



Shakespeare's Purpose in Timon of Athens

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XXXIX

SHAKESPERE'S PURPOSE IN *TIMON OF ATHENS*

TWO conflicting theories regarding the composition of *Timon of Athens* have been expounded for many years. The first, argued notably by Professor Delius,¹ asserts that the Folio text represents Shakespeare's partial revision of an uninspired old play; the second, espoused by Mr. Fleay² and elaborated in recent years by Dr. E. H. Wright,³ assumes that the play is an unfinished draft by Shakespeare filled out by later literary hack-work. The latter theory at present receives more general favour; nevertheless in 1923 Mr. Dugdale Sykes in *Notes and Queries*,⁴ after calling attention to certain internal relationships in the play, has attempted to revive the earlier explanation.

Fleay and Wright had agreed substantially in parceling out certain long passages between Shakespeare and the second author, on metrical, technical, and æsthetic grounds.⁵ With these general ascriptions Mr. Sykes has no quarrel, but he does show that certain bits of dialogue or turns of phrase which in one case fall within Shakespeare's supposed demesne are echoed in scenes obviously by an inferior author. From the four sets of parallels which he notes, I cite one as an example:

Just before the end of Act I. Scene i, the First Lord thus addresses the Second Lord:

Come, shall we in
And taste Lord Timon's bounty?

This, according to Fleay and Wright, is in Shakespeare's part of the play. The next scene (I. ii) which contains Cupid's speech beginning with the lines:

¹ "Über Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*," in *Shaks. Jahrbuch*, II, 175 ff.

² "On the Authorship of *Timon of Athens*," in *Transactions of New Shaks. Soc.*, 1874, pp. 130 ff.

³ *The Authorship of Timon of Athens*, Columbia diss., 1910.

⁴ 13th Ser., vol. I, Aug. 4-Sept. 15, 1923.

⁵ Cf. Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56. Thus the first banquet-scene is clearly the work of an inferior; whereas Timon's lengthy maledictions in Act IV bear a decisive resemblance to *Lear*. Upon the distribution of several important scenes, e.g., the first two scenes of Act III, Fleay and Wright disagree—the latter always seeking to give Shakespeare enough to make an integral, though brief, play. In such cases Mr. Sykes takes sides invariably with the former.

Hail to thee, worthy Timon, and to all
That of his bounties taste,

is assigned to the inferior hand. And when the poet in V.i visits Timon in his cave we are told that his speech

Sir,

Having often of *your open bounty tasted*, &c.

was written by Shakespeare. Is this probable? Is it not beyond any reasonable doubt that all three passages are due to one and the same author, who had this idea of "tasting" bounties running in his mind at the time he wrote them?⁶

If the evidence of such parallels is granted as revealing touches of an inferior author here and there in admittedly Shakesperean strata, then there is no such clean-cut separation of lengthy passages or scenes between Shakespere and the second writer as Fleay and Wright have posited. Mr. Sykes, following Mr. William Wells,⁷ also shows that Scenes i and ii of Act III, in which the servants of Timon seek to borrow money from Lucius and Lucullus, bear the strongest traces of Middleton's work as paralleled throughout several plays.⁸ Fleay had given these scenes to the inferior author, but Wright assigned them to Shakespere on logic rather than internal evidence. He argued that if Shakespere *did* write first (as other evidence leads him to believe), it was he who blocked out the essential plot, motivated Timon's misanthropy by showing the perfidy of sycophants, and that he simply neglected ever to fill in certain subsidiary scenes.⁹ This assumption seems more reasonable than the more naïve one sometimes advanced, that Shakespere poured forth his emotions upon the theme of ingratitude in Acts IV and V of *Timon*, and then lost all interest in the antecedent action—since one of our most fixed notions in regard to Shakespere is that he was a practical dramatist rather than the showman of a bleeding heart. Therefore Shakespere surely did not jump from

⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 85–86. He eventually discovers an analogue, p. 149, in the phrase "the bounty of your love, as ever poor gentleman tasted," in a Middletonian passage of *The Roaring Girl*, II, i.

⁷ *N. & Q.*, 12th Ser., VI (1920), 266 ff. The evidence which Wells and Sykes adduce for Middleton's case is quite formidable, both in quantity and quality. Versification and spirit of treatment in Middleton's earlier period confirm the evidence of verbal similarity. On the other hand, Sykes' attempt to establish the collaboration of John Day with Middleton seems much less successful, and for our present purpose may be ignored.

⁸ Pp. 147–48.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 39–41 and Chap. iv, ii, *passim*.

Timon in his palmiest days to Timon drenching his guests with lukewarm water without showing something of the motivation, reasons Dr. Wright, and proceeds to assign to him Scenes i and ii of Act III. But these scenes have now been demonstrated pretty conclusively to bear the stamp of Middleton.

Having gone thus far with Mr. Sykes, we cannot accept his explanation that the Shakesperean parts are merely the roving revisions of an earlier play largely by Middleton. First, because, as Dr. Wright has pointed out,¹⁰ almost all the source-material of the play—Plutarch's excursus on Timon in the *Life of Antony*, the twenty-eighth novel of Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, the academic play of *Timon*, and the questionable influence of Lucian's dialogue *Timon the Misanthrope*—is consumed in Shakesperean scenes, whereas the inferior author had practically no formal sources whatever. In the second place, as Dr. Wright also observes,¹¹ details are to be found in the Shakesperean portions of Acts IV and V which are ignored in the inferior parts of the play: Timon is portrayed as a public servant whom the state has ungratefully cast aside, and Alcibiades is made the avenger, not of himself or of his unnamed friend in III. v, but of Timon. If Shakespere's hand was the last which touched the play, why these unanticipated matters? We appear, then, to have arrived at an *impasse*; we can follow implicitly neither Dr. Wright nor Mr. Sykes.

