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OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
AND
THOMAS MIDDLETON

The Life of
Timon of Athens

Edited by
JOHN JOWETT

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
or balcony above and behind the main stage. Their stage entry through the door after 17.65, which is a location exit from the city, enigmatically harks back to Timon's departure from Athens in Sc. 12. In the long scene between these crucial moments of entrance on stage and exit from Athens, Timon's gold is dug from a hole that would be represented by a raised trapdoor in the middle of the stage. Timon's cave, presumably at the rear of the stage, might have been a solid stage property or a gap to the rear of the stage between curtains. When the soldier in Sc. 16 finds Timon's tomb he perhaps draws back the same curtains to reveal the monument.

In the banquet scene and elsewhere, jewels may have glittered by the light of torches, and music would have lent further suggestions of courtly magnificence and the 'magic of bounty'. Except in the masque, the King's Men might have been more interested in suggesting a Renaissance style of richness by using costumes readily available to them than in imitating the garb of ancient Athens, though stage directions for 'Senators' and the 'Old Athenian' of 1.131.1 conceivably point to an element of historical costume. Throughout, simple properties signify potently and often emblematically: the painting and manuscript in the opening scenes; Apemantus' root and Timon's casket of jewels in Sc. 2; Flaminius' empty box in Sc. 5; the muffle over the Steward's face in Sc. 8; the covered dishes with steaming water and stones in Sc. 11; the rich clothing Timon strips off in Sc. 12; the spade, earth, gold, and roots in the woods; the epitaph, and the impression the soldier takes from it, at the end of the play.

As for the actors and their roles, the Folio text does not correlate the anonymous speaking lords, the similar senators, and the named 'friends' of Timon: Ventidius, Luctus, Lucullus, and Sempronius. However, it is clear from 9.8 that Luctus, Lucullus, and Sempronius are among the guests in Sc. 11, and clear also on account of inconsistencies in the stage directions and speech-prefixes of Sc. 11 that the lords and senators who attend Timon's feasts, receive his gifts, and refuse to lend him money, are overlapping groups or even exactly the same men. Whether the First Lord in one scene is the same figure as the First Senator in another, and, if so, whether he equates with one of the named friends, are questions of directorial choice in the theatre. Similar issues surround the numbered but unnamed servants of Timon and the named servants Flaminius and Servilius. The text in general terms
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encourages such equations to be made, yet leaves it difficult to determine a self-consistent system in any detail (see notes to \texttt{II.0.2} and \texttt{II.1}).

The play as it stands requires a minimum of about thirteen adult men; this would impose some awkward doubling, and in an actual staging a few more men may have taken part. In addition, several boys are needed for the masque in Sc. 2 (see note to \texttt{2.179--23}). Mute actors are required as lords and soldiers. There are a few opportunities for the doubling of speaking parts in a way that might be significant on stage. The Thieves in Sc. 14 conveniently and logically double with the lords Lucius, Lucullus, and Sempronius (or Ventidius). As has been apparent in some modern productions, the boy actors playing whores Phrynia and Timandra in the same scene would quite probably already have appeared as two of the ladies in the masque of Sc. 2. Of the King’s Men’s principal actors, the laconic comedian Robert Armin, who was probably the Fool in \textit{Lear}, might have been most suitable to play Apemantus. Timon itself is a role that must surely have been written for Richard Burbage, the King’s Men’s most famous actor, who is believed to have been the original performer of all Shakespeare’s major tragic roles.

Plutarch and Lucian

Timon was well known as the type of misanthropy long before the play was written.\textsuperscript{1} Both Seneca and Montaigne mention him as such. Several English writers working before the play also refer to him, including Robert Greene. A cluster of brief references appearing in the years 1600–6 include John Weever’s \textit{Faunus and Melliflora} (1600), in which Timon is a miser rather than a spendthrift; John Marston’s \textit{Jack Drum’s Entertainment} (1602), in which a Page offers, ironically, to ‘be as sociable as Timon of Athens’; John Beaumont’s \textit{Metamorphosis of Tobacco} (1602), in which the ‘odious beast’ Timon ‘would have turned jester at each solemn feast’ had he known tobacco; William Warner’s \textit{Albion’s England} (1602), in which intriguingly, Timon is compared with Robin Hood; the same author’s \textit{A Continuance of Albion’s England} (1606), in which a ‘land-striped’ gentleman ‘grew thenceforth shy of women, and a Timon unto men’; and Craig Alexander’s \textit{Poetical Essays} (1604), in which

\textsuperscript{1} For discussion of classical and early modern accounts of Timon beyond the immediate sources, see Bullough.
Timon is ruined by overspending and the addressed prince is urged to be the ‘stone’ to drive off parasites. Timon was therefore a figure of some literary currency when our play was written, perhaps partly in response to the source-play Timon discussed below.

The dramatists drew most immediately on two classical texts, Plutarch’s Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans and Lucian’s Dialogues. They were evidently influenced also by two texts in English, William Painter’s The Palace of Pleasure, which contains a passage on Timon translated from Plutarch, and the anonymous comedy Timon (see pp. 19–22), which is loosely based on Lucian. None of these offers a sustained source; the play’s dramatic structure, language, and many of its plot details are original.

