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SHAKESPEARE'S MORAL ECONOMICS AND TIMON OF ATHENS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
John Joseph Ruszkiewicz, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1977

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[Signature]
Adviser
Department of English
For my father.
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<td>MLR</td>
<td>Modern Language Review</td>
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INTRODUCTION

Reinvesting the commonplace ideas of a past age with the vigor and intellectual ferment they possessed in their own time can result in a new appreciation for the depth of thought behind the "merely conventional." This study is a preliminary attempt to understand the economics of Shakespeare's works as it functions within a familiar moral tradition.

Shakespeare's most rigorously commercial play, *Timon of Athens*, provides a natural focus for such an inquiry, based as it is on the complex ethics of giving and receiving. But the tendency in criticism of *Timon* has been to ignore the specific dictates of the moral world the prodigal Athenian dwells in, to rely on modern notions of waste, covetousness, and content in exploring the deficiencies in Timon's character, or to explain the economic ethic in historical terms as part of a growing Renaissance perception of the corruptions of capitalism. As a result, the play becomes mere commentary on social conditions and Shakespeare's political consciousness. What is ignored is that, even from an economic point of
view, the argument of the play—like an Elizabethan's notion of economics—is essentially moral.

Timon of Athens is not the only work in the Shakespeare canon in which commercial transactions are evaluated according to precise moral judgments, or ethical perceptions are defined by mercantile allusions. Indeed, the commercial metaphor is ubiquitous in Shakespeare's poems and plays. While social conditions may have been responsible for the appearance and popularity of certain characters that appear in the works (the prodigal, the usurer), they are perceived, judged, and presented in literature according to conventional paradigms that had little to do with expanding markets, new mercantile classes, or the particulars of primary accumulation. So in order to properly appreciate the stage representatives of the prodigal, the usurer, the merchant, the miser, the discharged soldier turned thief, or even—as it turns out—the adventuring lover, it is as important to understand the morality that defined their characters and behavior as it is to be familiar with the conditions that gave rise to their existence. I have chosen then to study Shakespeare's works from a moral-economic point of view, not to uncover the playwright's economic bias or to increase our knowledge of
Elizabethan-Jacobean social conditions, but to discover how economic morality functions dramatically.

This study does not travel into entirely undiscovered countries. Shakespeare's economics has been studied by critics of diverse persuasions, especially by Marxists whose tendency to claim Shakespeare as a spokesman for an ideology does not lessen the value of their literary insights. Other critics have focused on particular economic features in the plays, or their social and political backgrounds. Some, like John Russell Brown, Sylvan Barnet, and Robert Heilman, have anticipated the direction of this study. But there is a need for a more systematic treatment of Shakespeare's moral economics than the current body of criticism offers. Such a study, with its foundation in the relevant background materials of Renaissance England, will explain the traditions and alternatives available to a dramatist working within the commercial perceptions of his age. It will elucidate commonplace ideas, conferring on terms like content, security, and husbandry the richness of ethical connotation they formerly possessed. Further, an appreciation of moral economics will help define the patterns and principles of human relationship in Shakespeare's works for which the world of commerce proves to be the
convenient and fitting metaphor. Finally, a prudent regard for the rich and varied ethical tradition in which Shakespeare framed his commercial references will, I hope, temper any tendency to claim Shakespeare for a particular socio-economic camp, to reduce the plays to ideology and the poetry to propaganda.

* * * * *

The question of economic ethics is a huge one, limited here by a focus on the issues raised by Timon of Athens and, in part, answered by the study of some earlier and more conventional dramas of Shakespeare. But the inquiry is not directed solely toward the explication of Timon. The middle chapters are, I believe, pertinent examinations of the essential moral-economic concepts of liberality, prodigality, and covetousness. I have examined several works not ordinarily considered "economic" (The Merry Wives of Windsor, As You Like It, Richard II), in part to demonstrate how economic and commercial analogies were used by the dramatist to highlight other aspects of human endeavor—love, governance, war—and in part because these plays cast some light upon aspects of Timon.

The particular limits of this dissertation made it necessary to avoid full-scale treatments of several plays of moral-economic significance: The Merchant of
Venice, Coriolanus, and King Lear. The omission of Lear was made with especial reluctance since the play embodies many of the same issues that Timon does and is more poignant in its championing of social and economic justice. But to have included King Lear would have given the study a double focus, required additional chapters of background material, and complicated the development beyond the time or ability allotted to me.

The text used throughout is The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).
CHAPTER I: MORAL ECONOMICS AND TIMON OF ATHENS

To understand how Shakespeare incorporates into his drama the economic ethics and issues of Renaissance England, there is no better starting place than Timon of Athens. More than any other work in the Shakespeare canon, Timon focuses on the problem of man's commercial relationships with his fellows, and makes that inquiry central to its dramatic purpose. This is not to deny that other plays involve important economic issues. At the core of The Merchant of Venice is the sixteenth-century controversy over usury, a debate which stirred commercial and religious circles in England and on the continent into bitter pamphleteering, and which in our own time has inspired no small number of scholarly articles explicating the protocols which constrained borrowing and lending in the period. Likewise, the patterns of filial ingratitude in King Lear would have been understood by Shakespeare's contemporaries as—at least in part—an economic matter. The often-cited declarations of the king and Gloucester urging a more proper and even-handed distribution of wealth are, undeniably, part of the tragedy's challenge to conventional
wisdom and social hierarchies (III.iv.28-36; IV.i.64-71).
The sonnets and *Venus and Adonis* use commercial and mer­
cantile motifs to explain that love, like wealth, is a
commodity to be ventured for and expended. The notion
receives sophisticated treatment in *Romeo and Juliet*; the
two commemorative statues of pure gold promised by the
mourning families are a brutal conclusion to the commer­
cial themes of the play.

But in all these works, economic morality is of
secondary interest. *Romeo and Juliet* is essentially a
story about love, will, and fate. No one (except perhaps
for a few scholars) reads the sonnets for their economic
doctrine. And *Lear* is too vast, too dramatically awesome,
too intent on expounding the full range of human suffer­
ing to be solely concerned with setting forth a paradigm
of economic behavior. Even *The Merchant of Venice* is,
arguably, more interested in the nature of love than in
commercial problems. It too is a love story.

No such argument could be made for *Timon of Athens*.
At the heart of the play is a moral-economic issue from
which the action is rarely, if ever, diverted. There is
no love interest in *Timon* (in fact, there are no major
women characters), no majesty, no kingdom lost and won.
Rather, the play inquires into how economic forces and
economic moralities affect and rule the life of a single
man: Timon. And no other play or poem of Shakespeare's shares the like concern so unswervingly.

The character of Timon has sparked a variety of opinions. The generous assessment of G. Wilson Knight represents one end of a critical spectrum: "Timon himself is the flower of human aspiration . . . a universal lover, not by principle but by nature. His charity is never cold, self-conscious, or dutiful. He withholds nothing of himself." At the other end are critics less impressed by the nobility of the protagonist, such as David Cook: "Timon is not discriminatingly or positively generous. . . . he emulates the indiscriminate generosity of an abstract deity like Fortune. The real difference [between the man and the god] is that Timon proves to have feet of clay."²

Yet whether universal lover or clod, Timon is a prodigal, and most critics would agree on the word, if not on the degree of disapprobation it carries. To be prodigal is to exceed in giving; yet drawing the line between the virtue and the vice in Shakespeare's play is not as easy as it is in other Renaissance dramas in which the unthrift's behavior is more easily predicted.

Timon resembles Shylock in this straining of convention. The former is a prodigal, the latter a usurer, but Shakespeare complicates the stereotype
in both cases by adding an unanticipated human dimension. The last words one would expect from the stage representation of a usurer, the monster of the Renaissance imagination, who'd flay the skin of his father "to cover drummes for children at Bartholmew faire," are those that begin, "Hath not a Jew eyes?" (MV III.i.59).\(^3\) Admittedly, the prodigal was not the figure of contempt the money­lender was, and he did not evoke the same vigorously hostile reactions from the literary practitioners of the day; but he was, nonetheless, a figure with certain predictable traits and predilections from which the playwright drew the outlines of Timon's character. But a detailed look at the caricatures reveals that Shakespeare's prodigals differ in important ways from typical spendthrifts of the Elizabethan stage.