It seems to me that there is one solution which has been generally overlooked—namely that Shakespere was the original author but that he actually wrote a full five-act play, probably not much inferior to *Coriolanus*, and that this play some time before the publication of the Folio suffered deliberate mutilation, that certain scenes were completely rewritten and even names changed,¹² and that smaller deletions and substitutions were made here and there throughout almost all the other scenes. This hypothesis satisfies Mr. Sykes' contention that Timon's motivation lies in non-Shakesperean scenes and that the prevaillingly Shakesperean ones show touches of the inferior pen, and at the same time it accords with Dr. Wright's eloquent arguments for Shakespere's priority.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 78–9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 73–8.

¹² Thus the name "Flavius" is substituted for "Steward," and Sempronius is introduced, as we shall see presently, in the dramatic niche of Ventidius. Wright notes the blunders in servants' names, pp. 61 ff. Fleay, *op. cit.*, p. 150, tabulates the names introduced by Shakespeare and the second writer respectively.

But having laid the old issues, it evokes a new one: why should this play have been intentionally and ruthlessly spoiled? Is there any possible reason why Shakespeare should have suffered revision by Thomas Middleton?

First of all let us refer to the probable date of composition. As Professor Bradley¹³ and Professor Parrott¹⁴ have observed, the sparing use of light and weak endings in the passages conservatively assigned to Shakespeare indicates that his share in the play belongs to a period prior to *Macbeth*. Bradley has also called attention to the affinity of *Timon of Athens* with *King Lear* in mental attitudes, phraseology and style.¹⁵ Therefore we may well assume *ca.* 1605 as a date for the Shakespearean portions. But Mr. Wells declares that a comparison of the Middleton strata with the known plays of that dramatist leads him to conclude that Middleton's share in *Timon of Athens* was "no later, certainly, than *Michaelmas Term* (1607)." He reminds us that prose, which finds a substantial use in *Timon*, is in Middleton's later period almost wholly discarded.¹⁶ It appears therefore that Middleton's slashing of the play occurred not only within Shakespeare's life-time but within a year or two of the original writing. That Shakespeare probably would have found it profitless or distasteful to revise his own play in the manner proposed, I shall presently suggest.

In regard to the changes suffered by Shakespeare's *Timon*, can we with a fair degree of assurance reconstruct certain features of the original plan? In the first place, as Dr. Wright maintains,¹⁷ Shakespeare plainly intended *Timon* to be not simply a private citizen, but a public, even a military, hero. He is surely not presuming on his bare citizenship when he orders his steward to go to the senators of Athens:

Of whom, even to the state's best health, I have
Deserv'd this hearing—bid 'em send o' the instant
A thousand talents to me (II, ii, 206, Oxford *Shaks.*)

And learning that no help will come from them, he speaks of their "ingratitude" (II, ii, 225). After he has retired to the forest, Alcibiades meets him and says:

¹³ *Shakespearean Tragedy*, pp. 477-480.

¹⁴ *The Problem of Timon of Athens* (London, 1923), p. 24.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, Note S (pp. 443 ff.).

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 269.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 73-5.

I have heard and grieved
 How cursed Athens, mindless of thy worth,
 Forgetting thy great deeds, when neighbour states
 But for thy sword and fortune, trod upon them (IV, iii, 92)

when Timon cuts him short. And finally the two senators seek out Timon, offering him "the captainship . . . allow'd with absolute power" (V, i, 166), if he will defend them against Alcibiades. Now in all Shakespeare's sources about which we know, there is no suggestion of Timon's great services as a preserver of the State.¹⁸ Was there a purpose here?

But perhaps the most striking evidence of discord between Shakesperean and non-Shakesperean parts is the utter frustration of the Ventidius theme. This matter, first noted by Mr. Fleay, is stated by Dr. Wright as follows:

It is easy to see what Shakspeare meant to do with Ventidius. In the first scene he makes Timon, in affluence, ransom Ventidius from a debtor's prison with five talents. At the close of the second act, when the now insolvent Timon is appealing to his friends for help, he lets him send to Ventidius as a last and surest friend, now rich, for those five talents. We cannot think that Shakspeare meant to stop here. In a later scene, surely—after the other friends of Timon have deserted—he meant to show Ventidius denying the request. Such a refusal would have put the climax on the ingratitude of Timon's friends; and without it the part of Ventidius in the play is pointless. But before we reach the request to Ventidius we have seen it practically nullified. For the author of the banquet scene could think of no better way to open it than by making Ventidius offer to repay Timon's loan. With this error behind him, the author found it difficult to show Ventidius refusing Timon's appeal; so instead he merely mentions the refusal casually in the scene where he displays that of his own Sempronius.¹⁹

And a few pages later we find Dr. Wright actually maintaining that Shakespeare *did* write a scene of Ventidius' singratitude,²⁰

¹⁸ To be sure, in the dialogue of Lucian, the orator Demeas, in his fulsome flattery, hails the wealthy misanthrope as winner of the Olympic games though Timon has never competed in them, and says that he "cut to pieces two divisions of Spartans," though Timon retorts that he was never even mustered out. It is of course doubtful whether Shakespeare ever read this Dialogue, but granted that he did we can hardly find a nexus between this jocular flattery and the illustrious services which Shakespeare's Timon has performed for Athens.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 67 f.

though of course he never proposes (as I have done) that Shakespeare wrote a great deal more of the play which has vanished. To this assumption Dr. Wright's hypothesis has led him: namely, that a second author, hurrying to knock a play into shape for the theatre,²¹ would, after discovering an error he had made, prefer to write a whole fresh scene of 42 lines rather than avoid that labour by turning back and crossing out thirteen unlucky lines of his own at the opening of Act I, Sc. ii, and thereby keep a dramatic advantage apparent to the most rudimentary sense of plot. Is it not more reasonable to suppose that the reviser had a definite purpose in cutting away most of the Ventidius plot, leaving Ventidius merely an obscure person in the chorus of ingrates? The lines at the beginning of I, ii would therefore represent, as it were, his effort to heal the place of amputation.