As noted above, Shakespeare was in a position to have been drawn to the story of Timon when he was writing All’s Well (1604–5). The source for that play is the thirty-eighth ‘novel’ or novella in Painter’s Palace of Pleasure (1566). The twenty-eighth ‘novel’ is entitled ‘Of the strange and beastly nature of Timon of Athens, enemy to mankind, with his death, burial, and epitaph’. A fuller chapter heading goes on to identify the key features of the Timon myth: ‘All the beasts of the world do apply themselves to other beasts of their kind, Timon of Athens only excepted, of whose strange nature Plutarch is astonied in the “Life of Marcus Antonius”’. Perhaps Shakespeare’s reading of this account returned him to the ‘Life of Marcus Antonius’ in Plutarch’s Lives, as translated by Sir Thomas North and published in 1579. Painter’s account of Timon is an indirect and slightly elaborated translation of a passage in Plutarch’s ‘Life of Marcus Antonius’. Shakespeare had used North’s version in writing Julius Caesar. In this, the full text, Plutarch digresses from his main narrative when he tells how Mark Antony, after his defeat at Actium, withdrew to an island. There, according to North’s marginal note, he ‘followeth the life and example of Timon Misanthropos’ (see Appendix B). In summarizing Timon’s life, Plutarch claims to draw on accounts of Timon, now lost, in Plato and the comedies of Aristophanes. His brief narrative includes anecdotes that associate Timon with the

1 This supposes that Timon of Athens was written before Shakespeare returned to the ‘Life of Antonius’ when working on Antony and Cleopatra. See the discussion of date on pp. 3–9.

2 Painter’s source is Pedro Mexía’s La silva de varia lección (1540), trans. into French by Claude Grigel (1552).
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military commander Alcibiades and with Aperantus, who 'was much like of his nature and conditions, and also followed him in manner of life'. He relates that Timon taunted Athenians to hang themselves on his fig-tree, and that he was buried after his death by the seashore. Words from an epitaph written by Timon before his death and another by the poet Callimachus are quoted.

These particulars are mostly to be found in Painter's translation as well as North's. The dramatists, particularly Shakespeare, make much of the little detail both versions contain. The description of Timon's grave at 14.749–52 most closely recalls Painter's Palace of Pleasure: 'By his last will, he ordained himself to be interred upon the sea shore, that the waves and surges might beat and vex his dead carcass'. But the title Timon chooses for himself—'Misanthropos' (14.53)—comes from North. At least one of the dramatists was aware of the 'Life of Alcibiades' in North's Plutarch, and the names given to six minor roles are drawn from the 'Life of Marcus Antonius', and so are Latin instead of Greek: Lucius, Hortensius, Ventidius, Flavius, Lucillus, and Philotas.¹

Despite its certain debt, the play owes surprisingly little to the 'Life of Alcibiades', which offers a much fuller account of the history surrounding the play's events and, potentially at least, a source for the plot-line showing Alcibiades' revolt against Athens. In Plutarch, Alcibiades is banished not for overstepping the mark in pleading for clemency on behalf of his soldier, but for mocking the holy mysteries of Ceres and Proserpina. Though he attacks Athenian forces, he does not aim to destroy the city of Athens itself. Marginal notes in North’s Plutarch provide a slight cue for Alcibiades’ appearance in the play with two prostitutes, one of whom is called Timandra. In North the reader finds a comment on Alcibiades’ dishonesty [i.e. sexual promiscuity] and wantonness, and a note that 'Timandra the courtesan buried Alcibiades' after his death.²

The dramatists—or perhaps only Shakespeare—may have done no more than merely skim the notes of this ‘Life’; they may have read the text little if at all.³

¹ As noted by Honigmann. Ventidius is associated with both Shakespeare and Middleton, the others mainly with Middleton.
² The notes appear on sigs. T4r (p. 218) and V3r (p. 234).
³ One possible exception is the last page, which mentions that 'Some hold opinion that Laïs, the only famous courtesan, which they say was of Corinth ... was his [Alcibiades'] daughter'. This might inform the allusion to Corinth as a place of prostitution at 4.68 (and perhaps frequented by Alcibiades; see 4.80).
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line ‘Some beast read this. There does not live a man’ (16.4). Whilst clearly this proclaims the inhumanity of ‘man’, it also happens to remind us that few people are likely to stumble on this obscure memorial and read it. By taking a wax impression, the soldier is able to reproduce the text, and his copy can be alienated from the monument and from the body of Timon, to become a physically mobile text that can be brought into the city as a dislocated and disembodied reminder of Timon.

His voice, moreover, is fragmented. In effect, there are no fewer than three epitaphs. It is tempting to agree with commentators who have detected some accidental redundancy. In the Soldier scene, the Soldier reads an epitaph then tells the audience ‘What’s on this tomb— I cannot read’. In the final scene the apparently single epitaph runs together two epitaphs in the source material. The first two lines derive from an epitaph written, according to Plutarch, by Timon himself. Plutarch attributes the second pair to the poet Callimachus. Shakespeare’s conflation of the two produces an awkward contradiction: first the reader is urged to ‘Seek not my name’, but then is told ‘Here lie I, Timon’.

From another point of view, the contradiction acts as a reminder that there are two separate utterances here, even if in the play they are both attributed to Timon himself. To a sophisticated reader familiar with North’s Plutarch, the inconsistency might draw attention to the play’s basis in another text; and this reader might note also that Timon has taken over the voice of Callimachus. If the play’s Poet was silenced by means of stone missiles, this poet is silenced through intertextual appropriation. From this perspective, the epitaphs do not simply originate with the character Timon but emerge from a textual transmission from shadowy origins in writings before Plutarch to North’s English translation to Timon of Athens that preserves the words in question as quoted inscription at every stage. This is one of the few moments at which the play so to speak hails its source, and here the effect might be to make the play itself a memorial to Timon.

