

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00606-4 - The Life of Timon of Athens, Volume 34

William Shakespeare

Excerpt

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THE LIFE OF
TIMON OF ATHENS

N.S.T.A.—4

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The scene: Athens and neighbourhood

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

TIMON, a noble Athenian

LUCIUS

LUCULLUS } flattering lords

SEMPRONIUS }

VENTIDIUS, one of Timon's false friends

ALCIBIADES, an Athenian captain

APEMANTUS, a churlish philosopher

FLAVIUS, steward to Timon

Poet, Painter, Jeweller, and Merchant

An old Athenian

FLAMINIUS }

LUCILIUS } servants to Timon

SERVILIUS }

CAPHIS

PHILOTUS

TITUS } servants to Timon's creditors and to the

HORTENSIUS } Lords

And others }

A Page. A Fool. Three Strangers

PHRYNIA }

TIMANDRA } mistresses to Alcibiades

Cupid and Amazons in the masque

Other Lords, Senators, Officers, Banditti, and
Attendants

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[I. I.] *Athens. A hall in Timon's house*

'Enter Poet, Painter, Jeweller, Merchant,' and others,
'at several doors'

Poet. Good day, sir.

Painter. I am glad you're well.

Poet. I have not seen you long; how goes the world?

Painter. It wears, sir, as it grows.

Poet. Ay, that's well known.

But what particular rarity? what strange,
Which manifold record not matches? See,
Magic of bounty, all these spirits thy power
Hath conjured to attend. I know the merchant.

Painter. I know them both; th'other's a jeweller.

Merchant. O, 'tis a worthy lord!

Jeweller. Nay, that's most fixed.

Merchant. A most incomparable man, breathed, as
it were,

10

To an untirable and continue goodness.

He passes.

Jeweller. I have a jewel here.

Merchant. O, pray, let's see't. For the Lord
Timon, sir?

Jeweller. If he will touch the estimate. But for that—

Poet [*reciting to himself*]. 'When we for recompense
have praised the vile,

It stains the glory in that happy verse

Which aptly sings the good.'

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I. I. 19

Merchant. 'Tis a good form.20 *Jeweller.* And rich. Here is a water, look ye.*Painter.* You are rapt, sir, in some work,
some dedication

To the great lord.

Poet. A thing slipped idly from me.

Our poesy is as a gum which oozes

From whence 'tis nourished. The fire i'th'flint

Shows not till it be struck: our gentle flame

Provokes itself, and like the current flies

Each bound it chafes. What have you there?

Painter. A picture, sir. When comes your book forth?*Poet.* Upon the heels of my presentment, sir.

30 Let's see your piece.

Painter. 'Tis a good piece.*Poet.* So 'tis; this comes off well and excellent.*Painter.* Indifferent.*Poet.* Admirable. How this grace

Speaks his own standing! what a mental power

This eye shoots forth! how big imagination

Moves in this lip! to th'dumbness of the gesture

One might interpret.

Painter. It is a pretty mocking of the life.

Here is a touch; is't good?

Poet. I will say of it,

40 It tutors nature; artificial strife

Lives in these touches, livelier than life.

*'Enter certain Senators', and pass by**Painter.* How this lord is followed!*Poet.* The senators of Athens—happy man!*Painter.* Look, moe!*Poet.* You see this confluence, this great flood
of visitors:

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TIMON OF ATHENS

I. I. 77

With one man beckoned from the rest below,
 Bowing his head against the steepy mount
 To climb his happiness, would be well expressed

80 In our condition.

Poet. Nay, sir, but hear me on.
 All those which were his fellows but of late,
 Some better than his value, on the moment
 Follow his strides, his lobbies fill with tendance,
 Rain sacrificial whisperings in his ear,
 Make sacred even his stirrup, and through him
 Drink the free air.

Painter. Ay, marry, what of these?

Poet. When Fortune in her shift and change of mood
 Spurns down her late beloved, all his dependants,
 Which laboured after him to the mountain's top
 90 Even on their knees and hands, let him slip down,
 Not one accompanying his declining foot.

Painter. 'Tis common:
 A thousand moral paintings I can show,
 That shall demonstrate these quick blows
 of Fortune's

More pregnantly than words. Yet you do well
 To show Lord Timon that mean eyes have seen
 The foot above the head.