It may be observed that alterations in the major plot of the play occur almost always at the points of personal relationship between Timon and his false friends,²² whereas Timon's invectives against mankind in general are left unmolested. Is there any conceivable method in such revision?

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 99 f.

²² Thus I, i, in which Timon appears surrounded by his suitors, is but partly Shakespearian, as Fleay and Sykes observe; the lengthy banquet-scene (I, ii) is agreed by all our critics to be prevailingly, probably wholly, by an inferior; the three important "dunning" scenes with Timon's false friends (III, i, ii, and iii) are pronounced essentially non-Shakespearian by Fleay and Sykes; III, iv, in which the creditors' men discuss Timon's parlous state and the desertion of his friends, and in which Timon issues invitations to the mock-banquet, is in substance given by all critics to the inferior; the prose of the mock-banquet, in which the sycophants are talking with Timon, is called spurious by Fleay, following Furnivall, and by Sykes. On the other hand, the last two acts are prevailingly Shakespearian, as all agree.

There are at least two interpolations superfluous to the plot, which may be dropped without any loss whatever: the colloquy of Apemantus, the Fool, and the Page in II, ii, 46-132, and the soldier's discovery of Timon's grave, V, iii. I suggest that they were inserted after excisions elsewhere had greatly reduced the length and stage-business of Shakespeare's original.

In regard to the sub-plot, Fleay, Wright, and Sykes regard the banishment of Alcibiades (III, v) as spurious. Plutarch, while recording Alcibiades' banishment, assigns no such circumstances as these. Perhaps the pleading for a soldier who has offended under the influence of drink (II. 69-70) was suggested to the interpolator by *Othello*. Just what were Shakespeare's intentions here we can never know—though it appears, as Wright suggests, pp. 75 ff., that in some way he would create a stronger dramatic tie between Timon and his future avenger. If so, the reviser may have found it inextricable from the scenes of Timon and his circle, which, as we have seen, were sweepingly expunged.

Moreover, from the mangled play we may disengage Shakespeare's conception of Timon: an impulsive, headstrong, generous nobleman, a distinguished soldier and patron of the arts, who ignoring prudent counsel casts himself unreservedly upon his courtiers, falls upon evil days and is deserted by his host of trencher-friends—even by the man whom he has lifted from debt, is forsaken by the State in whose defense he has so bravely and effectually fought; until at last, cherished only by his faithful steward, he passes through a period of bitterest despair to a wretched but welcome death. Needless to say, this conception of Timon is not the old Greek one of the surly *Μισάνθρωπος* whose delight is to jeer at humanity, nor assuredly is it the silly voluptuary of the academic farce: it is indeed Shakespeare's, by an act of creation such as that which gave us Richard II and Lear.

At present it is hardly revolutionary to suggest political purpose in the plays of Shakespeare. Therefore I propose to set forth several curious similarities between Shakespeare's Timon and Robert Devereaux, Second Earl of Essex.²³ I do not maintain the precarious thesis that Timon is in every particular a faithful portrait of the Earl, but rather that in building up the character of the Athenian lord Shakespeare wrote into the play the Southampton judgement on the crying injustice of the Essex affair, particularly the part played by Francis Bacon; and so transparent was his intention that the play was mutilated shortly after its composition when a contemporary event, the trouble over Samuel Daniel's *Philotas*, demonstrated that a public vindication of Essex would still be politically offensive—not, probably, to the King himself, but to certain powerful noblemen.

As early as May, 1601 the players at the Curtain apparently attempted to convey, "under obscure manner," a commentary on the case, but were restrained.²⁴ But upon the accession of James—with the release of Southampton and the King's praise of Essex²⁵

²³ Three recent efforts to connect Shakespeare and Essex should be noted: Miss Lillian Winstanley's "*Hamlet*" and the Essex Conspiracy, Aberystwyth Studies VI and VII, Univ. of Wales, 1924-25; Professor E. P. Kuhl's study, "*As You Like It*" and the Earl of Essex, read before the Modern Language Association, December, 1926; and Miss E. M. Albright, *Shakespeare's "Richard II" and the Essex Conspiracy*, *PMLA*, September, 1927, pp. 686 ff.

²⁴ Cf. C. C. Stopes, *The Third Earl of Southampton*, p. 242.

²⁵ En route to London James had pronounced the late Earl "the most noble knight England had ever produced." *Venetian Papers*, May 15, 1603, quoted Stopes, 266.

—one might have assumed that a play defending Essex could appear unmolested, especially if it stressed his misfortunes and sufferings rather than his supposed treason; and that to Southampton and others such a work would have been welcome, since virtually no popular vindication of the unfortunate Earl—other than a few dolorous street-ballads²⁶—had been made, and doubtless many good people still regarded his name as anathema.²⁷ It is my assumption therefore that in 1605, almost synchronously with *Lear*, Shakespere wrote his *Timon of Athens*, picturing the desperation to which the Earl had been driven and revealing the crucial desertion of some of his most trusted friends (Bacon in particular), and disguised the political allusion by substituting for the rebellion an ending which his sources offered, and which, as we shall see, Essex seems seriously to have considered as a course for himself. But in this same year Samuel Daniel was completing a drama he had begun in 1600, also out of Plutarch, *The Tragedy of Philotas*, the story of a recalcitrant captain of Alexander, whom Daniel describes in the Argument as "patient of trauell, exceeding bountifull, and one that loued his men and friends better then any Noble-man of the Campe: but otherwise; noted of vaine-glory and prodigalitie."²⁸ After publication the play fell under suspicion as being covertly sympathetic with the late Earl, and Daniel seems to have been summoned before the Lords of the Council. By proving that three acts had been written prior to the Rebellion Daniel cleared himself, and when in 1607 he re-issued the play he included an *Apology* piously deprecating the treasons of Essex.²⁹

It is our supposition that this imbroglio rendered Shakespere's company wary of producing *Timon*, particularly with its aspersions on Bacon, and that Shakespere either declined to revise it or else was too busy on *Macbeth*. But instead of being utterly discarded the play was soon entrusted to the care of Thomas Middleton, who rewrote some of the dunning scenes in the vastly less heroic vein of *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, and otherwise filled up excisions

²⁶ Cf. *Ballads from MSS* (Ballad Society, 1873), II, 195-259.