But the play’s story has not quite ended, and what remains is a more immediate placement of Timon within history, the political history that Alcibiades is making. It is, of course, Alcibiades who reads out Timon’s epitaph (17.71–4). It speaks of him as someone

1 See commentary to 16.3–4.
absent and potentially irrelevant. As a text, it belongs to its on-
stage readers, who can make what they will of it to suit their occa-
sions. Timon calls for plague and utters curses in the epitaphs, but
Alcibiades arbitrarily, if not perversely, takes them as a reminder of
‘faults forgiven’ (17.80). The speciousness is so swift that we can-
not tell from Alcibiades’ phrasing whether the faults are those of
Timon or those Timon himself suffered. In either case, the phrase
‘faults forgiven’ is brought into immediate relation with Alcibiades’
political agenda, and so prompts the play to conclude: ‘Bring me
into your city’. The epitaph’s ‘stay not here thy gait’ is therefore
applied—misapplied—to ‘here’ before the walls of Athens, and to
the ‘here’ that will become the final cleared stage.

The ending would be more consolidated and conventional if the
epitaph were to move Alcibiades towards mercy, but it has no such
effect: he relents well before the epitaph arrives. This has often been
perceived as a fault in the script, as is evidenced by the history of
altered endings discussed below (pp. 117–18). But the play’s avoid-
ance of a more romantic closure seems consistent with its overall
experimentalism, and also with the uneasy tone of the final lines:

And I will use the olive with my sword,
Make war breed peace, make peace stint war, make each
Prescribe to other as each other’s leech.

(17.83–5)

The golden-age fruit of the olive is co-opted to join with the iron-
age weapon of war. Blood is reciprocally exchanged from body to
body, just as the image of the ebb and flow of the tide over Timon’s
grave contrives to suggest an endless weeping that is miraculously
without any expense. The uneasy kind of flowing within a sealed
double body that is implied in the image of acting as each other’s
leech escapes the dangers of profligacy and debt. It achieves a
stable economy at the expense of becoming revoltingly surreal, so
leaving our feelings towards it unsettled and perhaps hostile. The
soft glutinosity of the olive and leech abating the edge of war
emblematically reasserts a civic ideology that has been placed
under severe strain. Timon, the absolute of Utopian and anti-
Utopian thought, is kept out, and his residual voice contained.
There will be no Apocalypse; neither will there be the establish-
ment of the heavenly city. Alcibiades allows personal sentiment as
much scope as is compatible with decorum, and no more. This is
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still, inevitably, an Iron Age ruled by money, law, and the sword.

'The Man-hater' and After

The play that has been described in the previous sections is the play printed in 1623, which has had a sporadic but intriguing history of performance over the past two centuries. Its potential for realization on the early modern stage has already been considered. Whether it was ever staged before the Restoration we do not know. Thomas Shadwell’s adaptation Timon of Athens: Or, The Man-hater appeared on stage in about 1674. Shadwell claims on the title-page that Shakespeare’s work is now ‘Made into a Play’. The boast is notorious for the dismissive comment it seems to imply on the original, but it may have meant no more than that he made the play fit for the altered conditions of the stage of his day.

Women, previously excluded from the public stage, now assumed a prominent role, so there was an urgent need for Shadwell to introduce new female roles. The adaptation includes a romantic plot concerning the two women in Timon’s life, figures entirely absent from the Folio text. In the early scenes Timon has lost interest in his own former love Evandra, who remains sadly loyal to him, and has become infatuated with Melissa, the former fiancée of Alcibiades. She is equivalent to Callimela in the academic comedy Timon (see p. 21). When Timon falls on hard times, Melissa deserts him, but Evandra follows him to the woods. Taking on some of the Steward’s function, and some of his lines, she can now be seen even by Timon to be the female exemplification of true love and friendship. After Timon dies, so too does she.

As this new plot exemplifies perfectly, the presence of women on the Restoration stage led to modulations in the genres of plays. Tragedies became more romantically heroic, and the changes to Timon of Athens accordingly shift the play away from nihilistic disgust and towards a more affirmative sense of tragedy. There was space, nevertheless, for comedy, and the adaptation was generously provided with music, including a semi-opera that replaced the masque (see pp. 111–12).

the Shakespeare play was established on stage. Gentleman found the Alcibiades plot 'episodical' and irrelevant. Everything that follows after Timon's 'languid departure' he considered 'so detached from the main plot, except Timon of Athens's epitaph, that cutting every line out would rather serve than maim the piece'. Gentleman's two complaints regarding the Alcibiades plot and the play's ending relate to each other, for the more clearly the subplot is articulated, the more straightforwardly convincing the ending will seem to be.

The difficulty many readers have felt about the lack of preparation for Alcibiades' appearance before the senate has been addressed in a number of ways. Shadwell filled out the dialogue at the beginning of the senate scene to provide a firmer sense of context. In the 1990-1 Young Vic production, Alcibiades explained his friend's crime to Timon in a few lines of added dialogue in Sc. 4. Michael Benthall at the Old Vic in 1956-7 had clarified the situation by bringing the soldier on stage as a chained prisoner, a device echoed in Doran's 1999 production, in which there was a tableau at the end of the scene showing the soldier being hanged. Earlier in the performance Doran introduced a violent homoerotic mime sequence in which one of the male dancers in the masque flirted with Alcibiades' soldier but rejected him when he made a pass at him at the end of Sc. 2; the disgruntled soldier later stabbed the dancer and killed him.

