sisters. He wants Cordelia to be what she is not. Cordelia, because she is honest, refuses. "I cannot heave my heart into my mouth," she says to her father. Cordelia is the truest of Lear's daughters, and she has shown, by her acts, that she is. She cannot be otherwise. What matters in the final analysis is that one's acts give substance to his words. One must know himself and speak from self-knowledge. Before Lear can be anything, he must first exist as a man, he must know himself. Subjected to the most extreme agony and despair, Lear finally comes to understand that freedom lies in knowing one's self and acting and speaking in accord with it. At the end of the play, Lear is not so much a king--a being described by a title--as he is a king who is also a man. When Lear attempted to relieve himself of the responsibilities of kingship early in the play, he was, in one way, attempting to live as something he was not. But at the end, Lear knows that he is a man and a king--he cannot be more or less. His encounter with nothingness, his being stripped of

everything but what he is, brings him an understanding of his self. He is free, and he can say to Cordelia that they may "sing like birds in' th' cage" (V.iii.9) even though they are cast into prison. Kent's words accentuate Lear's final grasp of self-knowledge. After Lear dies, Kent observes: "The wonder is he hath endur'd so long, / He but usurp'd his life" (V.iii.317-318).

Coriolanus's struggle to gain an identity of his own parallels Lear's. Early in the play, one finds that Coriolanus does not exist as a man. He is, rather, an image. The warrior hero of Rome is indeed a flesh and bone creature, but he does not know himself. Like Lear, Coriolanus sees himself narrowly, in terms of his persona. He conceives of himself in terms of words which describe him as a soldier, and, because those words do not emanate from acts determined by his self (and are ineffectual), he has outline but no substance. Until the end of the play, Coriolanus allows the hollow words (his name, for example, comes from his conquest of the Corioles) of his persona, not his self, to shape his image. The words in which he most believes are his mother's, not his own. "Thou art my warrior," Volumnia says, "I holp to frame thee" (V.iii.63). Volumnia has dictated her son's actions. He is an actor playing a role in a drama written by someone else. Coriolanus does not exist. Caius Martius does. Only at the end of the play when Martius is able to throw off

the insulating armor of his warrior persona, "Coriolanus," does he become a man. Only then does he know himself. When he extends mercy to Rome, he becomes whole. Having made his decision, he says to Virgilia and Volumnia:

> But we will drink together; and you shall bear
> A better witness back than words, which we,
> On like conditions, will have counter seal'd.
> (V.iii.203-205)

The "better witness" to which Martius refers is the treaty with the Romans. It stands for his deed, his act of mercy. He has acted in accord with the constancy of his self. Virgilia and Volumnia will carry Martius's message to Rome. Further, it will be "counter seal'd," that is, authentic--just as authentic as the man who authors it. Martius's resolve is firm. He will act in accord with his self--what he is--even at the peril of his life. Earlier, he has told his mother:

> O my mother, mother! O!
> You have won a happy victory to Rome;
> But, for your son, believe it--O, believe it--
> Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,
> If not most mortal to him. But let it come.
> (V.iii.185-189)

"But let it come." Martius indicates that his decision to spare Rome is not made lightly or in the emotion of the moment. He acts in accord with his self, and, in doing so, he assumes responsibility for his act. He reveals the same constancy that his friend Menenius has shown. One recalls Menenius's statement to the Volscian guard: "He that hath a

will to die by himself fears it not from another" (V.ii.103-104). Martius has matured. He knows himself. He stands as a man who is indeed "author of himself" (V.iii.36). When Aufidius charges him with treason and calls him a "boy of tears" (V.vi.100), Martius is enraged. What enrages him is Aufidius's suggestion that his act of mercy is not of his own creation, but prompted by Virgilia and Volumnia. Martius is, however, responsible for his actions. He tells Aufidius:

> Measureless liar, thou hast made my heart
> Too great for what contains it. "Boy?"
> . . . .
> Cut me to pieces, Volsces, men and lads,
> Stain your edges on me. "Boy," false hound!
> (V.ii.102-103, 111-112)

Martius the man--his brave, compassionate, responsible self--is asserted. He knows himself and will be no other. Like Cordelia, he can be no more than what he is. He is authentic. Martius's act of mercy stands for what he is, and it is by this act he must be judged.