²⁷ That even the linking of one's name with the doings of Essex was yet regarded as politically inauspicious, is shown by Lord Mountjoy's rebuke of Daniel for bringing in that nobleman's name, innocently enough, in the affair over *Philotas*. Cf. *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, "Samuel Daniel."

²⁸ *Works*, ed. Grosart, III, p. 104.

²⁹ Cf. "Samuel Daniel," in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, and the *Apology* printed in Grosart's edition.

with incoherent though inoffensive material. Because of certain strands which he overlooked we are able to form our hypothesis.

Essex was the bosom friend of Shakespere's patron, and in the Chorus to Act V of *Henry V*, 11. 29-34, Shakespere had paid graceful tribute to his popularity and military prowess. Malone observed that Horatio's adieu to Hamlet—

Good-night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest (V, ii, 374),

seems to be an echo of Essex's last words: "When my life and body shall part, send thy blessed angels, who may receive my soul and convey it to thy joys in heaven"; and Dr. Ward called attention to a resemblance between Essex and the Buckingham of *Henry VIII*. And Miss E. M. Albright's recent investigation makes it quite probable that Shakespere's *Richard II* was acted with deliberate propagandist intent on the eve of the so-called Rebellion.³⁰

With the assurance that this subject would have been both timely and congenial, let us observe the points of resemblance between the Earl and Lord Timon. We have spoken of Timon as a military patriot—

when neighbour states
But for thy sword and fortune, trod on them [i.e., the Athenians]
(IV, iii, 94).

We recall Essex's intrepidity against Cadiz in 1596, and the tremendous ovation accorded him on his return.³¹ In 1597 he was made commander-in-chief of the English forces against Spain, and despite the ill-luck of this exploit, he was still welcomed home as the nation's greatest soldier.³² Into these expeditions Essex poured

³⁰ Miss Albright makes the highly plausible suggestion that the omission of the abdication scene in the early quartos is to be explained by Shakespere's adumbration of current politics. I had not read Miss Albright's study until after the practical completion of the present paper; so that to such matters as Hayward's history and its influence on Shakespere, there should be given whatever weight is due to similar conclusions independently reached. Miss Winstanley, VI, 47 ff., refers to the older conjectures about Shakespere's dramatic allusions to Essex. Essex himself seems gloomily to have anticipated his own dramatization, writing in May, 1600 from Ireland, to the Queen: "Already they print me, and make me speak to the world; and shortly they will play me in what forms they list upon the stage" (T. Birch, *Memoirs of the Reign of Q. Elizabeth*, II, 445).

³¹ W. B. Devereaux, *Lives and Letters of the Devereaux*, I, 379.

³² *Ibid.*, I, 465 and *Reliquiae Wottonianae* (1651), 40.

his own fortune, hastening his ultimate financial collapse. Thus while Essex was fitting out the expedition of 1596 Sir Anthony Standen wrote of him: "He spareth neither purse, body nor spirit."³³ And in a daring public eulogy of the late Earl in 1601 one Abraham Colfe of Christ Church, Oxford—

. . . named the journey to Cadiz, his own forwardness there and felicity, and how men looked on him returning *tanquam in solem orientem*; for he beggared himself to maintain his soldiers. He spoke also of another journey, whence returning men looked on him *tanquam in solem occidentem*.³⁴

We might compare, parenthetically, a line from one of the revised scenes, I, ii, 150: "Men shut their doors against a setting sun."

In fact Essex's habit of "wasteful prodigality" as his grandfather called it,³⁵ was highly characteristic. Francis Bacon records in his *Apology* (1604) that after his own failure to obtain the Solicitorship Essex had pressed him to accept "a piece of land":

My answer I remember was, that for my fortune it was no great matter; but that his Lordship's offer made me call to mind what was wont to be said when I was in France about the Duke of Guise, that he was the greatest usurer in France, *because he had turned all his estate into obligations; meaning that he had left himself nothing, but only had bound numbers of persons to him*. Now my Lord (said I) I would not have you imitate his course, nor turn your estate thus by great gifts into obligations, *for you will find many bad debtors*.³⁶

In *A Declaration of the Treasons* (1601) Bacon describes the Earl's catholic hospitality:

So likewise those points of popularity which every man took notice and note of, as his affable gestures, open doors, making his table and his bed so popularly places of audience to suitors, denying nothing when he did nothing, feeding many men in their discontentments against the Queen and the State.³⁷

And Wotton thus describes his levee:

³³ Birch, *op. cit.*, II, 15.

³⁴ *Cal. State Papers Dom.*, 1601–1603, p. 35. Bacon, "Of Friendship," in the entirely-rewritten version of that Essay in the 1625 ed., quotes from Plutarch's *Pompey*: "Pompey turned vpon him [Sylla] againe, and in effect bad him be quiet; For that more Men adored the Sunne Rising, then the Sunne setting" (cf. North's Plutarch, *Tudor Translations*, IV, 219).

³⁵ *Lives*, I, 178.

³⁶ E. A. Abbott, *Bacon and Essex* (London, 1877), Appendix, p. 4. Italics mine.