The history of adaptations, performances, and criticism shows a strong tendency to idealize Alcibiades in ways that the text does not in itself allow. Stage tradition has made much of the entry direction 'Enter Alcibiades with [soldiers playing] drum and fife, in warlike manner; and Phrynia and Timandra'. Timon's isolation is punctured by a military procession to music, the two whores adding an element of scurrilous flamboyance (see Illustration 5). This is one of the play's defining moments of spectacle. Phrynia and Timandra notwithstanding, it provides opportunities to present an idealized picture of Alcibiades as representative of military glory. Such a picture contributes to a romantic heightening of Timon too. Though he based his script on the Folio version, George Lamb continued Shadwell's heroic view of Alcibiades as revenger of Timon's death and reformer of Athens. This was in 1816, the

1 Quoted in Vickers, Critical Heritage, vi. 30 and 96.
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... year after the British defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo. From Leigh Hunt’s description, it is clear that Lamb’s production made a stunning spectacle of Alcibiades’ arrival in the woods:

First, you heard a sprightly quick march playing in the distance; Kean started, listened, and leaned in a fixed and angry manner on his spade, with frowning eyes, and lips full of the truest feeling, compressed but not too much so; he seemed as if resolved not to be deceived, even by the charm of a thing inanimate; the audience were silent; the march threw forth its gallant note nearer and nearer; the Athenian standards appear, then the soldiers come treading on the scene with that air of confident progress which is produced by the accompaniment of music; and at last, while the squalid misanthrope still maintains his posture and keeps his back to the strangers, in steps the young and splendid Alcibiades, in the flush of victorious expectation. It is the encounter of hope with despair.¹

The whores Phrynia and Timandra, too demeaning for this warrior, were excluded.

At the end of the play in Lamb’s version, Alcibiades singles out Timon’s chief false friends Lucius and Lucullus for punishments that reflect their harshness to Timon. They are stripped of their wealth and banished from Athens.² This is another way in which Alcibiades emerges as a better leader: a fair dispenser of measured justice rather than a commander who imposes arbitrary death by decimation.

Samuel Phelps’s spectacular, splendid, and highly successful production of 1851 also made much of Alcibiades’ visit to Timon and altered the play’s ending. The scenes in the woods were staged in a spirit of full Romanticism. The prompt book describes the set for Sc. 14 as ‘A Woody Dell with a high raking platform ... Cave ... set flush’. Timon was discovered ‘on bank in a mean dress, with a spade’. In stark contrast, Alcibiades and his army entered marching magnificently down the platform on to the stage, a crucial moment in Phelps’s ennoblement of the role. His drastic reshaping of the final scene, like Lamb’s, sought to give the closing sequence a stronger plot-line and in particular to create new links between Alcibiades and the dead Timon. When the Soldier tells Alcibiades of Timon’s death, he replies ‘Conduct me to the spot, that we may be assured’; then, as the prompt book directs, ‘Music. Troops face about, Mark time / Diorama moved on, and closes them in, they descend,’

¹ In Wells, Shakespeare in the Theatre, p. 48. ² Gary Jay Williams, p. 163.
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and Woody opening in Diorama Shows them on their march, again Closed in, and Diorama worked entirely off R2E, Showing Timon’s Tomb, Sunlight Sea Shore backing, with rolling waters’. The diorama, a continuous painted cloth, was wound across the stage to show the change of location as the troops marched from Athens to the tomb. It thus enabled a return to the woods, which was another way of addressing the difficulty Shadwell had perceived in the Folio’s anticlimactic ending (see p. 93). Alcibiades’ impressive march brings the closing action from Athens to the evocatively lit seashore where Timon lies buried, so turning the final focus back to Timon. There is no need for the Soldier who takes an impression of the epitaph, for now Alcibiades can read the real thing directly in situ. His final speech continues to ‘on faults forgiven’ (l. 80), after which he orders ‘Let our drums strike’ and, to slow music, the soldiers ‘lower their arms in grief’. This romantically solemn seashore-Hamlet close is a far cry from the play’s insistence on an inconclusive peace in an Athens where Timon is no more.

There have been several imitations of and variants on Phelps’s altered ending. Frederick Warde introduced one of them in 1910. To quote Gary Jay Williams’s account, ‘At the end of the play, the “senators, citizens, women and children of Athens” have come out to Timon’s cave to beg his assistance against Alcibiades when Alcibiades and his army enter. The captain demands that the Athenians kneel and promise to restore Timon to honour and wealth. A soldier seeking Timon finds him dead in his cave, and his body is borne off with a long procession of Athenians behind.’ Even the Folio-faithful Robert Atkins at the Old Vic in 1921 introduced a final tableau in which soldiers and senators salute Timon’s grave.

The view that something needs to be done to tighten up the play’s conclusion remains widespread. Schlesinger was amongst those who shortened the final scene. Timon’s potentially bathetic off-stage death challenges expectations, and has sometimes been altered to make the event visible to the audience. This treatment ultimately goes back to Shadwell’s adaptation, by way of productions such as Charles Calvert’s, who in Manchester in 1871 had Timon die in the arms of his servants.

In 1989 the Red Shift company staged two endings, one after the other. The first, and the more romantic, showed Timon gently
sinking into a sea of black silks held by actors, each printed with a
gold emblem of one of the senses. The second, more political, pre­
sented an altered transposition of the mock banquet, in which
Timon was silently murdered by assassins. A year later at the Young
Vic, David Suchet as Timon shot himself with a pistol abandoned by
the thieves. In Stephen Oliver’s opera at the London Coliseum in
1991 Timon killed himself, as in the Young Vic production, but with
the critical difference that now Timon had to obtain help from Alci­
biades. His was an act of friendship in a world where friendship was
otherwise exposed as hollow and absent, and as such was the only
effectual thing that could be done for Timon. Even Doran’s textually
conservative 1999 production sought a coherence in the ending in
the spirit of Atkins and the Victorian adapters that the text does not
encourage. Alcibiades directed an onslaught against Athens from a
gangway hung over the main stage. After the dry ice cleared and
Alcibiades established order, the Athenians on the main stage
departed, leaving Alcibiades above, the Steward centre stage, and
Apemantus downstage by the proscenium wall. So the ending
resolved into a silent triptych of Timon’s friends, widely separate,
each, as the audience might imagine, remembering Timon in his
own way.