The problem of character is central to an inquiry into Timon of Athens because the unthrift Athenian is constantly at the center of controversy of the play. The audience is continually challenged to pass judgment on his actions as Shakespeare presents one assessment of Timon after another:

A most incomparable man, breath'd, as it were,
To an untirable and continuate goodness;
(I.i.10-11)

The noblest mind he carries
That ever govern'd man; (I.i.280-81)
O, he's the very soul of bounty;  
(I.ii.209)

Lord Timon will be left a naked gull  
Which flashes now a phoenix;  
(Il.i.31-32)

Never mind  
Was to be so unwise, to be so kind;  
(Il.ii.5-6)

Unwisely, not ignobly, have I given;  
(Il.ii.174)

A noble nature  
May catch a wrench;  
(Il.ii.208-09)

He's but a mad lord, and nought but humors  
sway him;  
(III.vi.111-12)

My dearest lord, blest to be most accurs'd,  
Rich only to be wretched;  
(IV.ii.42-43)

Hang thee, monster;  
(IV.iii.88)

Thou hast cast away thyself, being like thyself,  
A madman so long, now a fool;  
(IV.iii.220-21)

Thou art the cap of all the fools alive.  
(IV.iii.358)

Only when Alcibiades goes before the Senate to plead for  
the life of a friend (III.v.) does the action and atten-  
tion of the play shift away from the extravagant citizen.  
The final judgment on Timon, his own epitaph, arrives  
just after Alcibiades has concluded a peace with the  
Athenian government. But far from offering a definitive  
estimate of the man, the epitaph appears in the text in  
two versions (borrowed from Plutarch), one of which  
Shakespeare probably intended to strike in the final  
version of the play. Once again, the audience is left
with conflicting evidence about the character of the man who has dominated the stage for two hours.

Further complicating an assessment of Timon is the subtlety of the moral-economic principles on which any judgment of the hero must be predicated. As the parade of sycophants, flatterers, artists, merchants, thieves, whores, servants, and soldiers goes tramping by noble or foolish Timon, the moral-economic issues raised by the discourse, comments, and behavior of the visitants are explored in detail and at length. By making Timon "interesting" morally and ethically, Shakespeare deprived himself of the comfortable predictability of a conventional drama on the prodigal theme—which ordinarily would have been a comedy. But apparently Shakespeare was not concerned with simplifying his drama by the adoption of a conventional framework of belief. The problems raised by a questioning of commercial morality are exactly what interest him in Timon of Athens.

Although Timon is particularly useful in demonstrating how economics could be perceived as, fundamentally, a moral issue, it is not unique in this regard. Almost any Elizabethan or Jacobean play that touches on economics, whether Volpone (1607), A New Way To Pay Old Debts (1633), Liberalitie and Prodigalitie (1602), or any of a dozen others, would be, with analysis,
instructive on this point. Nor is a linking of economics and morality necessarily alien to ways of thinking in the twentieth century. The Grapes of Wrath (1939) or Death of a Salesman (1949) might be pointed to as literary reflections of modern moral-economic problems. What seems to make the moral-economics of Shakespeare's time significantly different from our own is that economic perceptions, theory, and activity were not then so easily divorced from the ethical behavior of an individual as they are in our own day. Because economics had not yet developed as an independent and significant science, because the Elizabethans or Jacobians were but dimly aware of the principles of a rapidly developing system of capital enterprise and industry and had to endure (or enjoy) the effects of the new forces—boom markets, inflation, recession—without understanding their causes, Shakespeare's contemporaries were apt to explain economic conditions according to the dictates given to them by the religion or the moral philosophy that guided their relationships with other men in other aspects of life. This is not to say that today the average Western consumer has at his command the subtleties of Keynesian economics, or that economic problems are approached without any concern for justice, equitable distribution,
or charity. Indeed, modern commercial attitudes have their roots in the Renaissance and the decades that follow. But twentieth-century man is keenly aware of economic forces beyond the control of individuals and even whole governments. To give an example, inflation is not treated as a moral problem that can be solved by the individual practice of thrift. Price increases may anger the public, but it seldom holds a particular company responsible for the problem. Even more rarely is an individual blamed. Instead, economics is understood in terms of faceless entities: multi-national conglomerates, federal reserve boards, international brotherhoods of workers. And though the individual confronted by these spectres may be as cruelly buffeted in the marketplace as his Renaissance compeer, he is not likely to believe that anything he does can make much difference.

By contrast, the Elizabethan merchant, the adventurer, the land encloser, the wool trader, the humble laborer, or the monarch himself was responsible to God and to the state for his economic behavior. The man who wasted his patrimony was guilty not only of economic stupidity, but also of intemperance. The land-owner who enclosed a commons and drove dozens of farmers
out of work was a villain, as was the man who lent money at interest or cheated his fellow merchant in the stall. The Elizabethan and Jacobean had no greater control over his economic well-being than does an individual today. He may have had less. But he believed that the causes of economic problems were simpler than we believe they are today. And hence, with due regard for the profound respect the age had for changes wrought by perverse Fortune, I believe that the popular Renaissance understanding of economics, as preached from the pulpit and explained through sermons, treatises, and other devices of propaganda, was essentially moral. The nation would be more prosperous if men were more charitable; the causes of economic tribulation are *prodigality* and *covetousness*; the proper use of wealth is dictated by the laws of God. Although these concepts are not radical, they differ from modern ones in ways that undermine surface resemblances. We understand *prodigality* and *thrift*, *greed* and *husbandry*, *usury* and *bounty* when we read *Volpone* or *Timon of Athens* or one of Philip Massinger's city comedies. Yet we are not likely to take these concepts in their context as seriously as the Renaissance audiences did. I do not mean serious in the sense of frowning intellectual analysis. Moral economics provides the groundwork for many excellent comedies. But the
issues engaged by economic ideas could and did support ethical inquiry: the usurer's villainy and the prodigal's waste on stage were, for their component elements, often in debt to similar portraits of economic characters in treatises, debates, catechisms, and other types of moral-economic literature of the day.

Such moral-economic documents of the Tudor and Stuart eras are discussed at length by W. K. Jordan in his Philanthropy in England 1480-1660. Chapter VI, "The Impulse," is a useful survey of what Jordan calls "the literature of exhortation," the outpouring of sermons and treatises that urged Protestant England to equal and surpass the charitable achievements of the pre-Reformation centuries. Jordan shows that, while the impulse to charitable work came from the English church and was eventually supported by the actions of Elizabeth's government, the most significant contributions toward the alleviation of poverty and unemployment, sickness, and illiteracy were secular. In paraphrasing the teaching of protestant divine, Thomas Becon, Jordan describes with admirable simplicity an important aspect of moral-economic thought: "The Christian obligation is simply that Christ's flock must be fed. The community of Christ is an economic as well as a spiritual polity in which
distribution must be made to every member according to his need."^{5}

It is Jordan's argument that the widespread concern for the poor demonstrated in the homiletic literature of the Tudor-Stuart reigns was a new phenomenon, made necessary by the dismemberment of the institutional charities of the Roman Church. A vacuum was created that had to be filled. And the response was—despite the Protestant doctrine of good works and the despairing tone of many of the sermons—significant and heartening. The modern concept of the liberal, secular state responsible for the welfare of its citizens was born in this historical moment.^{6}

But if the direction of its charitable impulses were modern, the commercial ethic of all but the most advanced commercial classes in Shakespeare's England remained essentially medieval. "Doctrineless individualism," to use L. C. Knights' phrase, was on the rise, but far from dominating the economic viewpoint of England's masses.^{7} Hence, the moral-economics of Shakespeare's world was quite complex: a system of ethical belief founded on venerable concepts of community responsibility and individual culpability responding to the admonitions of a reformed Anglican and Puritan church to act secularly, to deal with the tribulations
of an economy in transition from a relatively simple, land-based feudal organization to one based on trade, technology, and capital. As might be expected, no single work is typical of moral-economic literature. In fact, it may be more useful to think of moral economics as an ethical attitude that informs a variety of productions from the most serious to the almost ludicrous than as a formal system of belief.

For example, when Robert Crowley, a divine and the man responsible for the first printed editions of Piers Plowman, responds to an outbreak of riots among the commons (circa 1550) with a short treatise aimed at stopping the disruptions of order, The Way to Wealth Wherein Is Plainly Taught a Most Present Remedy for Sedicion (1550), he does not offer an economic proposal aimed at alleviating the conditions and problems that led to the riots, though he mentions some of them. Instead he points an accusing finger at the rich for oppressing the poor and at the commons for rebelling against God's laws. Return to God's laws, The Way to Wealth implies, and the economic problems of England will solve themselves.

In Compendious or Briefe Examination of Certayne Ordinary Complaints, a work of uncertain authorship probably written earlier than the date ascribed to it
(1581), and revised for publication by a certain W.S., we have a relatively complete and sophisticated analysis of the economic problems of England presented in the form of a dialogue among a knight, a merchant, a doctor, a husbandman, and a craftsman. The author offers precise answers to the questions posed by inclosure, price rises, increases of foreign manufactured goods, unemployment, and the like. While far from scientific, he is at least systematic in first searching out "the causes of said common and universall dearth of all thinges (in comparison of the former age)," and then "some remedies for the same griefes." But if the work is more analytic and rigorously economic than The Way to Wealth, it is founded on the same principles. Moral philosophy and learning are notably recognized early in the work as commodities necessary to good national husbandry: "doth it [i.e. moral philosophy] not teach, first how every man shoulde live honestly; Secondly, how he should guide his family wisely and profitably? And thirdly, it sheweth how a Cyty or a Realme, or any other common weale shoulde bee well ordered and governed, both in time of peace, and also warre." Moreover, "religious differences" is included as one of the major problems England faces. The other three--dearth, enclosures, and the decay of towns--
are more obviously economic, but the author saw no lack of consistency in his list. In a work otherwise concerned with the material well-being of England, he thought it entirely appropriate to discuss religion and to call for a general council.