Timon's struggle for authenticity, traced above in Chapter III, is comparable to the struggles of Lear and Coriolanus (Martius). Just as Lear and Coriolanus (Martius) assume personas which do not represent or coincide with the self within each of them, so, too, does Timon. The first persona he assumes is of a prodigal flatterer. The second is that of a misanthrope. In each play, the major character must

descend beyond the depths of despair. Dramatically, Shakespeare does this by placing them at the mercy of persons with whom they deal as projections of those personas which they assume. Lear suffers rejection and abuse from his elder daughters. Coriolanus is made consul, immediately deposed, and banished from Rome, but subsequently he bows to the will of his enemy, Aufidius. Timon is placed at the mercy of his parasitic, usurious companions. Upon recognition of their duplicity, Timon projects his venomous, misanthropic hatred on all mankind. Each of the three is humbled. Each learns the hard lesson that regardless of what he appears to be--king, warrior, bountiful lord--he is nothing until he is first a man who knows himself.

In existential terms, this is illustrated in the plays by the central character's achievement of constancy which, in turn, brings with it a congruence of self and persona, the prime requirement for authenticity and, therefore, for identity. When each character acts in accord with his self, he "becomes." Each knows himself. Lear can be what he always was at core--a king who is a kind, loving father. He is this when he accepts Cordelia for what she is. Coriolanus, also, can be Martius, the compassionate, feeling man who tempers his power with mercy instead of the cold, insensitive killing machine, Coriolanus. Martius is himself when he spares Rome. Timon, deserted by his society, castigated by himself, becomes

the man whose expression of constancy and authenticity pressed into a wax table saves Athens--full of all the things he despises. He becomes himself in the writing of his epitaph.

Out of their encounters with adversity in its purest form, Lear, Coriolanus, and Timon come to know themselves. They achieve identities which transcend even their deaths. They _are_. Shakespeare dramatically underlines their achievements with the words he puts into the mouths of the characters whose speeches conclude each play. Of Lear, Edgar says:

> The weight of this sad time we must obey,
> Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say:
> The oldest hath borne most; we that are young
> Shall never see so much, nor live so long.
> (V.iii.324-327)

And of Caius Martius, even his enemy Aufidius says:

> Beat thou the drum, that it speak mournfully;
> Trail your steel pikes. Though in this city he
> Hath widowed and unchilded many a one,
> Which to his honor bewail the injury,
> Yet he shall have a noble memory.
> (V.vi.149-153)

And of Timon, Alcibiades says:

> Yet rich conceit
> Taught thee to make vast Neptune weep for aye
> On thy low grave, on faults forgiven. Dead
> Is noble Timon, of whose memory
> Hereafter more.
> (V.iv.77-81)

Certainly, then, Shakespeare sought to express dramatically and explicitly a fundamental idea of what existence means.

That idea is expressed in Timon's words:

> My long sickness
> Of health and living now begins to mend,
> And nothing brings me all things.
> (V.i.186-188)

Chapter V

CONSIDERATION OF MAJOR RECURRENT CRITICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT *TIMON OF ATHENS* AND HOW A PSYCHOLOGICAL-PHILOSOPHICAL READING OF *TIMON OF ATHENS* ANSWERS THEM

Beginning with a consideration of *Timon*'s textual difficulties, its major editions, and its stage history, our discussion has moved through a review of major critical attitudes about *Timon* to a reconsideration of the play from the perspective of a recently developed critical approach to Shakespeare--an approach which combines the principles of psychology and existential philosophy. When these principles are applied to *Timon*, one finds that the play exhibits a pattern of dramatic construction which *Timon* shares with other of Shakespeare's plays, especially *King Lear* and *Coriolanus*. This final chapter explains the usefulness of a psychological-philosophical investigation of *Timon of Athens*.

There are two reasons that a psychological-philosophical investigation of *Timon* is particularly valuable. One is that such an investigation helps resolve certain recurrent questions that arise in critical assessments of the play. Another is that it allows and invites a more appreciative reading of

Timon than do those critical assessments which preoccupy themselves with the structural problems.