³⁷ P. 3, printed in Appendix, Abbott, *op. cit.*

His chamber being commonly stived with Friends or Suiters of one kind or other, when he gave his legs, armes, and brest to his ordinary servants to button and dresse him with little heed, his head and his face to his Barbour, his eyes to his letters, and ears to Petitioners, and many times all at once.³⁸

At his trial Bacon likened Essex to Pisistratus, who tried to gain the sympathy of the populace of Athens,³⁹ but if our assumption is correct Shakespere is here showing him in a truer light, as flattered, but in the crucial moment deserted, by his Athenian trencher-friends. In passing we might note Essex's taste for hawking⁴⁰ and for sumptuous banquets,⁴¹ in which Shakespere's Timon indulges in true Elizabethan fashion.⁴² His lavishness had long been eating away Essex's fortune, so that after the Irish failure we find him writing to the Queen "of a number of hungry creditors, who suffer me, in my retired life, to have no rest."⁴³

The biographer of the *Lives* describes Essex as "generous, ardent, impetuous and arrogant, a great patron of men of genius."⁴⁴ His relations with Spenser are perhaps best known. But more important for our present purpose: in 1599 the dedication to him

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 18. On p. 36 he describes him as "delighting in the press and affluence of Dependants and Suiters, which are alwayes the Burres, and sometimes the Briars of Favourits."

³⁹ Abbott, 193.

⁴⁰ In 1591 Essex was mildly reproved by the Privy Council because he did "adventure to go a hawking" and expose himself to capture, while he was a commander in France (*Lives*, I, 245-46).

⁴¹ Note a banquet at Essex House costing at least a thousand marks (*Lives*, I, 388), and Wotton's comment on the Earl's epicurism, p. 18. On pp. 21 f. he speaks of him as "inclyning to popular ways; for we know the people are apter to applaud hous-keepers, then hous-raisers."

⁴² The dining and hawking are alluded to in authentic Shakesperean passages, e.g., I, i, 254 and II, ii, 8, respectively.

⁴³ *Cal. State Papers Dom.*, 1598-1601, p. 468. He is pleading for the renewal of his patent on sweet wines. He continues: "If my creditors would take for payment many ounces of my blood . . . you should never hear of this suit." One may compare a bit of dialogue between Timon and his creditors in III, iv, 94. though the scene as a whole shows marks of revision:

Timon. Cut my heart in sums.

Titus. Mine, fifty talents.

Tim. Tell out my blood.

Luc. Serv. Five thousand crowns, my lord.

Tim. Five thousand drops pays that. What yours? and yours?

⁴⁴ I, 474.

of a book, Dr. John Hayward's *Life and raigne of King Henrie IIII*, was memorable because Elizabeth resented Hayward's comparison of Essex with Henry IV.⁴⁶ Having likened Essex to Henry in the Dedication Hayward writes on p. 4, after describing the popularity and prowess of Bolingbroke, that he was

yet more easie to be either corrupted or abused by flattering speeches, then to be terrified by threats.

Is Hayward warning Essex against flatterers just as the Poet of I, i is seeking to warn Timon by the allegory of his poem? On p. 77 Hayward describes the flight of sycophants from the King—

like swallows, forsook that house in the winter of fortune's boysterous blasts, where they did nothing but feede & foyle in the summer of her sweete sunneshine.

Compare a passage from the prose of the mock-banquet, which, though probably revised, is conceivably indebted for imagery to the original:

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

Timon (aside). Nor more willingly leaves winter; such summer birds are men (III, vi, 32).

In the book the scheming courtiers are called "sellers of smoake," p. 43. Compare Timon's outburst:

smoke and luke-warm water
Is your perfection (III, vi, 100).

But to pursue our comparison. It may be pointed out that Timon leads no rebellion to gain an audience with the Senate which has neglected him. But we may easily suppose that a too-definite portrayal of the actual insurrection was not what the dramatist desired; his purpose was rather to present the provocation which drives a brave, generous, benevolent spirit to violence and misery. Hence he transfers to Alcibiades, who is a *deus ex machinâ* rather than a character of flesh and blood (so far as we know), the act of raising arms against the ungrateful state. But for Timon he does choose an alternative which seems often to have attracted the temperamental *weltschmerz* of Essex. About the time of the Irish

⁴⁶ Cf. Abbott, 118, and *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, "Robert Devereaux." Miss Albright, *op. cit.*, 699 ff., presents the matter at some length, and offers the theory that Shakespere used Hayward's history, in MS, in the composition of *Richard II*.

disappointment he had written these lines, to the Queen it is said; they are preserved in at least three MSS collections and hence testify to considerable circulation:

Happy were he could finish forth his fate
 In some enchanted desert, most obscure
 From all society, from love, from hate
 Of worldly folk, then would he sleep secure;
 Then wake again and yield God ever praise,
 Content with hips and haws and bramble-berries,
 In contemplation passing still his days,
 And change of holy thoughts to make him merry;
 And when he dies his tomb may be a bush,
 Where harmless robin dwells with gentle thrush;
 Quoth Robertus Comes Essexiae.⁴⁶

This, darkened with despair such as Essex had not yet experienced, is the spirit of Act IV of *Timon of Athens*. Cf. especially Timon's colloquy with the Thieves:

The oaks bear mast, the briers scarlet hips;
 The bounteous housewife, nature, on each bush
 Lays her full mess before you. Want! why want?
First thief. We cannot live on grass, on berries, water,
 As beasts, and birds, and fishes, etc. (IV, iii, 425).

Essex's reputed *Last Voyage to the Haven of Happiness* begins

Welcome sweet Death the kindest freind I haue,
 This fleshly prison of my sowle vnlocke.⁴⁷

We recall Timon's despair:

I am sick of this false world, and will love nought
 But even the mere necessities upon 't.
 Then, Timon, presently prepare thy grave

 That death in me at others' lives may laugh (IV, iii, 378).

⁴⁶ *Lives*, II, 120 f., printed from Bodl. Libr. Tanner MSS 79. Grosart, *Miscellanies of Fuller Worthies' Library, Poems of Lord Vaux, Earl of Oxford, Earl of Essex*, etc. (1872), pp. 94-95, prints it from Ashm. MS, 781, p. 83 and collates Chetham MS, 8012, p. 86. In his verses "The Buzzeinge Bee's Complaynt," Grosart, *ibid.*, 85 ff., he images himself as deserting the hive:

To sucke on hen bane, hemlocke, netteles, rewe.