Timon of Athens on Television

The BBC television production issued on video deserves special con­
sideration both for its merits and for its rare representation of how
the play can be adapted for the screen. It is, moreover, a resource
available to many readers of this edition who may never see the
play on stage. Carefully directed by Jonathan Miller, it takes advan­
tage of the camera close-up to present a studied and softly spoken
production. Plain monumental architecture with gaps and arch­
ways defines Timon’s house and Athens. The woods are realized as
an underlit pebble beach backed by the concrete of sea defences.

The director originally designated to work on Timon of Athens
was Michael Bogdanov, who planned a modern-dress production.
In the event, he was replaced by Miller, who was prepared to use
period costume in line with the conservatism of the BBC series.1

1 Susan Willis, The BBC Shakespeare Plays (Chapel Hill, 1991), p. 26. For the
script, comment by Jonathan Miller, and illustrations, see the accompanying
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The Athenian men wear smart black doublets with white ruffs, and the general uniformity of appearance in the early scenes is emphasized by trim beards. Miller used the severe formality of the costume as a point of contrast with Timon's ragged near-nakedness in the later scenes. Jonathan Pryce played a Timon whose benevolence was tinged with edgy anxiety from the outset. At his banquet in Sc. 2, he wears similar apparel to his friends; in appearance he is first amongst equals. The buttoned-up doublet and ruff gives way to open doublet and shirt as he becomes aware of his financial straits, and so to a loin-cloth and a blistered body-stocking of a shirt on the beach.

Miller chose the satirists John Fortune and John Bird to play the Poet and Painter. Despite Fortune's acquisition of a beard, they perform their roles with mannerisms recognizable from their performance style in satirical television programmes. In Miller's production they echo the complacent hypocrisy of modern forms of patronage as acted out in their own performances in these shows. Apemantus, played by Norman Rodway, is an older and wiser man than Timon. He shows wry concern, but finally, in the second part of the play, admits wry defeat, faced with a Timon who has learnt his lessons from Apemantus all too well.

Miller interprets the masque as a display of both the Amazons and the five senses, but resolves the potential overload of information by splitting the entertainment into two sections. This allows him to dwell at length on the banquet scene as a typification of Timon's life in Athens. The first episode shows adolescent girls dressed in white representing the five senses with emblematic objects, which are presented to Timon as gifts. This dumbshow is accompanied by Cupid singing a musical setting of his speech 'Hail to thee, worthy Timon'. Women then enter dressed as rather feminine Amazons in pale yellow dresses loosely based on Inigo Jones's Penthesilea.

The production observes the common practice of cutting episodes such as the Fool and Page in Sc. 4, the dialogue of the Strangers in Sc. 6, the short Sc. 15 showing the senators as they hear the news of Timon and Alcibiades, and Sc. 16 showing the Soldier discovering his tomb. More innovative and interesting is the cut at the turning-point of the play where Timon leaves Athens. The end of Sc. 11 and the first three lines of Sc. 12 are deleted, with the result that the rest of Timon's soliloquy in Sc. 12 is played as a
TIMON Slave!
APEMANTUS Toad!
TIMON Rogue, rogue, rogue!

I am sick of this false world, and will love naught
But even the mere necessities upon't.
Then, Timon, presently prepare thy grave.
Lie where the light foam of the sea may beat
Thy gravestone daily. Make thine epitaph,
That death in me at others' lives may laugh.

He looks on the gold
O, thou sweet king-killer, and dear divorce
'Twixt natural son and sire; thou bright defiler
Of Hymen's purest bed; thou valiant Mars:
Thou ever young, fresh-loved, and delicate wooer,
Whose blush doth thaw the consecrated snow
SECOND SENATOR And shakes his threat'ning sword
Against the walls of Athens.
FIRST SENATOR Therefore, Timon—
TIMON
    Well, sir; I will; therefore I will, sir, thus.
    If Alcibiades kill my countrymen,
    Let Alcibiades know this of Timon:
    That Timon cares not. But if he sack fair Athens,
    And take our goodly aged men by th'beards,
    Giving our holy virgins to the stain
    Of contumelious, beastly, mad-brained war,
    Then let him know, and tell him Timon speaks it
    In pity of our aged and our youth,
    I cannot choose but tell him that I care not;
    And—let him take't at worst—for their knives care not
    While you have throats to answer. For myself,
    There's not a whistle in th'unruly camp
    But I do prize it at my love before
    The reverend'st threat in Athens. So I leave you
    To the protection of the prosperous gods,
    As thieves to keepers.
STEWARD (to Senators) Stay not; all's in vain.

TIMON
Why, I was writing of my epitaph.

703 I will...I will The first 'I will' apparently agrees to assume the captainship of Athens. The second issues a perverse 'I command' in that role. The speech that follows deflates the conventions of the speech of defiance, replacing the challenge with 'I care not'. 'For myself...' (lines 712-14) replaces the leader's assertions of willingness to sacrifice himself in the cause.
707 take...beards (both violent and insulting)
708-9 stain...war i.e. rape
709 contumelious insolent; i.e. disrespectful of holiness and virginity beastly bestial
713 take't at worst put the worst interpretation on it. Compare Five Gallants 3.1.90, 'You take me still at worst'. Varies proverbial 'Take it as you list' (Dent T27).
714 care i.e. I care
715 do answer i.e. for the knives to cut (with wordplay on 'to respond vocally')
715 whistle-chap-knife th'unruly camp (of Alcibiades' soldiers)
716 But I do prize it at that I do not value as meriting
719 As thieves to keepers as I would leave thieves to the protection of prison guards (who might well admit executioners, or turn out to be executioners themselves, as in Richard III, Richard II, King John, etc.).
720 Why...tomorrow Timon continues his farewell and anticipation that he will die begun in 'So I leave you...': F's only punctuation is a comma after 'epitaph'.

Sc. 14 The Life of Timon of Athens
It will be seen tomorrow. My long sickness
Of health and living now begins to mend.
And nothing brings me all things. Go; live still.
Be Alcibiades your plague, you his,
And last so long enough.