Structural assessments of *Timon* have inspired considerable controversy over the play's authorship. Unfortunately, most of the investigations which consider the question of authorship present *Timon* in a negative way. They begin by asserting that *Timon* is not a well-wrought play and that it therefore does not accurately represent Shakespeare's genius. They attempt to explain the play's difficulties by suggesting that *Timon* was not the work of Shakespeare only, but a play written by Shakespeare and from one to three others. Since Knight's introduction of the divided authorship theory in 1839, many scholars have concerned themselves with exploring *Timon* from the perspective this theory provides. Although this view was very popular in the nineteenth century, the theory's popularity waned by the 1930's. For all practical purposes, the theory died then. However, Hardin Craig still favored the theory in the 1950's. In *An Interpretation of Shakespeare*, he mentions the assertion of Parrott, made some twenty years earlier, that Chapman was the second author of *Timon*. Craig does indicate the uncertainty of the assertion. He writes: "It has been plausibly argued that Shakespeare wrote only certain scenes and that Chapman, or another dramatist, finished it for the stage; but agreement is forestalled by the thought that Chapman, or any

other competent dramatist of the time, would have done better work."[87] Later in the same decade, Winifred M. T. Nowottny, the last critic I know of who strongly supported the divided authorship theory, is more positive than Craig. Although Nowottny reveals in his text that he, too, would like a better explanation for the problem, he nevertheless asserts in a recent essay: "I should perhaps mention, in order to clarify for the reader the point of view from which I write this article, that I think _Timon_ to be the work of two hands. . . ."[88]

The note of hesitancy expressed by both Craig and Nowottny in asserting that "two hands" are involved in _Timon_ expresses reasonable caution on their part. The condition of _Timon_'s text--its inconsistencies and loose ends, its extremely free verse, its large proportion of prose which occurs capriciously--_Timon_'s uncertain date, the circumstances of its inclusion in the First Folio, and so forth, do not inspire confidence. It is in this respect that a psychological-philosophical reading of _Timon_ is useful. For all _Timon_'s problems, a psychological-philosophical reading reveals too much correspondence in dramatic construction among _King Lear_, _Coriolanus_, and _Timon_ for _Timon_

[87] _An Interpretation of Shakespeare_, pp. 246-247.

[88] "Acts IV and V of _Timon of Athens_," _Shakespeare Quarterly_, 10 (1959), 497.

to be anything other than the work of Shakespeare alone. Shakespeare's careful use of the opening scene in each play to present his major characters as people who suffer from a lack of self-knowledge is consistent. In these plays Shakespeare focuses on the mental disorder initially affecting the major characters and their efforts to resolve that disorder. In each play, Shakespeare's resolution of the major character's disorder, expressed in existential terms, is accomplished through the character's achievement of authenticity. Shakespeare's use of disease imagery in each play as a metaphor for the major character's disjunctive condition is apparent. Finally, Shakespeare's use of an "authentic" character as a norm for comparison with the central figure is also consistent in each play. This evidence weakens any argument which proposes that _Timon_ is not entirely the work of Shakespeare.

The structural difficulties, however, remain. Blakemore Evans asserts, on the basis of bibliographical studies, that many of the First Folio texts were set from specially prepared transcripts by Ralph Crane.[89] Perhaps this fact helps to account for what appears to be the presence of "two hands." When one considers this information in conjunction with the elements which are consistently brought into sharp relief in _King Lear_, _Coriolanus_, and _Timon_ under the light of psychological-philosophical analysis, any reading which

[89] _Riverside Shakespeare_, pp. 31-32.

requires the presence of two playwrights at work in _Timon_ seems awkward.

Another explanation of the problems of _Timon_ has been the "unfinished play" theory. Its adherents think that _Timon_ is a wholly Shakespearean play, but that for various reasons he did not finish it. First offered by Ulrici in the early nineteenth century and then largely ignored, the theory was revived in the early twentieth century by E. K. Chambers.[90] He was followed by several other scholars--Ellis-Fermor in the 1940's, W. W. Greg, J. C. Maxwell, and H. J. Oliver in the 1950's, and, most recently, by Frank Kermode and Richard D. Fly. This is the popularly accepted explanation of the problems found in _Timon_.