Professor Carleton Brown, in his edition of *Poems by Sir John Salusbury and Robert Chester* (EETS, Ext. Ser. CXIII, p. 13) notes the numerous MS copies of this poem. It is sometimes ascribed to Henry Cuffe, Essex's secretary.

⁴⁷ Grosart, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

In 1599 Essex had written to the Queen from Ireland:

From a mind delighting in sorrow; from spirits wasted with travail, care and grief; from a heart torn in pieces with passion; from a man that hates himself and all things that keep him alive.⁴⁸

And after the Earl—who had bearded the Spaniard at the very gates of Cadiz, and was thought to have saved the Queen's life from the plot of Dr. Lopez⁴⁹—was by his enemies accused of treason to England, he burst forth into such impetuous but helpless rage that Sir John Harington wrote of him:

the haughty spirit knoweth not how to yield, and the man's soul seemeth tossed to and fro, like the waves of a troubled sea.⁵⁰

And that Essex was not sparing of his talents for vituperation when once aroused is indicated, among other evidence,⁵¹ by his famous but fatal expression "that the Queen was cankered, and that her mind had become as crooked as her carcase."⁵²

Now as to the desertion of Essex's friends. His biographer writes that during the spring of 1600 "Essex House was thrown open, and Sir Gilly Meyrick, the Earl's steward, entertained all comers."⁵³ It was upon these people and upon his universal popularity that Essex staked his last bold effort to recoup his fortune and his place at court. If Elizabeth proved ungrateful, and if Raleigh plotted against his former commander and benefactor,⁵⁴ it seemed that at least these friends would not fail him. Later events proved the futility of this hope. We read that

⁴⁸ *Lives*, II, 68. Of course Essex was always somewhat theatrical.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Lives*, I, 307 ff.

⁵⁰ *Nugae Ant.*, 179, quoted *Lives*, II, 130.

⁵¹ E.g., Wotton remarks, p. 8, that "towards his latter time . . . his humours grew Tart," and regarding his inability to dissemble quotes the words of his servant Cuffe about him, p. 14, *Amorem & odium semper in fronte gessit, nec celare novit*. Lord Cobham he always called "the Sycophant," "even to the Queen her self," p. 22.

⁵² Cf. *Lives*, II, 131. Note Timon's emphasis on the age of the Senate, "Their blood is cak'd, 'tis cold, it seldom flows," etc. (II, ii, 225). And he declares that they "have their ingratitude in them hereditary," which may remind us of Elizabeth's father and Wolsey. Note also that Timon's signet has been presented to the senate with the request for help, II, ii, 211, and compare the famous story of Essex's sending a ring to Elizabeth from his prison, *Lives*, II, 178.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, II, 134.

⁵⁴ Cf. Stopes, 204-5. For an instance of his lenity to Raleigh, Wotton, 30-31.

a young man of good family, a domestic of the Earl, who had been educated with him, and was so much trusted by him, that, in his hearing, he discussed his most secret designs, at this time turned informer and revealed to the Secretary every thing that passed at Essex House.⁵⁵

And William Reynolds writes on Feb. 13, 1601, that he

marvelled what had become of Piers Edmonds, the Earl of Essex's man, born in the Strand near me, who had many preferments by the Earl. His villainy I have often complained of. He was Corporal General of the Horse in Ireland under the Earl of Southampton. He ate and drank at his table and lay in his tent. The earl of Southampton caressed him and gave him privileges.⁵⁶

And Essex's reliance upon his popularity at large proved utterly vain. Bacon in the *Declaration of Treasons* writes:

But there was not in so populous a city, where he thought himself held so dear, one man, from the chiefest citizen to the meanest artificer or prentice, that armed with him.⁵⁷

The defection of his nobler associates was also disastrous. His supposed friend Sir Ferdinando Gorges counterfeited a message from the Earl and caused the release of three distinguished hostages, thinking thereby to gain favour for himself.⁵⁸ And the day before the Earls of Essex and Southampton were brought to trial, Davies, Davers, Blount, and Rutland (who had all been arrested with them) turned Queen's evidence. A letter from George Carleton to his brother Dudley testifies to the great surprise which these facile confessions evoked,⁵⁹ and Essex himself seems bitterly to have resented their action.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Probably Gabriel Montgomery. Cf. *Lives*, II, 136 f.

⁵⁶ *Salisbury Papers*, XI, 48, 93, quoted Stopes, 199.

⁵⁷ Pp. 25-26, Abbott reprint.

⁵⁸ *Lives*, II, 145.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 157 ff.

⁶⁰ Cecil, writing to Winwood, says of Essex after the trial: "Before he went out of the hall, when he saw himself condemned, and found that Sir John Davers, Sir Ferdinando Gorge, Sir Christopher Blount and Sir Charles Davers, had confessed all the conferences that were held at Drury House by his direction for surprising the Queen and the Tower of London, he then broke out to divers gentlemen that attended him in the Hall that his confederates who had now accused him had been principal inciters of him and not he of them, ever since August last, to work his access to the Queen with force." Spedding, *Life and Times of F. Bacon* (1878), I, 343. And cf. Abbott, 222.

So his familiars to his buried fortunes
Slink all away; leave their false vows with him,
Like empty purses pick'd (IV, ii, 10).

But the arch-recreant, like Ventidius the climax of ingratitude—one who in penurious days has been aided generously by his patron, but now, having risen to affluence himself, deliberately repudiates his benefactor—this man is surely Francis Bacon. Dr. Abbott⁶¹ has traced the manner in which Essex befriended the slowly-rising courtier for many years, wearied Elizabeth to exasperation with pleading for Bacon's advancement, and after Bacon's failure in 1594-5 to obtain the Solicitorship assuaged his loss by giving him a piece of land worth upwards of £1800.⁶² Yet for several years Bacon was badly encumbered with debts, especially to the creditor Trott,⁶³ and in 1597 we find him appealing to Essex for help in obtaining some office and in marrying a fortune.⁶⁴ Though the latter scheme did not succeed, we have a record of Essex's efforts on his friend's behalf.⁶⁵ In 1598 we find Bacon arrested by a creditor and confined in a house in Coleman Street for a debt of £300, and writing letters to friends,⁶⁶ though whether he appealed to Essex and was succoured we do not know.