**FIRST SENATOR** We speak in vain.

**TIMON**

But yet I love my country, and am not
One that rejoices in the common wrack
As common bruit doth put it.

**FIRST SENATOR** That's well spoke.

**TIMON** Commend me to my loving countrymen—

**SECOND SENATOR** These words become your lips as they pass through them.

**FIRST SENATOR** We speak in vain. 725

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One that rejoices in the common wrack
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728 it* (f some copies); t (others)

which could be interpreted ‘Why I was writing of my epitaph | It will be seen tomorrow’ (i.e. the reason why | will be seen | ). The usual punctuation, as accepted in this edition, makes the line Timon’s call to be left alone, because he has preoccupying work to finish by (literally) a deadline. ‘Of’ is redundant to the sense (Abbott 178).

721-3 My ... things Probably added by Middleton. Compare *Demist* 3.7.39-42: ‘Forgetfulness, | To the pleasing’st virtue anyone can have | That rises up from nothing, for by the same, | Forgetting all, they forget from whence they came’. The idiom ‘sickness of followed by an abstraction is in Middleton’s vein; compare sickness of affection’ (Lady's 2.2.96). There is a similar echoic collocation of ‘thing’, ‘nothing’, and ‘being’ in *Triumphs of Truth* ii. 303-4. Holdsworth compares Middleton passages such as Lady’s 5.2.89-90: ‘health | After long sickness’, and Changeling 3.4.170-1. ‘Let me go poor unto my bed with honour, | And I am rich in all things’.

723 And ... things Echoes, with altered meaning, the words of St Paul: ‘yet alway rejoicing: as poor, and yet make many rich: as having nothing, and yet possessing all things’ (2 Corinthians 6: 10). St Paul’s theme of personal poverty as a source of communal richness is immediately relevant to Timon, though Timon ‘rejoices in the common wrack’ (l. 727). In the comedy *Timon*, Timon says the opposite: ‘Nothing (I say) nothing | All things are made nothing’ (1776-7). Nothing is also a key word in *Lear* (1.81-2, 2.37-5, 4.128-9, etc.).

723 nothing nothingness, oblivion

725 last so long enough I.e. survive in that state for a long time before dying.

727 the common wrack general destruction.

728 common bruit popular rumour

730 become befit, grace

731 great triumphant: i.e. great men entering the city at a triumphal welcome. The Roman practice of according a triumph to victorious generals was imitated in Renaissance civic welcomes for dignitaries.

732 applauding Applies to the imagined crowds at the gates, suggesting crowd and gates as fixed elements of a ceremonial
Sc. 14  The Life of Timon of Athens

TIMON
Commend me to them,
And tell them that to ease them of their griefs,
Their fears of hostile strokes, their aches, losses,
Their pangs of love, with other incident throes
That nature's fragile vessel doth sustain
In life's uncertain voyage, I will some kindness do them.
I'll teach them to prevent wild Alcibiades' wrath.

FIRST SENATOR (aside)
I like this well; he will return again.

TIMON
I have a tree which grows here in my close
That mine own use invites me to cut down,
And shortly must I fell it. Tell my friends,
Tell Athens, in the sequence of degree
From high to low throughout, that whoso please
To stop affliction, let him take his haste,
Come hither ere my tree hath felt the axe,
And hang himself. I pray you do my greeting.

STEWARD (to Senators)
Trouble him no further. Thus you still shall find him.

TIMON
Come not to me again, but say to Athens,
Timon hath made his everlasting mansion

spectacle. Shakespeare provides several early examples of the verb applied in OE, where the present line is the only pre-r8th century illustration of the adjectival participle.

734-6 Their...wrath: Capell noted the concentration of hexameters in this passage.
735 those pangs, agonies
736 nature's fragile vessel i.e. the human body (seen as a container for the soul)
738 OE's earliest example that is not in the moral sense 'liable to err or fall into sin'
740-7 I...himself: Timon's satirical jibe is based on Plutarch (see following note).
But Bradbrook identifies the passage as an equivalent to episodes where 'the figure of Despair appeared with rope and knife' in morality plays (pp. 27-8, also citing Faerie Queene I.ix.33-4.
746 close enclosure, yard. The word, perhaps unexpected in relation to Timon's cave, echoes the 'little yard at my house' in Plutarch, where Timon is speaking in the market place. The cryptic 'use' that leads Timon to propose felling the tree is similarly a relic from the source: in Plutarch Timon says 'I mean to make some building on the place'.
748 please would like
749 take his haste hurry up
750 where always
751 See Introduction, p. 3-4.
755 mansion dwelling. There may be an allusion, by way of contrast, with John 14: 3-4, 'if my father's house are many mansions; and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you even unto myself'. If so, the line recalls the Great Bible translation, at quoted here.
The Life of Timon of Athens

Sc. 15

Upon the beached verge of the salt flood,
Who once a day with his embossed froth
The turbulent surge shall cover. Thither come,
And let my gravestone be your oracle.
Lips, let four words go by, and language end.
What is amiss, plague and infection mend.
Graves only be men's works, and death their gain.
Sun, hide thy beams. Timon hath done his reign.

FIRST SENATOR
His discontents are unremovably
Coupled to nature.
SECOND SENATOR
Our hope in him is dead. Let us return,
And strain what other means is left unto us
In our dear peril.
FIRST SENATOR
It requires swift foot.

Enter two other Senators, with a Messenger

[THIRD] SENATOR
Thou hast painfully discovered. Are his files
As full as thy report?

755 four words Rowe's emendation 'soUI'' is unnecessary.