A generation later when James Maxwell, a Scot, published *The Golden Art or The Right Way of Enriching* (1611), the commercial ethic was advancing; and a work explaining how a Christian, in good conscience, could get rich must have seemed timely. The tone of *The Golden Art* is pious and the admonitions traditional, but there is something new, even bourgeois, in the attitude: "Everie man that desireth to bee rich, must endeavour to understand the nature, quality, secrets, and perfection of his own vocation." Maxwell succeeds in constricting wealth to sinless turpitude, urging moderation in dress and entertainments (the stage is described as "a contemplative brothelhouse"), and reminds men that wealth is not to be relied on. Still, *The Golden Art* is a brave attempt to incorporate the newly wealthy and the new ethic of wealth into the Christian moral-economic system. After all, as Maxwell points out, neither the earnest following of a profession—Adam having been a gardener and Christ a carpenter—nor the pleasures of prosperity—Abraham, Lot,
Isaac, Solomon, and Joseph of Arimathea having been rich--
exclude a man from the kingdom of God.

In a less serious moral-economic piece, called
"A Fooles Bolt is Soone Shot" (1629), the fool of the
title, depicted in an engraving with his bolt leveled
at the reader, takes aim in stanza after ballad stanza
at men in all estates guilty of assorted follies, most
of which lead to bankruptcy. Among those in the cata­
logue of fools are the man who delights in lawsuits
"and proves a begger at last," the prodigal, the miser,
the gentleman "apt to come in bands/ For every common
friend" who winds up in prison, and an assortment of
marriage partners: the hard-working husband with the
spendthrift wife, the man who fishes for wealth through
marriage and ends up with a frog, the rich old woman
taken in by a roaring boy, and so forth, concluding with
those that live in sin thinking death will not come.
Penury is considered a great evil in the ballad, a view
that might upset the more orthodox moral commentators
who do not necessarily equate riches with good sense.
But the song does. In its view, the poor man is a self-
made fool and deserves what he gets. The admonition is
moral, but the consequences here, despite the last stanza's
warning of sin and death, are clearly economic.
These examples and the preceding discussion of moral-economics demonstrate that the popular understanding in Tudor-Stuart England of what we call economics involved considerably more than just usury and the wool trade, the topics that often dominate chapters on the socio-economic background of Shakespeare's plays. And Timon of Athens, one of the most complex statements of a moral-economic dilemma offered by the Renaissance, is both part of a tradition and a challenge to it. Like the poor commons in The Way to Wealth, Timon is victimized by an economic system beyond his control. His world is the Athens of corrupt senators and usurious merchants. But he is guilty himself of prodigality, waste, and vanity, vices whose consequences ripple out into ever widening circles. Timon's inability to govern himself leads to the collapse of his household and to the dispersion of his loyal servants. But his disorder also shakes Athens and brings war to its very gates. In the meantime, Timon is advised by good men and by bad, by his dutiful servant, Flavius, and by the merchant who profited by the knowledge that even a beggar's dog coined gold by Timon (III.i. 5-6). But who is right? Is Timon too prodigal or is he too good? A fool's bolt is aimed directly at both Timon and the audience, daring
them to make a judgment that the play seems constantly to avoid. From an ethical perspective, Timon of Athens is a problem play, and not typical of moral-economic documents or of the attitudes of some earlier Shakespearean plays in which it can be shown that the author is familiar with and even exploits the conventions of the Christian moral-economic system.

An early example of Shakespeare's deliberate employment of a moral-economic theme for a dramatic purpose can be found in 2 Henry VI. Jack Cade, his rebellion thwarted and a price on his head, crawls over a wall into the garden of a certain Iden to find food (IV.x.). Shakespeare's source, Edward Hall's The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke (1548), describes the scene this way: "For after a proclamation made, that whosoever could apprehende the saied Jac Cade, should have for his pain, a M. markes, many sought for hym, but few espied hym, til one Alexander Iden. esquire of Kent found hym in a garden, and there in his defence, manfully slewe the caitife Cade." Perhaps beginning with the suggestion of the garden, Shakespeare constructs a model of the perfect husbandman in the character of Iden:
Iden. Lord, who would live turmoiled in the court
And may enjoy such quiet walks as these?
This small inheritance my father left me
Contenteth me, and worth a monarchy;
I seek not to wax great by others' [waning],
Or gather wealth, I care not with what envy.
Sufficeth that I have maintains my state
And sends the poor well pleased from my gate.

(IV.x.16-23)

Each sentence draws from traditional ethics and could be
glossed with analogous sentiments from a number of moral tracts. 12 No detail is incidental. Iden's satisfaction with the small inheritance left to him by his father would remind a London audience of the prodigal familiar in sermons and plays who never appreciated the limits of his patrimony until he exceeded them. A man like Iden, whose desires are moderate and who lives content, is a rarity indeed. Sufficient in his holdings to still care for the poor, the esquire is a model of economic virtue. Shakespeare counts on his audience to quickly recognize this, so that when Iden slays the dangerous rebel who enters the garden like a thief, not only is the action justified, but it sets a pattern for the salvation of England. Not by the radical programs of Cades, nor by the warring factions of noble families will England be rescued from civil strife, but by the solid virtues of contented and sufficient men like Iden. All this is achieved very economically by transforming the source's
"one Alexander Iden" into a figure of traditional moral stature as familiar as the sermon come Sunday. The passage strongly suggests that Shakespeare knew the language of economic ethics well enough to use it skillfully for dramatic purposes as early as 2 Henry VI. He knew moral economics.

By the time Shakespeare wrote Timon of Athens, his dramatic skills had peaked, and his treatment of economic morality had also matured. The economic and ethical themes, paradoxes, and problems raised in the work encompass all his previous treatments of the concepts and, hence, Timon is propaeduetic to an understanding of Shakespearian moral economics in general. The play raises three major questions that are at the heart of Timon's dilemma: What is a proper attitude toward wealth? What constitutes an improper use of wealth? Is wealth inherently evil?

* * * * *

The moral commentators of Shakespeare's age defined a proper attitude toward wealth as one which was suspicious of any equation between material prosperity and good fortune or God's favor. In the first act of Timon, the poet who has concocted an allegory for the edification of the noble lord raises the issue:
Sir, I have upon a high and pleasant hill
Feign'd Fortune to be thron'd. The base o' th' mount
Is rank'd with all deserts, all kinds of natures,
That labor on the bosom of this sphere
To propagate their states. Amongst them all,
Whose eyes are on this sovereign lady fix'd,
One do I personate of Lord Timon's frame,
Whom Fortune with her ivory hand wafts to her,
Whose present grace to present slaves and servants
Translates his rivals.

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.

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

To this, the painter replies that he can show a thousand
moral paintings with the same moral (I.i.89-92). That
moral, which says that fortune is fickle and trencher
friends untrue, is in the broadest way a description of
what is to occur on stage for the rest of the performance.
Timon, apparently at the mountain top in the first act,
soon discovers that his wealth has been squandered, and
down he comes. By the time he meets Apemantus late in
the play, having forsaken Athens, human company, and
the pleasures of this world, Timon has come to believe
that his former wealth only makes his suffering more
poignant (IV.iii.259-69). He would have nothing more to do with wealth, even if it were offered to him (IV.iii.278-80), and he is true to his declaration on two occasions (IV.iii.23-48; V.i.143-55).

Similarly, a couplet from John Skelton's morality play, *Magnificence* (1523?), warns against the related presumption, that wealth can be in any way relied upon: "Thus none estate lyvynge of hymselfe can be sure,/ For the Welthe of this worlde can not indure" (lines 2559-60). In variant forms, the theme in English literature is as old as "The Wanderer" and "Deor"; its expression in the moral interlude *Impacyvent Poverte* (1560) is not far removed from these medieval works in spirit: "Now flode of ryches now ebbe of poverte . . ./ The gayest of us al is but wormes meate." More typical of the Renaissance is the warning of Puritan divine, Paul Baynes, against "the halfe-penny transitory things of this present life" or Nicholas Breton's description of the wise man as one who "knows not the Pride of Prosperity, nor the misery of Adversitie, but takes the one as the Day, the other as the Night. He knows no Fortune but builds all upon providence." Thomas Crewe's catechesis has an application to *Timon of Athens*: "Q. What is the possession that is least sure in this worlde? A. Riches without
wisedome." And William Pemberton may be recalling Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590) when he cites Tamerlane and Baiazzat as primary examples of men who undergo a precipitous change of fortune. To understand why riches can be so little relied on, the moralists probe into what gives earthly wealth its value and discover it is nothing but man's opinion: "And seeing that golde and sylver is but a redde and white earth, which error and follie of man hath made precious, leave to love these transitorie treasures, and seek to gette thee a good conscience that when thou shalt stand all naked before the judgement seat of GOD, thou mayst looke up with a cheerefull countenaunce." The concept is raised in *Timon of Athens* by the Jeweller who enters to peddle a rich stone to the prodigal: "My lord, 'tis rated/ As those which sell would give" (I.i.168-69). Later in the play, Timon stands naked as a gull before the judgment seat of the audience, answerable for the false valuations he placed on material goods.