In 1596 Bacon wrote to Essex, rather transparently: "Consider whether I have not reason to think that *your fortune comprehendeth mine*."⁶⁷ On the contrary, four years later, after Bacon had begun to collect evidence against the Earl but had written to him a kind of apology, Essex replies:⁶⁸

Your profession of affection, and offer of good offices, are welcome to me; for answer to them, I will say but this, that you have believed that I have been kind to you; and you may believe that I cannot be other, either upon humour or mine own election.

⁶¹ *Bacon and Essex* (London, 1877), *passim*.

⁶² Abbott, 55 and Bacon's *Apology* 4. A similar instance of Essex's generosity is recorded when after failing to obtain a suit for Sir Francis Allen, he wrote to him: "And if I be so unfortunate that the Queen will break her word with me for you, I will divide one house with you if you will live with me, or settle you in one, if I had but two in the world. For while I have any fortune, Sir Francis Allen shall have part of it." Add. MSS 4112 (72), quoted Abbott, 27 f.

⁶³ Abbott, 80 ff.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 83-4.

⁶⁵ His two letters on Bacon's behalf in Birch, *Memoirs*, II, 347-48.

⁶⁶ Spedding, *Life and Times*, I, 231 ff. Letters to Cecil and Egerton are preserved.

⁶⁷ Abbott, 36.

⁶⁸ *Lives*, II, 119.

The contrast is one between the opportunism of Ventidius and the staunch fidelity of Timon, as it is revealed, for example, when the messenger had come from Ventidius:

His means most short, his creditors most strait:
 Your honourable letter he desires
 To those have shut him up; which, failing,
 Periods his comfort.
Timon. Noble Ventidius! Well;
 I am not of that feather to shake off
 My friend when he most needs me (I, i, 97).

As Essex began to sink into disfavour, Bacon had less and less to do with him, especially since Bacon now had the ear of the Queen and was, besides, growing steadily more prosperous.⁶⁹ Upon Essex's first arraignment Bacon set out to unearth evidence against him of the sort most irritating to Elizabeth.⁷⁰ Bacon's subsequent attempt to explain away this initial act of perfidy, in a letter to the Earl, recalls the lame excuses of the sycophants (recast from Shakespeare) when they are invited to the mock banquet.⁷¹ Also, the bitterness of Sir Gilly Meyrick, the steward of Essex, may be compared to the indignation of Timon's steward against the false friends.⁷²

At the Earl's trial in February, 1601 Bacon delivered a righteous speech of accusation against Essex, to which the Earl retorted with an instance of Bacon's duplicity.⁷³ And afterwards at Elizabeth's request Bacon drew up the *Declaration of Treasons*—for all of

⁶⁹ Cf. Abbott, 88.

⁷⁰ That is, personal aspersions Essex had let fall. Cf. Abbott, 170. He had been commissioned merely to investigate Hayward's book.

⁷¹ "Only I humbly pray you to believe that I aspire to the conscience and commendation of *bonus civis* and *bonus vir*, and that though I love some things better, I confess, than I love your Lordship, yet I love few persons better, *both for gratitude's sake*, and for virtues which cannot hurt but by accident . . . for, as I was ever sorry your Lordship should fly with waxen wings, doubting Icarus' fortune; so for the growing up of your feathers, be they ostriches or other kind, no man shall be more glad." *Lives*, II, 118. His allegation that he had previously warned the Earl against rash courses is paralleled in the (revised) Lucullus scene, III, i, in which that lord tells the servant how he had often urged prudence to Timon.

⁷² Meyrick commented: "Mr. Bacon was very idle, and I trust shall have the reward of that sooner in the end." Abbott, 174. Timon's steward in II, ii realizes the falsity of the friends long before Timon suspects them.

⁷³ Abbott, 226-27.

which services he received £1200.⁷⁴ Abbott in summary remarks, p. 249:

Contemporary opinion, as described by Bacon himself, the testimony of the author of the Sydnev Papers, the testimony of Sir Gilly Meyrick, the angry asseverations of Buckingham, the expostulations of Cecil, and the indirect evidence of Bacon's letters and even of his Apology, all point to this, that Bacon was regarded by the men of his own day as a man who, not content with deserting, attempted to injure and destroy his friend.⁷⁵ The depiction of this perfidy, in such a tragedy of ingratitude toward a noble soldier and patron as Shakespeare intended *Timon of Athens* to be, would doubtless be identified by many—and at the same time would savour of audacity, since Bacon, thanks to his ingratiating strategies, had climbed rather steadily under the Jacobean regime.⁷⁶

But Francis' brother Anthony, secretary of Essex, along with Meyrick, the Earl's steward, Captain Thomas Lea, and perhaps one or two others formed a less illustrious but staunchly faithful circle about the Earl, *usque ad aras*—corresponding in our play to the household of Timon with the steward at their head. Lea and Meyrick were executed,⁷⁷ and Anthony Bacon died in the same year, 1601, partly, it is supposed, from the shock of his master's downfall,⁷⁸ but to the last was engaged in attempts to exonerate

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁷⁵ One more link between the Bacon-Essex relation and our play may be cited. There is a certain figure of speech which Essex uses on at least two occasions regarding friendship. The first, a letter to Francis Bacon in April, 1593 (repr. from a Lambeth MS fragment by Spedding, *op. cit.*, I, 100): "... it is the best wisdom in any man in his own matters to rest in the wisdom of a friend (for who can so often *looking in the glass* discern and judge so well of his own favour, as another with whom he converseth?)." The second, addressed to Anthony Bacon in 1598 and published before Essex's death, in which he defends himself against current slander, *Lives*, I, 484: "The same curiosity moves me to show the true face and state of my mind to my true friend, that he, like a true glass, without injury or flattery, may tell me whether a matter or accident have set so foul a blemish in that, as my accusers pretend." Cf. a striking phrase of I, i, 59, describing a false friend of Timon, "the glass-fac'd flatterer."