755 the beached... flood A lyrical phrase that echoes Midsummer Night's Dream 2.1.85, 'the beached margin of the sea'.
752-3 Who... cover See Introduction, p. 85.
754 Thither come But contrast the words on the epitaph at 17.74.
755 four words See Introduction, pp. 85-6. Rowe's emendation 'sour' is unnecessary.
757 their i.e. men's (though it is not impossible that the referent is 'Graves')
MESSENGER

I have spoke the least. Besides, his expedition promises present approach.

FOUTH SENATOR

We stand much hazard if they bring not Timon.

MESSENGER

I met a courier, one mine ancient friend, whom, though in general part we were opposed, yet our old love made a particular force and made us speak like friends. This man was riding from Alcibiades to Timon's cave with letters of entreaty which imported his fellowship i'th' cause against your city, in part for his sake moved.

Enter the other Senators

THIRD SENATOR

Here come our brothers.

FIRST SENATOR

No talk of Timon; nothing of him expect. The enemy's drum is heard, and fearful scouring doth choke the air with dust. In, and prepare. Ours is the fall, I fear, our foe's the snare. Exeunt
Sc. 16 Enter a Soldier, in the woods, seeking Timon

SOLDIER

By all description, this should be the place.

Who's here? Speak, ho! No answer?

[He discovers an inscribed tomb]

What is this?

'Timon is dead, who hath outstretched his span.

Some beast read this; there does not live a man.'

16.2 He... (read) BEVINGTON (subs.) (conj. Collier MS; not in F; A Rude Tomb seen CALLELL (before the scene’s opening entry) 3-4 Timon... man] F; not in OxfoRD SNAKESE 4 read] F (reade); rear'd THEOBALD (conj. Warburton)}

The scene was relegated to a footnote in Pope’s edition, and has often been omitted in performance. Johnson commented, 'There is something elaborately unskilful in the contrivance of sending a soldier, who cannot read, to take the epitaph in wax, only that it may close the play by being read with more solemnity in the last scene.' Charles Knight and others attributed the scene to another dramatist, but recent studies restore it to Shakespeare. It presents Timon’s burial as a shocking enigma. The physicality of the grave as source of the words that are transported to Alcibiades gives concrete expression to Timon’s death, an equivalent in stage properties to the words themselves.

3-4 Timon... man These lines are not italicized or indicated as quotation in F. Warburton emended ‘read’ to ‘rear’d’, which helps ll. 2-4 to be understood as the Soldier’s own words rather than the words he reads on the grave. Johnson defended ‘read’, taking the couplet as the Soldier’s own words: ‘for it must be read, and in this place it cannot be read by man’. But the line is in the vein of Timon’s misanthropy, and the rhyming couplet has the formality of an inscription. Most commentators agree that it is an epitaph. It differs from the lines read from the Soldier’s wax copy at 17.71-4. Textual Companion, pp. 506-7, suggests that the present epitaph was abandoned as the writing of the play’s final scenes progressed, and that these two lines should therefore be deleted from the text. ‘What’s on the tomb I cannot read’, puzzling just after the Soldier bas apparently just read an epitaph, could then be explained as a later addition replacing the reading of the epitaph. However, as a superfluity of epitaphs seems oddly appropriate to the play and the character, it seems best to leave the text unemended.

Interpreter (I. 8), if taken in the sense ‘translator’, supports Oliver’s suggestion that there is a second, unread inscription that is not in the Soldier’s native language, or is, for some other reason, illegible to him. Platarch records two epitaphs, the first reported to be written by Timon himself, the second by the poet Callimachus. Textually, these are conflated in the play.
Sc. 16  The Life of Timon of Athens

Dead, sure, and this his grave. What's on this tomb
I cannot read. The character I'll take with wax.
Our captain hath in every figure skill,
An aged interpreter, though young in days.
Before proud Athens he's set down by this,
Whose fall the mark of his ambition is.

Sc. 17  Trumpets sound. Enter Alcibiades with his powers,
before Athens

ALCIBIADES

Sound to this coward and lascivious town
Our terrible approach.

Sounds a parley. The Senators appear upon the walls
Till now you have gone on and filled the time
With all licentious measure, making your wills
The scope of justice. Till now myself and such

the epitaph of 17.71-4. Functionally, they correspond here with the epitaph
read by the Soldier and the one copied by him. How Timon came to be buried with­
in the tomb is left a mystery, but see note to 14.764.
3 outstretched his span i.e. lived too long.
Proverbially, 'Life is a span' (Dent L251).
Outstretched is Shakespearean, but not in Middleton.
4 Some beast read this implies 'being able to
read this doesn't prove that you are not a
beast'. Or an impatient absurdity: 'it's
more likely that a beast will be capable of
reading this than that a truly human man
will do so'.
6 The... wax Either the Soldier takes a
wax impression of the letters or copies
them on to a wax tablet by hand. The lat­
ter would be more straightforward on
stage (and would avoid creating a mirror
image of the letters).
7 figure kind of writing
8 aged experienced
interpreter Perhaps specifically 'translator'.
9 before... down To set down before is to
encamp before and besiege. The Soldier's
captain is clearly Alcibiades. Set down and
mark (ll. 9–10) seem also to glance, per­
haps illogically, at writing.
9 by this by now
10 Whose refers to Athens.
mark target
Sc. 17 (5.91) Attributed to Shakespeare (but
see notes to II. 10-13).
0.2 before Athens See note to I. 2.1.
1 Sound i.e. proclaim by trumpet-call
lascivious The accusation could properly
be levelled against Alcibiades himself
(Kline).
2 terrible approach terrifying advance to
the attack
2.1 upon the walls As in Sc. 12, the tiring­
house wall behind the stage would repre­
sent the city wall. The senators would
appear in upon the walls, A
gallery above the wall continuing the
gallery occupied by members of the audi­
ence. The staging is standard for siege
scenes, as in King John 2.1, Henry V 3.3,
and Coriolanus  ||, in all of which the
non-combatant representatives of the
city appear 'upon the walls'.
4 all licentious measure every degree and
kind of licentiousness
4–5 making... justice i.e. enacting justice
as it pleases you; excluding the rule of
law from actions that gratify your own
desires
5 scope determining limit
Descend, and open your uncharged ports.