'Trumpets sound. Enter LORD TIMON, addressing himself courteously to every suitor'; a Messenger from VENTIDIUS talking with him; LUCILIUS and other servants following

Timon. Imprisoned is he, say you?

Messenger. Ay, my good lord; five talents is
 his debt,

His means most short, his creditors most strait.

100 Your honourable letter he desires

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TIMON OF ATHENS

I. I. 128

In qualities of the best. This man of thine
 Attempts her love; I prithee, noble lord,
 130 Join with me to forbid him her resort;
 Myself have spoke in vain.

Timon. The man is honest.

Athenian. Therefore he will be, Timon.

His honesty rewards him in itself;

It must not bear my daughter.

Timon. Does she love him?

Athenian. She is young and apt.

Our own precedent passions do instruct us

What levity's in youth.

Timon [to Lucilius]. Love you the maid?

Lucilius. Ay, my good lord, and she accepts of it.

Athenian. If in her marriage my consent
 be missing,

140 I call the gods to witness, I will choose
 Mine heir from forth the beggars of the world,
 And dispossess her all.

Timon. How shall she be endowed,

If she be mated with an equal husband?

Athenian. Three talents on the present; in
 future, all.

Timon. This gentleman of mine hath served
 me long;

To build his fortune I will strain a little,

For 'tis a bond in men. Give him thy daughter:

What you bestow, in him I'll counterpoise,

And make him weigh with her.

Athenian. Most noble lord,

150 Pawn me to this your honour, she is his.

Timon. My hand to thee; mine honour on
 my promise.

Lucilius. Humbly I thank your lordship; never may

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I. I. 153 TIMON OF ATHENS 9

That state or fortune fall into my keeping
Which is not owed to you!

[*Lucilius and Old Athenian go*

Poet. Vouchsafe my labour, and long live
your lordship!

Timon. I thank you; you shall hear from me anon.
Go not away. What have you there, my friend?

Painter. A piece of painting, which I do beseech
Your lordship to accept.

Timon. Painting is welcome.
The painting is almost the natural man; 160
For since dishonour traffics with man's nature,
He is but outside; these pencilled figures are
Even such as they give out. I like your work,
And you shall find I like it; wait attendance
Till you hear further from me.

Painter. The gods preserve ye!

Timon. Well fare you, gentleman. Give me
your hand;

We must needs dine together. Sir, your jewel
Hath sufferéd under praise.

Jeweller. What, my lord, dispraise?

Timon. A mere satiety of commendations.
If I should pay you for't as 'tis extolled, 170
It would unclew me quite.

Jeweller. My lord, 'tis rated
As those which sell would give; but you well know,
Things of like value, differing in the owners,
Are prizéd by their masters. Believe't, dear lord,
You mend the jewel by the wearing it.

Timon. Well mocked.

Merchant. No, my good lord; he speaks the
common tongue
Which all men speak with him.

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10 TIMON OF ATHENS I. I. 179

Timon. Look who comes here; will you be chid?*Enter APEMANTUS*180 *Jeweller.* We'll bear, with your lordship.*Merchant.* He'll spare none.*Timon.* Good morrow to thee, gentle Apemantus.*Apemantus.* Till I be gentle, stay thou for thy
good morrow;

When thou art Timon's dog, and these knaves honest.

Timon. Why dost thou call them knaves? thou
know'st them not.*Apemantus.* Are they not Athenians?*Timon.* Yes.*Apemantus.* Then I repent not.*Jeweller.* You know me, Apemantus?*Apemantus.* Thou know'st I do; I called thee by
thy name.190 *Timon.* Thou art proud, Apemantus.*Apemantus.* Of nothing so much as that I am not
like Timon.*Timon.* Whither art going?*Apemantus.* To knock out an honest Athenian's
brains.*Timon.* That's a deed thou'lt die for.*Apemantus.* Right, if doing nothing be death by
th'law.*Timon.* How lik'st thou this picture, Apemantus?*Apemantus.* The best, for the innocence.*Timon.* Wrought he not well that painted it?200 *Apemantus.* He wrought better that made the
painter; and yet he's but a filthy piece of work.*Painter.* You're a dog.*Apemantus.* Thy mother's of my generation; what's
she, if I be a dog?