Moral philosophers were also wary of any suggestion that great wealth signified moral worth. They would have questioned whether Timon's riches were a symbol of his virtue, an instrument of it, or the thing itself. But we do not require passages from philosophy
to tell us that rich men may be bad men. The Renaissance knew this and was more concerned that a man accept his estate in life as an indication of God's will than that he be judged according to it:

Riches and Blessedness do not always kiss; He's not ever Happie that is prosperous; the acquisition of much wealth, is no End of miserie, but a change. . . . If God send me Riches I accept them thankfully, and imploy them, in my best, to his service, and mine owne; But if by Casualtie, or Affliction, or some unhappie Accident, I am driven to Indigence, or Calamitie; or else, if God have proportion'd mee such an humble Condition, Ile take no indirect course to any higher, but carrie this cheerfully, without Solitariness, or Discontent.19

The steward, Flavius, assures the audience that Timon is a worthy man: "Poor honest lord, brought low by his own heart/ Undone by goodness!" (IV.ii.37-38). But the audience must wonder how deep this virtue goes when a decline of wealth and fortune leads him to vicious, solitary misanthropy. Sir Miles Sandys writes that not riches or poverty makes for salvation, but the mind, "the mind maketh all."20 The condition of Timon's mind when confronted by the harsh realities of an ungrateful Athens, the quality and nobility of that mind, and the justification of its anger are important issues.

But not the only ones, for Timon's dilemma and his bitter attacks on mankind and human institutions, his sweeping reductions of all natural processes to thievery
question the likelihood that any man can find happiness or content in this world. Intrigued by the problem of content, moral philosophers of the Renaissance tend to support Apemantus' admonition to Timon that he never knew "the middle of humanity . . . but the extremity of both ends" (IV.iii.300-01). Yet their notion of content involves more than simply finding a middle ground between riches and poverty. What then are the essential conditions for earthly felicity and what is it in man's moral nature that prevents him from attaining enduring happiness? The Renaissance commentaries on these questions are rich, and certain of Shakespeare's comedies contribute significantly to that literature.

A proper attitude toward wealth—one that harbors content—will, according to the moral thinkers, lead inevitably to the practice of liberality, the virtue which defines proper giving. We are accustomed to think of liberality as simple generosity—the generosity Timon shows when he buys a friend from prison or endows a servant with the money he needs to marry the daughter of a thrifty old Athenian (I.i.94-151). We may even be inclined to find Timon the heart of kindness or the soul of bounty when we hear the excellence of his sentiments and watch him squander his patrimony in supporting them.
We are born to do benefits and what better or properer can we call our own than the riches of our friends? (I.ii.101-02)

Methinks, I could deal kingdoms to my friends, And ne'er be weary. (I.ii.220-21)

All to you. Lights, more lights! (I.ii.228)

But Renaissance audiences would be more critical, as Shakespeare no doubt realized.

Liberality is a sophisticated concept developed by Aristotle and Cicero and refined and emended by Christian thinkers. Some idea of the complexity of charity is apparent in the tortuous, if thorough, attempt of Robert Allen to define it:

It is a most free, or franke and liberall imparting some meete and convenient portion of that wherewith God of his goodnesse hath blessed everyman, to the maintenance and advauncement of Gods pure religion and worship, and to the mercifull relieving, comforting, and succouring of all such as we see, or for want of such, of those whom we do by credible report, understand at any time, to be in any present necessitie and need, in such manner as God himselfe would have his owne worship to be upheld and furthered, and the poore among his people in all Christian Churches, to be comfortably relieved and succoured. 21

We cannot expect Timon, a pagan, to act to foster the spread of Christian doctrine, but we might expect that a Christian audience, schooled and sermoned in the well-regulated practice of virtue, might detect shortcomings in Timon's generosity. For if Timon's bounty is excessive
and even immoral, then the possibility is that, far from being ruined by goodness, he is actually destroyed by a fault which encompasses both misanthropy and excessive liberalitas.

* * * * *

That fault is prodigality, a central moral-economic concept in Shakespeare's time. In defining prodigality and its consequences, the moral philosophers provide answers to what we have set down as the second major moral-economic question raised by Timon: What constitutes an improper use of wealth? The prodigal nature probably receives more attention in Renaissance literature and commentary than the liberal one, as is not surprising since vice is always more intriguing than virtue. But the tendency of young Elizabethans and Jacobeans, enriched by large inheritances, to fall into unthrift ways and into the clutches of merchants and usurers caused genuine distress to moralists worried about the stability of England. **Prodigality** was a national problem that provided dramatists like Philip Massinger, Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and the anonymous authors of interludes such as Liberalitas and Prodigalitie with popular subjects for the stage. The prodigal young man gulled, reduced to poverty, and providentially reformed provided the matter
for a satisfying five acts. Like the usurer, the spendthrift became a familiar stage figure with recognizable traits. These must be identified to see where Shakespeare's prodigals (Timon, Falstaff, Prince Hal, Richard II, Antonio, Bassanio) conform to the model, and where they differ. Timon, for one, spends prodigiously, but does not demonstrate the more disreputable vices commonly ascribed to his kind. Nor does he reform. Shakespeare, we may assume, had good reasons for diverging from the prodigal norm that he otherwise exploited for its typological associations.

The generosity of the prodigal suggests a paradox inherent in Christian moral economics that Timon of Athens explores. Strip a prodigal of the more heinous accouterments of his profession—the drunkenness, dicing, whoring, cruelty to the poor—fill his mouth with sentiments surcharged with goodness, and the result is a character who seems either a fool or a saint, the spokesman for the Christian ideal: "O, what a precious comfort 'tis to have so many like brothers commanding one another's fortunes! O, joy's e'en made away ere't can be born! Mine eyes cannot hold out water, methinks" (I.ii. 103-05). And when that character enjoys an affinity in allusion and reference to Christ, then there is the
suggestion that the prodigal, the outrageously liberal man, the fool who doles out gifts without quibbles over rank, appropriateness, or the well-being of his own estate, is in fact acting with admirable moral purity. Timon does not act so nobly throughout the drama. But his actions in the first part compel the thoughtful Christian or the moral philosopher to ask where exactly does bounty turn prodigal. How is a limit to be placed on goodness? When prodigality and meanness are set at odds, Thomas Acheley, in his long moral poem, The Mas-sacre of Money (1602), would have us believe that the inevitable winner is Virtue, who introduces her champion, Liberality, as:

The meane betwixt mudde-raking covetousnesse,  
And loosenesse offspring, careless diffluence,  
I have this liberall, sparing bounteousnesse,  
Free giver, yet with equall conscience.

Shakespeare, however, seems less interested in champi-oning virtue as the middle ground between extremes of vice than in investigating the possibility of an extreme of good so careless of self that it destroys his hero. The concept is a challenging one, that a man may be prodigal in goodness.

* * * * *
Finally, the moral philosophers of Shakespeare's time were interested in probing the association that gives both prodigality and covetousness their sinful natures, the relationship of wealth and evil. Is wealth inherently evil? That question, posed in tract, sermon, treatise, and interlude, provoked a variety of responses. Wealth and commercial transactions are epitomized in *Timon of Athens* by the gold Timon unearths in the fourth act and lambastes with a rhetorical outpouring that attracted the attentions of Marx. "Thou common whore of mankind," Timon calls the substance (IV.iii.43) that controls man's view of reality, turning "black white, foul fair, wrong right" (IV.iii.29). The two whores who accompany Alcibiades second Timon's opinion: "Believe 't that we'll do any thing for gold" (IV.iii.150). Appropriately, Timon grants the metal the awful power sin possesses, to damn men's souls (IV.iii.165-66). Thus, though he is a pagan, Timon speaks in the language of a venerable Christian tradition willing to equate wealth and evil without much additional qualification. But Timon's analysis of the power of gold also plumbs the underlying natural and human relationships that make its signification what it is. The substance is evil not only in itself, but for the exploitation it serves and encourages. Thereafter
Timon is led to seriously question the interdependent nature of the universe. "I'll example you with thievery," he tells the bandits who come for his gold, and then describes how the sun, the moon, and the sea thrive by exploitation. In such a creation, man must be a thief by nature.

But how does Shakespeare's England understand thievery? Charles Richardson, in A Sermon Against Oppression and Fraudulent Dealing (1615), says that theft is simply what is gotten by another man's loss. Even by this bare definition, thievery is made to include more than just the adventures of the highwaymen and cut-purses who monopolized much of the popular attention in Shakespeare's day. The fuller implications of thievery are apparent in the declaration of poet, Arthur Warren, that "Man is man's Woolfe for man would man devoure." The flatterer, the landlord, the hostler, even the prodigal are robbers of a sort, John Taylor, the quick-witted "water poet," assures us:

The Trade is scatt'red, universally
Throughout the spacious worlds Rotundity,
For all estates and functions great and small
Are for the most Thieves ingenerall.