I, too, believe that _Timon_ is unfinished, but I see the play as unfinished in the sense that it lacks refinement, not in the sense that it is incomplete as do Ellis-Fermor and others. As we have seen, the basic pattern of the play is complete. Moreover, the correspondences among _Lear_, _Coriolanus_, and _Timon_ indicate _Timon_ to be consistently developed. To say that _Timon_ is unfinished in the sense that its rough edges could be smoothed and jointed more carefully is appropriate. To say that _Timon_ is unfinished in the sense of its being incomplete is not. I believe that a psychological-philosophical examination of _Timon_ demonstrates that it is more complete than critics are inclined to admit. Although Ellis-Fermor later modified her position somewhat,

[90] _William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems_, pp. 269-273.

what concerns her most and what provokes her conjecture that *Timon* is unfinished is Timon's character. In "*Timon of Athens*: An Unfinished Play," she observes:

> We have avoided mention so far of the greatest weakness in the play, that which gives us more ground for uneasiness than all of these [previously made points]--the character of Timon. This goes deep into the fabric of the play and we cannot explain it away by saying that something has been lost or not written or not worked over. This is a matter of conception, not of working out. . . . He [Timon] fails to leave a deep, coherent impression of his personality. . . . There is no individuality.[91]

I think to the contrary that there is an abundance of "individuality" in Timon's character. J. C. Maxwell points in the right direction when he says that insufficient stress has been laid on the fact that, when the play opens, Timon is already ruined.[92] A consideration of the resolution of the play in existential terms fills out Maxwell's suggestion. The whole play is built around Timon's struggle for identity, what today we might call an existential constancy. As we have seen, Shakespeare very early prepares his audience for the disjunction of self and persona in *Timon*; so when Timon takes the stage, he is already a figure in turmoil. Perhaps it is entirely logical that Ellis-Fermor, influenced by her

[91] "*Timon of Athens*: An Unfinished Play," p. 172.

[92] *Timon of Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp. xxx-xxxi.

view that *Timon* is incomplete, should see Timon as a "blank." And since the play is a chronicle of Timon's struggle for identity, it is only at the play's end that Timon becomes a man of substance.

Another problem, which is prompted by Ellis-Fermor's conclusion that Timon "fails to leave a coherent impression of his personality," that he has "no individuality," is evident in what appears to be the contradictory nature of Timon's epitaph. Scholars who have studied Shakespeare's sources for *Timon* have established that Shakespeare transcribed two epitaphs from North. On this evidence, it has been conjectured that Shakespeare intended to strike one of them in revision. Asserting that this was never done, scholars conclude that Shakespeare left an obvious contradiction in the final scene. Oliver's comment on the epitaph is typical of those by readers who have considered the problem it presents. He points to the fact that Shakespeare transcribed two epitaphs from North for use in the play and goes on to say: "It was because he transcribed *both* these epitaphs, and apparently omitted to strike one of them out, that Shakespeare left a contradiction in his final scene."[93] I disagree. I think that Shakespeare intentionally left both epitaphs in the play because he needed both. The psychological-philosophical reading of *Timon* suggests this

[93] Oliver, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

possibility. As we have already seen, the first half of the epitaph describes Timon's misanthropic persona, while the second part states Timon's achievement of authenticity. When Timon writes the epitaph, he knows himself. It is only at this point that Timon exists as a whole character. Once it is understood that only when Timon becomes authentic does he have substance, one can see why it would be possible for critics unaware of the implications of a psychological-philosophical reading of Timon to consider Timon as a "blank." Until the end of the play, the contrast between the personas Timon adopts and his self is not apparent. The presentation of the character in this way suited Shakespeare's dramatic purpose admirably. Timon is nothing until he comes to know himself. Through his encounter with nothingness, he learns to know himself and thereby becomes a man of substance. He has an identity. He is an individual. Northrop Frye, in Fools of Time: Studies in Shakespearean Tragedy, has observed: "In the tragic society one's life is one's function or relation to others, and when the group perceives one's real life, isolation becomes a confronting with nothingness."[94] I think that the second part of Timon's epitaph indicates that he has willingly confronted isolation because he knows that he is unlike the fellows of his society

[94] Fools of Time: Studies in Shakespearean Tragedy (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 99-100.

and that he alone must determine who he is. When Shakespeare allows Timon to write these words,

> Here lie I, Timon, who, alive, all living men
> did hate;
> Pass by and curse thy fill, but pass and stay
> not thy gait,
> (V.iv.72-73)

he is allowing Timon to assert that he is himself, no more nor less. At this point in the play Timon is not a flatterer and a usurer, and he is not a misanthrope who becomes so because he loses everything. Unmoved by curses and ostracism, Timon remains himself, a man who knows his self and who allows his self to prescribe what he is.