⁷⁶ He was even given an annual pension of £60 for "the good, faithful, and acceptable service" his brother Anthony had rendered Essex, Abbott, 252.

⁷⁷ Lea lost his life pleading too importunately for his general, Stopes, 206. Meyrick remained non-committal under questioning, "explaining that he had merely acted under his master's orders," *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, "Sir Gilly Meyrick."

⁷⁸ Cf. Spedding, I, 367.

⁷⁹ *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, "Anthony Bacon," on evidence of a letter to him in May, 1601, from an anonymous writer.

Essex. Sir Sidney Lee observes, *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, s. v. "Anthony Bacon":

Anthony received little or no money from Essex. He had lodgings in Essex House, but maintained himself out of his private resources. . . . Essex appears to have promised, and to have made some effort, to repay him for his self-denying services, but the schemes did not take effect.

To such an one Essex might have said, as Timon does:

Methinks thou art more honest now than wise;
For, *by oppressing and betraying me*,
Thou mightst have sooner got another service:
For many so arrive at second masters
Upon their first lord's neck (IV, iii, 511).

One finds the original of Apemantus in Henry Cuffe, also in the retinue of Essex, whom Birch calls "a great philosopher."⁸⁰ Bacon describes him as "a base fellow by birth, but a great scholar,"⁸¹ with which we may compare Timon's contemptuous address to Apemantus—

Thou art a slave, whom Fortune's tender arm
With favour never clasp'd, but bred a dog (IV, iii, 251).

And Wotton, pp. 31–32, describes him as

. . . a man of secret ambitious ends of his own, and of proportionate Counsells smothered under the habit of a Scholler, *and slubbered over with a certain rude and clownish fashion, that had the semblance of integrity.*

As a sample of his discourse we have his speech made when he was hanged at Tyburn, March 13, 1601:

I am adjudged to Death for plotting a plott never acted; and for acting an Act, never by me plotted. The Law will have its course. Accusers shall be heard; Greatness must have the victory; Scholar & Martialist (whose Valor & Learning in Engl^d shd have priviledged, yet) in Engl^d must die like Dogs & be hanged. To dislike this is but Folly; to gainsay it is but Time lost; to avoid it impossible; But to endure it manly: & to scorn it magnanimity. The Prince is displeased; y^e Law injurious; y^e Lawyers uncharitable; & Death terrible. But I ask pardon of y^e prince, forgive y^e Lawyer; beseech y^e world to pardon me; & welcome Death.⁸²

⁸⁰ II, 243.

⁸¹ *Declaration of Treasons*, 15. Birch, II, 82 speaks more highly of his extraction.

⁸² Tanner MS 76, fol. 98, printed in *Ballads from MSS* (Ballad Soc.), II, 240.

One may compare the brusque manner, the terse moralizings, and the love of antitheses⁸³ which Shakespere's 'churlish philosopher' exhibits.

One more bit of evidence binding Essex with Timon may be adduced. Dr. Samuel Johnson in his edition of Shakespere has a note under this speech of Timon:

Thou art a slave, whom Fortune's tender arm
With favour never clasped, but bred a dog.
Hadst thou, like us from our first swath, proceeded
The sweet degrees that this brief world affords
To such as may the passive drudges of it
Freely command, thou wouldst have plung'd thyself
In general riot; melted down thy youth
In different beds of lust; and never learn'd
The icy precepts of respect, but follow'd
The sugar'd game before thee. But myself,
Who had the world as my confectionery,
The mouths, the tongues, the eyes, and hearts of men
At duty, more than I could frame employment, etc. (IV, iii, 251).

Dr. Johnson calls attention to its similarity in spirit to a letter written by Essex shortly before his execution, to Southampton: . . . I had none but deceivers to call upon me, to whom I said, if my ambition could have entered into their narrow breasts, they would not have been so humble; or if my delights had been once tasted by them, they would not have been so precise.⁸⁴

Indeed one might venture to suggest a relationship between the extended tirades of Timon against sexual corruption,⁸⁵ and a characteristic feature of Essex's renunciation of the world when he prepared to die,⁸⁶ though, as Professor Bradley remarked,⁸⁷ the

⁸³ E.g.,

Willing misery
Outlives incertain pomp, is crown'd before:
The one is filling still, never complete;
The other, at high wish: best state, contentless,
Hath a distracted and most wretched being,
Worse than the worst, content (IV, iii, 243).

⁸⁴ The letter complete may be found in Birch, II, 484 ff.

⁸⁵ In IV, i, and in his speeches to Phrynia and Timandra, IV, iii.

⁸⁶ Cf. his confession: "I haue bestowed my youth in wantonnes, luste, and vncleannes," *Ballads from MSS*, II, 208 and its reflection in ballad literature in his reputed *Last Voyage*, stanza iii (Grosart, *op. cit.*, 99) and R. Williams' *Life and Death of Essex*, xxxvi (*Ballads from MSS*, 31).

⁸⁷ *Shakesperean Tragedy*, p. 443.

attitude is rather notable in this period of Shakespere's dramatic writing.

One may ask, why Southampton does not appear in the play? I reply that any vindication of Southampton would have been purposeless; he had now been restored to title and favour, and James had vaguely but happily regarded his part in the affair as a stroke for the Scottish succession. Southampton was now engaged in a new round of interests, courtly and colonial, and the old episode of 1601 might well be closed as a turbulent though not discreditable memory.

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