The usurer--the epitome of the covetous man--is regarded as a usurper of man's labor, as is anyone who oppresses
the poor. A regular observation of commentators who deal with the nature of thievery is one borrowed from antiquity, but true in any age: petty theft is more likely to be punished than grand larceny. Furred gowns hide all. Timon of Athens raises the issue of thievery deliberately because it is one element that must be considered in any economic system. That the play also includes banditti who claim to be soldiers (IV.iii.398) suggests that Shakespeare wanted to investigate exploitation in the context of a real social problem.

If evil is inseparable from wealth because wealth implies covetousness, thievery, and exploitation (this is a summary of one point of view that we need not assume holds true throughout Timon of Athens or Renaissance England for that matter), if gold is necessarily corrupting, then even a noble Timon may be tainted by his riches. The grandeur of Timon's life, the flatteries it sustains, the royal pretensions it fosters must be counted against him at least as venial sins that darken an admirable character. But a stricter moral inspection suggests that they may be mortal offenses. For if Timon is a good man brought low by an exploiting, avaricious world, he is an integral part of that world,
willingly participates in it even though unaware of the full dimensions of its evil, and in fact, by encouraging the poet, painter, jeweller, and all their companions, actually creates the society by which he is ultimately undone. How far Timon can separate himself from Athens, how guiltless he is of its corruptions are questions we must ask.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I


4 For a more complete development of this point, see Jarold W. Ramsey, "Timon's Imitation of Christ," *Shakespeare Studies II* (1966), 162-73.


6 Jordan, pp. 148-49.


8 William Stafford's *Compendious or Briefe Examination of Certayne Ordinary Complaints of Divers of our Countrymen in these Our Dayes, A.D. 1581*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (London: The New Shakespeare Society, 1876), pp. 32, 75. Furnivall and others have challenged the attribution of this work to William Stafford.

9 *Compendious Examination*, pp. 24-25.


12 William Pemberton, for example, comments in *The Godly Merchant* (London: 1613), pp. 64, 66, that "He ac­counts him rich, not who abounds in his wealth, but who is godly in his desires, not who has his possessions en­larged, but who hath his affections moderated," and "Godliness with contentment is great gaine." Maxwell, in *The Golden Art* (London: 1611), p. 81, says much the same thing; men ought to be content with "little goods gotten with a good conscience, and enjoyed with a quietnesse of minde, then to purchase or possesse much with an evil conscience, with strife, toile, and trouble of spirit."


18 *A Most Rare and Wonderfull Tragedy . . . of the Life and Death of a Miserable Usurer* (London: 1584), sig. C6v.


22 Again, Ramsey's "Timon's Imitation of Christ," *Shakespeare Studies II* (1966), 162-73 provides the best explication of this point.

23 Sig. E3r.


CHAPTER II: WEALTH, CONTENT, AND LIBERALITY

From a moral-economic point of view, Timon of Athens presents a series of problems and paradoxes. From the same perspective, Shakespeare's comedies are, with the notable exception of The Merchant of Venice, much simpler. They follow conventional patterns of love and reward which do not require scholarly explication. It is not a notion peculiar to the Renaissance that love should be bounteous and free and that, given the length of a comedy to work out their problems, lovers will find economic security and live happily ever after. Most audiences willingly accept and affirm these beliefs and values even though circumstances in the real world suggest that the course of true love seldom runs so smoothly or so prosperously as on the comic stage. Implicit in the audiences' willing acceptance of a manifest untruth—that love almost inevitably brings prosperity—is the more basic perception that love itself is a form of wealth. The playwright who capitalizes on his audiences' expectations by rewarding loving couples with prosperity at the end of a drama is actually transforming an unspoken belief into a stage metaphor. Prosperity proves the very
bond of love in comedy because love is prosperity. This chapter will show first how this equation is central to the moral economy of both *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Then the more complex moral-economic patterns of *As You Like It* will be explored. In that play, the blessings of love and wealth are held in abeyance until the desire for content and a mandate for liberality establish the proper relationship of man to fellow man.¹

*I come to wive it wealthily in Padua;*  
*If wealthily, then happily in Padua.*  
(*TS* I.ii.75-76)

Thus Petruchio declares his intentions in *The Taming of the Shrew* with a directness and vigor that would be shocking, except that even the more refined suitors in Padua approach marriage as a business proposition. Petruchio outdoes them only in volume. The moral-economic pattern that develops from this declaration, however, is rather more subtle than might be expected in an early Shakespearian comedy.

The main action of *The Taming of the Shrew*—the wooing of Bianca and the domestication of Kate—is concerned, from a moral-economic perspective, with explaining the sophisticated notion that love does not
simply win wealth or guarantee prosperity; it is the thing itself. The suitors in *The Taming of the Shrew*, especially Lucentio, Hortensio, and Petruchio who land wives, display an equal willingness to use wealth to win a lady's hand (or in the case of Hortensio and his widow, to be influenced by wealth to accept marriage). Only Petruchio of the group realizes that a successful and lucrative marriage settlement must include the marriage. The other men are willing to sacrifice their wealth for their love; Petruchio insists that his wealth be his love. Once freed of the shrewishness that prevents her from participating in a marital union, Kate is able to win her husband a wager and a second dowry in the last scene, while the other wives--Bianca and the widow--cost their husbands one hundred pounds apiece. Neither Kate nor Petruchio is compromised by the economics of marriage settlements because the contract they resolve between them (after the marriage and some lumps for the lady) assures them that the real wealth of the union resides in themselves, not in caps, or gowns, or choking argosies.

Yet we must not go overboard for love. No suitor in *The Taming of the Shrew* is poor before or after the marriages; so the dilemma of love or penury never arises.
Still, we must be aware that the age, more than our own, expected some balance between the ardor of a couple and its ability to support itself. John Heywood's *Proverbs and Epigrams* (1562), a marriage tale constructed from several hundred commonplaces and wise sayings, treats this problem specifically. A young man faced with the choice between marrying "a mayde of flowryng age" who has rich friends but no money herself, and a rich but ugly old widow, finally decides through the advice of a friend that neither money alone nor love alone is enough for a marriage:

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Onely for love, or onely for good,
Or onely for both I wed not, by my hood.
Thus no one thing onely, though one thing chiefly
Shall woo me to wed now: for now I espy,
Although the chiefe one thing in wedding be love,
Yet must mo things ioyne, as all in one maie move.
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Poor Kate, in the opening scenes of the play, has only her father's wealth to recommend her, and even that is not enough to hide her wicked disposition. Says Gremio: "Think'st thou, Hortensio, though her father be very rich, any man is so very a fool to be married to hell?" (I.i.123-25). Moral commentators would agree with Gremio that no amount of money can substitute for love and mutual agreement in marriage. Their concept of the ideal wife is shaped by the Christian-Pauline tradition which expected a woman to submit willingly to the
authority of her husband. Francis Dillingham, scholar and divine, for example, in his *Christian Oeconomy or Household Government* (1609), urges men to find themselves meek wives "mild, tractable, courteous, soft, and gentle," for contentious women, according to Proverbs 27.15, are like "a continuall dropping in the day of raine." Alex Niccholes is even less kind to women like Kate. In his *A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving* (1615), he declares it better to be cast into the sea and into the belly of a whale than to live "with such a Leviathan of the Land as is a furious woman." But the same Dillingham, after condemning those men who ignore the virtues of a woman "to choose wives as Chapmen sell their wares, with *Quantum dabitis,*" observes in the spirit of Petruchio that marriage is an adventure, "for whosoever marries . . . adventures his peace, his freedom, his liberty, his body; yea, and sometimes his soul too." Marriage involves risk, and those who seek to secure themselves against possible losses by careful and costly settlements are still apt to lose their wagers.

Although he is quite frankly interested in gaining wealth by marriage, Petruchio is also willing to woo the intractable, wild Kate because he is capable of appreciating qualities that the less vigorous beaus
ignore or do not consider virtues at all. Kate and
Petruchio are kindred spirits, more compatible than
ey they seem at first. Again, Niccholes makes the pertinent
observation that "every good woman, makes not for every
man a good wife, no otherwise then some one good dish
digesteth with every stomacke: therefore as for thy Trade
thou wilt choose a fit servant, for thy stomacke a fit
diet, for the body fit cloathing, so for thy inseperable,
daily, nightly society, choose a fit companion." (It
is worth noting that Petruchio "tames" Kate's willfulness
over issues of servants, diet, and clothing to make her a
fit companion.) But Petruchio does not ignore the finan-
cial side of his union with Baptista's daughter. In fact,
the marriage settlement is his first concern. Before
Petruchio even sees Kate, he has considered the business:

Signior Baptista, my business asketh haste,
And every day I cannot come to woo.
You knew my father well, and in him me,
Left solely heir to all his lands and goods,
Which I have bettered rather than decreas'd.
Then tell me, if I get your daughter's love,
What dowry shall I have with her to wife?
(II.i.114-20)

The language is terse and blunt. Seven lines later,
without haggling or doubt, the marriage contract is
complete. Two points tell in Petruchio's favor. The
first is his declaration (which we have no reason to
doubt) that he has increased his patrimony. Not many
young wooers on the Elizabethan stage can make this claim, a clear signal that despite his mad antics and boisterous manner, Petruchio is a shrewd and careful man. The second is the contrast Petruchio's short declaration of intentions makes with the bidding of Gremio and Tranio for the hand of Bianca only two hundred lines later in the same scene. In this "combat of wealth", (II.i.331-97), Bianca becomes little more than a commodity to be traded to the man who can promise Baptista the highest pile of houses, plate, tents, oxen, farms, rents, argosies, galleys, and galliasses. Though he takes a shrew, Petruchio has confidently gained. The other suitors, by comparison, seem fools indeed as they pledge away their wealth as fast as they can speak for the love of a woman who may prove less desirable than she seems.