Another difficulty which a psychological-philosophical investigation helps to resolve is how one should consider the relationship of Timon and Alcibiades in Act V. Alcibiades is too often seen as simply a character to contrast with Timon. Although many critics have considered this problem, Fly's ideas, since they are quite recent, serve as an example here. In "The Ending of 'Timon of Athens': A Reconsideration," Fly observes: "The discontinuity between the two story lines is sporadically bothersome . . . but causes the fifth act in particular to appear extremely unsatisfactory. Because of this structural bifurcation, the conclusion of _Timon_ . . . seems to conclude nothing, to leave the play distressingly open and unresolved."[95] Although Fly

[95] Fly, p. 242.

is apparently aware of the existential import of the play's end, he does not see how such a reading helps to bring the relationship of Timon and Alcibiades into focus. Alcibiades, like Timon and Coriolanus and Lear, has been victimized by a persona which does not coincide with his self. Like Coriolanus, his persona makes him appear to be pure soldier--hardened, ruthless, born to the action of battle. For this reason, he is too often seen only as a character to contrast with Timon. However, Alcibiades is not simply a foil for Timon; he also reflects Timon's real self, just as Flavius does. Therein, I think, lies the key to Fly's misunderstanding. Alcibiades learns from Timon that one becomes who he is, one becomes authentic, by knowing himself and assuming a conscious responsibility for his acts. Alcibiades has not been moved to destroy Athens because of his hatred for the city and its people; rather, he plans to attack Athens because the senators will not compromise their pompous, arrogant conception of justice. But Alcibiades does not realize his mistake until he has read Timon's epitaph. Like Coriolanus when he sees first Menenius and then his wife, child and mother, Alcibiades, as he reads the epitaph aloud, comes to know himself. He understands the example which Timon has provided for him. Because of this new understanding, he can say that he will "use the olive with my sword" (V.iv.82). Thus, _Timon_ does not end with Timon and Alcibiades

as contrasting figures even though, earlier in the play, they had been. What does occur is that Alcibiades learns to be a whole man. His maturity reflects a similar maturity in Timon. Both men come to know themselves, which is evidenced by the coming together of persona and self in each character. In this sense, the conceptual framework of the play is complete. Not one character, but two have succeeded in the struggle to achieve identity, or an existential constancy. Alcibiades serves a much more integral function than Fly assigns to him.

Because Timon has too long been clouded by negative criticism, we can easily understand why Charlton Hinman calls for a balanced consideration of Timon as a whole play in the Pelican Edition of Timon. He says: "It seems folly to regard the play as either one of the very best of Shakespeare's tragedies or as so bad that it cannot even be wholly his. The fact is that Timon, more strikingly than most other plays, 'is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.'"[96] Hinman has come a long way in making such a statement, even though it asserts a position of neutrality. Perhaps we should now step out of neutral ground and take strides on more positive soil. The psychological-philosophical reading of Timon, because it resolves in a positive way the problems of divided authorship and much of the problem of

[96] Hinman, p. 1136.

simple poetic quality, is a step in an appropriate direction. Twenty years ago, Charles Jasper Sisson said of _Timon_: "No play of Shakespeare requires more, and repays more, the closest attention to the precise sense of the words and thoughts [in it]. . . ."[97] His judgment is certainly pertinent today. _Timon of Athens_ is not as lacking in "finish" as critics have believed. It is true that the play is flawed, but the use of psychological and philosophical criticism makes it possible to consider the play, not in negative terms as a curious, abortive attempt at tragedy, but in a positive way as a conceptually whole play in which Shakespeare explores the archetypal struggle of a man for his identity.

[97] _William Shakespeare: The Complete Works_ (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), p. 910.

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