Those enemies of Timon’s and mine own
Whom you yourselves shall set out for reproof
Fall, and no more; and to atone your fears
With my more noble meaning, not a man
Shall pass his quarter or offend the stream
Of regular justice in your city’s bounds
But shall be remedied to your public laws
At heaviest answer.

BOTH SENATORS ‘Tis most nobly spoken.

ALCIBIADES Descend, and keep your words.

[Trumpets sound. Exeunt Senators from the walls and enter below]

SOLDIER

My noble general, Timon is dead,
Entombed upon the very hem o’th’ sea;

Descend Fr’s ‘Defend’ is nonsensical, as opening the gates does not defend them. The error need be no more than misreading of long ‘s’ as ‘r’. Compare 1. 65. encharged ports unassailed gates. OED’s only instance of uncharged in this sense. The adjectival form is not elsewhere in Shakespeare, but uncharge (verb) occurs in Hamlet 4. 7. 66.

reproof ignominy, blame

atone reconcile

meaning intentions

man soldier

pass his quarter leave his allotted place offend violate

shall, i.e. it shall remedied Pronounced as two syllables, as remedy sometimes is elsewhere in Shakespeare. The syntax of the line is acceptably elliptic. Remedied is often emended ‘rendered’, which might be right. Hibbard’s alternative ‘remanded’ is un-Shakespearian and unmetrical.

to in accordance with (OED, to, prep., conj., adv., 20)

At heaviest answer according to the severest punishment allowed.
And on his gravestone this inscription, which
With wax I brought away, whose soft impression
Interprets for my poor ignorance.

_Alcibiades reads the epitaph_

**ALCIBIADES**

'Here lies a wretched corpse, of wretched soul bereft. Seek not my name. A plague consume you wicked caitiffs 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.'

These well express in thee thy latter spirits. Though thou abhorrest in us our human griefs, Scorned'st our brains' flow and those our droplets which From niggard nature fall, yet rich conceit Taught thee to make vast Neptune weep for aye

On thy low grave, on faults forgiven. Dead

69 inscription carved inscription. _OED's_ earliest example of the word, though Middleton refers to 'inscription on a tomb' (_Revenger's Men_ 2.3.11). Despite his 'poor ignorance', the Soldier speaks an elevated language befitting his serious subject matter.

70 Interprets Figuratively speaking, the impression 'interprets' the original by communicating the letters in altered physical form. It so performs a task equivalent to the literal interpretation that the Soldier cannot perform.

71-4 Here...gait These are two separate epitaphs in Plutarch. The first two lines are those attributed to Timon, the second pair to the poet Callimachus. Joined together, they conflict oddly in that 'Seek not my name' is contradicted by 'Here lie I, Timon'. Sisson proposes that the first two lines should be deleted as a rejected first draft, but the desire to resolve the difficulties and contradictions in the epitaphs is probably misguided. See note to 16.3-4.

72 caitiffs wretches, villains

73 stay not here thy gait do not break your footsteps to linger here

74 latter belonging to the more recent part of your life

75 brains' flow i.e. tears

76 griefs hardships, sufferings

77 brains' flow i.e. tears

78 niggard nature parsimonious human nature. The phrase is Spenserian. In _Faerie Queene_ II.xii.50 'niggard Nature' contrasts with lavish art. Timon's 'rich conceit' (imagination; i.e. the faculty of artistic creativity) leads him to find a lavish mourner in a world of nature separate from his hume, making an extravagant and 'conceited' art out of nature.

79 aye ever Refers to the tide regularly wetting the beach where Timon lies buried.
themselves; and because I mean to make some building on the place, I thought good to let you all understand it that, before the fig tree be cut down, if any of you be desperate, you may there in time so hang yourselves? He died in the city of Hales, and was buried upon the seaside. Now it chanced so that, the sea getting in, it compassed his tomb round about, that no man could come to it; and upon the same was written this epitaph:

[Marginal note:] The epitaph of Timon Misanthrope.

Here lies a wretched corpse, of wretched soul bereft.
Seek not my name. A plague consume you wicked wretches left!

It is reported that Timon himself, when he lived, made this epitaph; for that which is commonly rehearsed was not his, but made by the poet Callimachus:

Here lies I, Timon, who alive all living men did hate.
Pass by and curse thy fill: but pass, and stay not here thy gait.

2. Lucian of Samosata, 'Timon, or, The Misanthrope'

The following extracts are from the earliest extant English translation, in Certain Select Dialogues, translated by Francis Hickes (1634), sigs. X3-A4. Explanatory notes in square brackets have been added editorially.

TIMON [to Jupiter]... To come to myself, that have set so many Athenians about, of miserable beggars have made them wealthy men, and succoured all that craved assistance at my hands, nay, rather poured out my riches by heaps to do my friends good; yet when by that means I grew poor and fell into decay I could never be acknowledged by them, nor they once so much as cast an eye towards me who before crouched and kneeled unto me, and wholly dependent on my beck. Others, if they see me afar off, will turn aside and take another way, as if I were some dismal and unlucky object to be looked upon who, not long before, had been their founder and benefactor. These indignities have made me betake myself to this solitary place, to clothe myself in this leather garment, and labour in the earth for four halfpence a day, here practising philosophy with solitariness and my mattock, and think I shall gain enough by the match in that I shall have no sight of many that are rich men without desert.

...]

JUPITER... What an alteration is this! That good man, that rich man, that had so many friends! How came he to be in such a case, miserably distrest, fain to dig and labour for his living...?