In further contrast to suitors willing to bankrupt themselves for love, Petruchio, after his wedding, adds his wife to his hoard of goods, and in language that takes no consideration of a woman's delicacy:

I will be master of what is my own.
She is my goods, my chattels, she is my house,
My household stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ox, my ass, my any thing.

(III.ii.229-31)

Hardly a verse to stuff a Valentine, but a reasonable interpretation of moral-economic doctrine nonetheless. When Petruchio claims Kate as his property, he asserts
a commonplace that is not intended to demean her: a man's wealth, family, and successful husbandry depend on the goodness of his wife. In The Good and the Badde (1616), Nicholas Breton makes the economic point even more explicit in his character of a good wife: "A Good Wife is a world of wealth. . . . She is a care of necessity, and a course of thrift, a book of Huswifery, and a mirror of modestie." And, as a madcap confirmation of what proves to be genuine concern for husbandry, Petruchio on two occasions—his wedding day and his return to Kate's father's home—eschews fine garments for ruder trappings:

For 'tis the mind that makes the body rich;  
And as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds,  
So honor peereth in the meanest habit.  

(IV.iii.172-74)

By this insistence on laying claim to his wife as property and on enforcing a show of poverty, Petruchio seems to be trying to strip away certain romantic illusions that dwell in the accouterments of wealth. If there is wealth in a marriage, it is in the relationship of man and wife, not in how they appear to the world. Petruchio, in effect, reverses the elements of numerous folk tales and stories in which a young man marries an apparently poor girl because of her virtue only to discover that she is wealthy. He thus wins both love and wealth. Petruchio starts with a wealthy woman of few apparent
graces and reduces her to a condition of poverty, without food, decent clothes, or even sleep, all to uncover the good nature within her. He too wins love and riches.

The wager that brings The Taming of the Shrew to a close provides Petruchio with the opportunity to prove his concept of marriage. "I think thou hast the veriest shrew of all" Baptista observes (V.ii.64), reflecting the Paduan opinion of Petruchio's lot. The test of obedience follows, and while Lucentio and Hortensio lose their hundred crowns, Petruchio wins not only the wager and a second dowry from Baptista, but more importantly, the peace, love, quiet life, and companionship surely denied to the other men. In a play moved by promises of riches, contracts, and marriage settlements, well-to-do fathers, and prodigal sons bidding like merchants for wifely commodities that seem sure gain, only Petruchio takes the risk of adventuring for the love and obedience of a woman he values more than wealth. "'Twas I won the wager, though you hit the white," Petruchio observes to Lucentio. And there's none to disagree.

* * * * *

In discussing imagery in The Merry Wives of Windsor, the editor of the New Arden edition of the play, H. J. Oliver, finds it unusual that Shakespeare should
use commercial images in the comedy. Says Oliver: "The legal and financial group of images] is not so easily explicable [as other image clusters]: that love and marriage are so often seen as arrangements to be made formally is only a partial explanation." Oliver notes that Falstaff falls in love only to fill his purse, and that there is a connection between the commercial and mercantile images of the work. But he ignores the simple moral-economic pattern by which Shakespeare connects the ideas in a way that makes his use of legal and financial imagery far from mysterious. The images support a plot that consistently denies success in love to those who think wealth can influence it.

Falstaff and Ford are the worst offenders against love in The Merry Wives and, in an interchange, share the baldest statements in the play on the power of money:

Ford. ... if money go before, all ways do lie open.
Fal. Money is a good soldier, sir, and will on. (II.i.168-70)

This attitude and belief, familiar to any age, is a Renaissance commonplace applicable to the conquest of kingdoms and women:

Magnificence. Why, wyl a maystres be wonne for money and for golde?
Courtly Abusyon. Why, was not for money Troy both bought and solde?

Full many a stronge cyte and towne hath ben wonne
By the meanes of money without ony gonne.
A maystres, I tell you, is but a small thynge;
A goodly rybon, or a golde rynge
May wynne with a sawte the fortresse of the holde.  

Or, if Courtly Abusyon in Skelton's *Magnyfycence* is too windy, the point is demonstrated equally well by the more direct advice of Sir Toby Belch, happy to fleece Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who is in love with Olivia: "Send for money, knight; if thou hast her not i' th' end, call me cut" (*TN* II.iii.186-87).

Falstaff, of course, is the chief of those in *The Merry Wives* ready to make love serve at Lady Pecunia's temple. The fat knight, low on funds, decides to foist his ample presence onto what he imagines are the panting affections of both Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page: "I will be cheaters to them both, and they shall be exchequers to me" (I.iii.69-71). But Falstaff is not the only traitor to love. Francis, Mrs. Ford's jealous husband, is as much a villain. Believing that his wife's chastity is assailable and hoping to trap her in an indiscretion, Ford, in the guise of Brook, delivers to Sir John what he believes is the essential engine of the attack: "There is money, spend it, spend it; spend more, spend all I have" (II.ii.231-33). Then there is Mrs. Page's husband, George, who though not plagued with jealousy, has another fault: he is eager to marry off his daughter, Anne, to
Slender, a country simpleton in possession of a decent income. Mrs. Page will have no part of the match because she has already set her sights on an equally wealthy French physician, Caius. This brace of wooers, the one "well-landed" and the other "well-money'd," is acceptable to Anne's parents primarily for what it brings to the marriage. A third champion for the lady's hand, Fenton, is at first and by his own admission intrigued by what he can get out of it. And all these separate interests, Falstaff and Fenton, the Pages and Mr. Ford, are served by various go-betweens, most notably Mistress Quickly and the Host of the Garter, none of whom is averse to the clank of silver.

Segregating the financial considerations of the play in this manner from the rich comic textures of Windsor distorts *The Merry Wives* unfairly. We are left with a society of heartless money-grubbers and conscienceless panders. Within the play, however, the characters' habits of personality and language destroy whatever threats to the comic action their motives may suggest. Even with the help of Justice Shallow and the support of Mrs. Page, the well-landed Slender is too timid, too boorish, to win Anne. Excitable Doctor Caius does not even get an opportunity to propose.
Still, the financial underpinnings of the work cannot be dismissed as mere convention in an age of contracted marriages. As conventions, these commercial arrangements have an interest of their own. More importantly, they represent the difficulties that must be overcome in *The Merry Wives* before a comic resolution can be achieved. Falstaff and Ford's conspiracy must be uncovered and Anne must find true love. Both of these events require the defeat of money by love, and both these conclusions are confidently anticipated by an audience familiar with the conventions of comedy. The moral-economic ethics of the situation supports the design that makes a triumphant fifth act possible and welcome.

In the first act, Falstaff finds himself in financial difficulties that require immediate action and force him to act in a manner to which he is not accustomed. In I.iii., the knight plays a series of economic roles that put him at a disadvantage and eventually set him up for the tricks of the conniving women who undo him. With expenses running ten pounds a week, Sir John is forced to pare down his retinue and dismiss Bardolph, to find additional sources of income, and most uncharacteristically, to practice thrift. Prodigal by nature and happiest that way, he is explicitly
associated with the Prodigal Son story (IV.v.6-8); but even lacking this precise identification, we would recognize his character. His very size, despite a disclaiming pun, suggests the luxury of his manner: "Indeed I am in the waist two yards about, but I am now about no waste" (I.iii.41-43). Perhaps bothered by a sense of guilt, Falstaff registers surprise when his economic fortunes turn brighter: "Wilt thou, after the expense of so much money, be now a gainer?" (II.ii.140-41). These are the words of a man who has already spent more than he has fair claim to. But greed does not shame Falstaff. He borrows the language of romance and adventure to plot the pillage of Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford:

She bears the purse too;  
She is a region in Guiana, all gold and bounty.  
They shall be my East and West Indies and  
I will trade to them both.¹⁰ (I.iii.68-72)

Yet Falstaff is more than just a prodigal and disreputable merchant-adventurer. He is also a thief, debtor, and usurer. When he dismisses Bardolph from his service, Falstaff notes that his objection to the man is not that he is a thief, but that he is a bad one (I.iii.24-26). Unfortunately, the awesome confidence the knight has in his own ability is belied by his lack of subtlety, as for example, when he explains his clever plan to bilk Mr. Ford to a disguised Mr. Ford: "I will use her
[Mrs. Ford] as the key of the cuckoldy rogue's coffer, and there's my harvest-home" (II.ii.273-75). With good reason, then, the master thief bridles at the mention of debtor's prison (III.iii.77-79). As if to round out his commercial career, Falstaff also manages a remark that puts him in the tribe of money-lenders. Replying to Pistol's angry accusation that, though unwilling to lend money now, he had earlier shared in the profits of a theft, Falstaff replies: "Reason, you rogue, reason; think'st thou I'll endanger my soul gratis?" (II.ii.15-16). These words borrow the logic of the usurer against free lending, and not incidentally, repeat the indictment of many preachers against the money-lender, that taking interest endangers the welfare of the soul.

Paired with Falstaff is Fenton, the third contestant for the hand of Anne Page. Like Falstaff, Fenton is an outsider to Windsor, and associated with the dissoluteness of court life. Mr. Page typifies the suspicions of the town:

The gentleman is of no having. He kept with the wild Prince and Poins; he is of too high a region, he knows too much. No, he shall not knit a knot in his fortunes with the finger of my substance. If he take her[Anne], let him take her simply. The wealth I have waits on my consent, and my consent goes not that way. (III.ii.71-78)

And, by Fenton's own admission, the elder Page's perceptions are not entirely wrong. The wooer admits to
Anne that he loved the father's wealth before the daughter, and—like Falstaff—he has spent more than he earns (III. iv.1-8). But fortune sides with Fenton, and his star rises while the knight's steadily declines.

What determines this course of events and ultimately the happy outcome is the astuteness of the important women of the play. Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford, suspecting Falstaff's duplicity even before he can set his schemes into motion, work to purge "the spirit of wantonness" from him (IV.ii.208). Mistress Quickly vouches for the economy of both ladies when she notes that not twenty angels nor hoards of wealth can tempt their virtue (II. ii.59-78). It is Falstaff who plays the strumpet's game. Speaking to himself, he declares "I'll make more of thy old body than I have done. Will they yet look after thee? . . . Good body, I thank thee" (II.ii.138-42). But Falstaff has misread the ladies grossly, one of whom declares that even in the dispensation of her mirth to Falsaff she has been frugal (II.i.27-28). The knight's humiliation ensues.

Fenton, on the other hand, succeeds because the woman he desires is perceptive enough to reject false suitors and risk the disfavor of her parents in order to secure her true love. We do not hear much from Anne, but
what she does say about her two wealthy suitors reveals a healthy sense of the priorities of love. Though kind to Master Slender, Anne, in an aside, correctly perceives the motive behind the proposed match in assessing him:

This is my father's choice.
O, what a world of wild ill-favor'd faults
Looks handsome in three hundred pounds a year!
(III.iv.31-33)

She is even more direct about her mother's favorite, Doctor Caius, whose rambunctious habits provoke a more stirring rebuttal to the thought of marrying him: "Alas, I had rather be set quick i' the earth,/ And bowl'd to death with turnips!" (III.iv.86-87). This lady of good gifts can be so outspoken because, wise enough to question even Fenton about the motives for his love, she has already drawn from him the unalloyed metal of his feelings, both past and present:

Albeit I will confess thy father's wealth
Was the first motive that I woo'd thee, Anne;
Yet wooing thee, I found thee of more value
Than stamps of gold, or sums in sealed bags;
And 'tis the very riches of thyself
That now I aim at. (III.iv.13-18)

Anne recognizes the genuine item, and throws her hand into the plot to deceive her parents, if necessary, to marry the man who loves her.

To effect this end, Fenton must buy the services of the host of the Garter to procure a vicar for the midnight marriage:
Assist me in my purpose,
And (as I am a gentleman) I'll give thee
A hundred pound in gold more than your loss.
(IV.vi.3-5)

We are reminded of the earlier collusion of Falstaff and that gentleman who has spent much, Mr. Brook-Ford, also involving money, and also entailing the winning of a lady's affections. But the scenes are in deliberate contrast. Fenton can use money to win love because love, not money, is his object. Falstaff and Mr. Brook are dirtied by their transaction, which was designed on one side to plunder Mr. Ford and on the other to destroy the reputation of Mrs. Ford.

Since *The Merry Wives* is a comedy and the ladies are too clever for him, Falstaff fails three times to achieve his conquest of Mrs. Ford. He persists, despite a rising gradient of humiliation, because of the association that makes Pecunia a lady: "Pecunia [is given] the title of a Woman . . . because (as Women are) shee is lov'd of men." Poor Sir John is the victim of both lust and lucre. The final act that sees him pinched and seared in a ring of fairies also witnesses the triumph of Fenton (and love) over deception, money, and parental authority. The successful husband returns to Windsor Park with his new bride and declares, somewhat self-righteously, to the Pages that he has saved their
daughter from shameful, forced marriages. Mr. Ford, understanding that his jealousy has been unfaithfulness to a devoted wife, has learned a lesson about love and can offer a mediating summary of all that has happened:

Stand not amaz'd; here is no remedy.
In love, the heavens themselves do guide the state;
Money buys lands, and wives are sold by fate.

(V.v.231-33)

It is less a moral than a statement of the principles that have helped guide the action of the play to a defeat of Falstaff's commercialization of love. Fenton and Anne find their way to the altar because money buys lands, not love.

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As You Like It is not ordinarily regarded as an "economic" play. True, it can claim the sort of love-wealth patterns we have discussed in The Taming of the Shrew and The Merry Wives: its four pairs of lovers, despite great obstacles, find their way unfailingly to Hymen's celebration and, only moments after tying their respective knots, receive the inevitable rewards of fortune to compensate the trials of amour. But except in some occasional scenes in the first two acts, what happens in As You Like It does not seem to be controlled or influenced by commercial or economic dislocations the way Shylock's bond, for example, dominates The Merchant
of Venice. Like the marriage comedies already considered, 
As You Like It makes use of economic issues and ideas in 
the course of its action without basing its structure on 
them. Yet, while long stretches of the play seem uncon­ 
cerned with man's commercial ties, it would be wrong to 
minimize the seriousness of Shakespeare's inquiry into 
moral-economic ideas when they do appear in As You Like 
It. Far more than just assuring us that love will be 
rewarded with riches, As You Like It inquires into the 
nature of wealth, and into the nature of relationships 
not based on carnal appeal in an effort to decide how, 
in fact, men and women can live and be content. 

As You Like It opens in a moral-economic disaster 
area plagued by betrayed patrimony, ingratitude, usurpa­ 
tion, and the seizure of lands. The oppressed in the 
opening scenes include Orlando, Adam, Rosalind, the old 
Duke, Celia, and Corin. With the exception of the last 
named, who already dwells in the Forest of Arden, all the 
characters are forced by circumstances to flee the courtly 
"inland" society, where they are outsiders burdened with 
a sense of economic deprivation, to seek out safety and 
content in another sort of world. In Arden, they assemble 
by chance and necessity and, there, lay the foundations 
of that better dukedom none dared do more than hope for
in the first two acts.

Orlando flees the dukedom to escape the murderous plans of his brother, Oliver. Deprived of a gentle upbringing, the youth asks his brother "what prodigal portion [he has] spent that [he] should come to such penury" (I.ii.37-39). In this condition he is melancholy and resigned to whatever fate the rib-cracking wrestler, Charles, can deal him (I.ii.187-93). The imperative to leave his brother's roof is, then, not entirely unwelcome. But Orlando faces an immediate economic dilemma. Leave Oliver's house, and he must choose between beggary and thievery. Addressing Adam, he asks:

What, wouldst thou have me go and beg my food?  
Or with a base and boist'rous sword enforce  
A thievish living on the road?  
This must I do, or know not what to do;  
Yet this I will not do, do how I can.  

(II.iii.31-55)

He will face a comparable problem later in the play, but for the time being, Adam, the victim of Oliver's ingratitude (I.ii.82-84) prevents the penniless young man from making a choice between his life and his honor by offering him five hundred crowns. They depart the dukedom together, young and old, mutually oppressed, forsaking the place where, for the time being, virtue seems to be hated and service unrewarded.
Rosalind shares Orlando's sense of deprivation while living under the rule of the usurper. Although protected and loved by her cousin, Celia (for whose benefit Frederick ultimately decides to oust the former duke's daughter from his principality), Rosalind is nonetheless aware that she is the victim of fortune and circumstances, and that her penury—like Orlando's—is not of her own doing:

Cel. Let us sit and mock the good huswife
Fortune from her wheel, that her gifts may henceforth be bestow'd equally.
Ros. I would we could do so; for her benefits are mightily misplaced, and the bountiful blind woman doth most mistake in her gifts to women.
(I.ii.31-36)

The young woman's poverty and fall from fortune is most apparent when, in the face of Frederick's ingracious treatment of Orlando—one as abused by the world as she—Rosalind is powerless to offer more comfort than a chain. "Wear this for me," she says, "one out of suits with Fortune,/ That could give more but that her hand lacks means" (I.ii.246-47). Soon after she shares two additional likenesses with Orlando. Her life is threatened if she remains in the dukedom and she is followed into her exile by a loving "servant"—Celia.

The dukedom is troubled by the plots and suspicions of the man who rules over it. Frederick, who maintains his power by the seizure of lands and revenues
(I.i.98-104), resembles Oliver in his distrust of the good and the virtuous. But while the villains share a common antipathy to virtue, it is not long before the bigger spider is preying upon the lesser, the Duke seizing Oliver's property on suspicions of treachery (III.i.). Frederick's habits soon have men fleeing his money-grubbing, insecure, and corrupt "inland" court, where worthy men and women are reduced to impotent beggary, to seek the forest sovereignty of the exiled Duke Senior, where lords and gentlemen "live like the old Robin Hood of England," in a dignified poverty.

Thus the first two acts of As You Like It set up a dichotomy between Frederick's world and a new society with its nucleus in the parallel relationships of Rosalind-Celia and Orlando-Adam. In these early scenes, the protagonists lack fortune in both senses of the word, and have it owed to them. They are beggars where they should be kings. But the reversal of values which fortune permits does not apply to assessments of virtue and, hence, because Orlando and Rosalind are good, they inspire love and loyalty.

Leaving Frederick's dukedom is, as Celia declares, a journey to liberty. Rosalind and Celia depart "in content"; Orlando and Adam resolve to seek "some settled low content." The repetition of the word is probably not
incidental. For content is precisely what is denied to Rosalind and Orlando in the version of civilization over which Frederick and Oliver preside. A life under such oppression must lead to the melancholy that both characters experience. To find happiness, they must break away from the frustration of a world that holds out expectations no circumstances can fulfill and build another where happiness waits upon desert and content need not depend on fortune.

The condition of content and how it is achieved receives the attention of many moral commentators in the Renaissance. A sermon, "The Way to Content," preached by John Gore on May 26, 1634, sums up the essential teachings of the divines of the age. The text is Philip. 4.11: "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."¹³ Gore equates perfect content with self-sufficiency, but notes that only God possesses that quality of self-knowledge. Men are often divorced from the knowledge of themselves, without which content is impossible, by drunkenness, by madness, and by Satan's villainage. No wicked man can be satisfied; indeed, "a wicked man's heart is like the sea, which when the winds are layed, and there is no outward thing to trouble it, it still workes and foames, and troubles it selfe with its own motion."¹⁴ Gore's analysis brings to mind the
paranoia of Frederick: the gnawing fears and suspicions that drive his niece and daughter from his realm. If we accept the notion that Frederick's behavior in the first acts is prompted by an inner discontent, then his ultimate conversion and acceptance of a monastic retirement do not seem so strange, even though the transformation occurs with great speed. Like the other displaced people of the play, Frederick must first leave his world to find sufficiency within himself.

From questions of self-sufficiency, Gore brings the matter of content down to a more practical, more grossly economic level. Content, he assures his congregation, is to be found between the extremes of riches and poverty. Neither a king nor a beggar can be truly happy. The poor are haunted by famine and the manifest wrongs and injuries done to them by the rich. They endure a severe trial of faith that threatens their belief in Providence. The seeming-happy rich man, on the other hand, faces different dangers. Riches clog the soul, stir desire to perpetual discontent, corrupt a man's conscience, and vex his spirit. Damnation is the companion of his wealth. The mean then, and what it implies, is the essential condition of content as Gore understands it, and in describing the concept of a moderate happiness, he is at his most perceptive:
You have heard the two extreames of this vertue
(Poverty and Riches) now the meane is that where true
contentment rests, that is, when God fits a man with
such an estate as is most meete, and most convenient
for him (feed me with food convenient for me, saith
Agur) when a mans heart and his estate doe convenire,
doe meete and agree and comply in one, ther's the
contentment that my text speaks of: when God fashioneth
a mans heart to his means . . . as a sute of clo^thes
is fitted to a mans body, so doth God fashion a good
mans heart to his estate, and make it suitable, fit
and convenient for him.15

So a man's happiness is entwined with his estate and his
self-knowledge, with how his mind is fixed in conjunction
with his material well-being. Gore's principle has im­
lications for comedy, where characters grow into self-
knowledge and wealth, and for tragedy, where men are
often not content or secure in their estates in life. In
As You Like It, the diminished positions of the protag­
onists do not fit with the nobility of their minds, and
the result is melancholy. But the discontent of Orlando
and Rosalind is not unhealthy since it prompts them to
seek a new life that will redefine their very natures and
their definition of happiness.

In the relationship of mind and estate, however,
estate is a condition subject to change, very often by
powers beyond individual control. Preachers were most
comfortable attributing these changes of fortune to
Providence and recommending acquiescence to all such mani­
festations of divine will. A man should be happy, or at
least uncomplaining, with whatever fruits of material life are offered or denied to him, for there is design even in poverty. Henry Mason, an Anglican divine, explains that "if he [God] send us want and poverty, and losses in our estates and dealings, it is because he foreseeeth that wealth would breede us more woe, then it is worth." Writers on the subject of content are generally aware that losses are often more difficult to accept gracefully than hereditary or habitual indigence. They insist simply that poverty be accepted, no matter how one comes to it; "If God send me Riches I accept them thankfully," Humphrey Sydenham writes, but if driven to indigence, "Ile take no direct course to any higher[estate], but carrie this cheerfully."  

The efforts of the moralists and preachers to adjust the minds of men to their divinely ordained careers are intended most often to assure the poor that their condition is bearable. (The wealthy, presumably, need no such bolstering.) Since content is not dependent on the size of one's holdings, but on one's attitude toward them, poverty and content are not necessarily inimicable, but even sometimes good friends:

Most happy who with little is content
That though he want, yet never doth complain;
Ne wisheth more his sorrow to augment,
Knowing that he by heaping wealth doth gaine,
Nothing but care, vexation, and paine."
The theme that riches do not bring happiness or content is so often the topic of sermons and moral treatises that it provokes a moderate scorn in less pious literature. John Heywood's collection of proverbs includes an epigram that exactly spots the crux in an old commonplace, "Enough is as good as a feast:"

As good ynough as a feast,  
This for a truth say most and least,  
But what ynough is iustly ment,  
And with enough to be content,  
Those are two pointes that fewe or none,  
Can learne to know, and stande upon.19

More blunt is Arthur Warren in two poems on the condition of poverty, "The Poor Mans Passions" and "Poverties Patience" (1605). Writing while imprisoned for debt, Warren, too bitter to accept the standard emollients and find content in his bleak situation, registers his frank resentment of the comforts enjoyed by the rich. He knows they have food when he is hungry; their feet are covered when he walks barefoot in the snow: "The winters frost nips not the Rich with colde,/ Their purse prevention gainst all plagues procures." His are the sharp words of a man clear-sighted enough to recognize how the world goes:

For in wealth consists worlds Nobility,  
Honour, Preferment, frindship, love and all,  
Birth, Learning, Vertue is but Beggary,  
Least hap it have to find the golden ball:  
Who is the Lord, but he, that hath the luck:  
Who is the man, but he, that hath the muck?20
Warren does reflect tradition in the poem when he imagines a time when the condition of all men was equal. In this golden age, before "tymes corruption private profit saw," goods were held in common. The notion of a golden world is an essential one to understanding content and Shakespeare's depiction of the Duke's woodland court. Charles the "wrestler" alludes to this edenic time when he observes that young men are flocking to Duke Senior's forest realm, to Arden, where they "fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world" (I.i.118-19). Thomas Acheley describes this era of the world's pre-history in some detail in The Massacre of Money (1602). According to Acheley, before the dawn of the silver age when the seasons began and sailing and agriculture were invented, before the bronze age with its wars, and before the follies of treason and covetousness that came with the iron age, mankind enjoyed perfect happiness in a world newly shaped from chaos by God. This Eden was characterized by what it lacked; there were no nations, no industry, no drink, or riot, or rape: "Men fed on hippes and hawes, curnels and cherries,/ Sloes, peares, and bulleis, apples, nuttes, and berries." Chiefly, there was content, "exceeding riches, glory, gold, or iems," in Acheley's version of the tale. Robert Anton's slightly later rendition of this golden
time, more particular in drawing contrasts between the
good old days and Renaissance England, matches the spirit
of Duke Senior's declaration that life in Arden is "more
sweete/ Than that of painted pomp" (II.i.2-3). Writes
Anton of the golden age in the Satyr of Saturne (1616):

> Arts did then despise
> The secular habits of great vanities:
> Liv'd richly reverent, in poor simple weeds,
> Without Monasticke hoods, did Saint-like deeds;
> Had neither pride, to envie, whom doth rise,
> Nor patron, to bestow a benefice:
> And did supply a poor nature with poore clothes,
> Dranke when a thirst, and eate when hunger growes.

The aversion to patronage and servitude and the acceptance
of rude, natural functions (thirst, hunger) shown in this
passage parallel Duke Senior's similar regard for the icy
wind: "This is no flattery: they are counsellors/ That
feelingly persuade me what I am" (II.i.10-11). And self-
knowledge, recalling John Gore, is the first condition of
content.

Thus an age—or a society—that breeds happiness
is most likely to be a simple one that confronts man with
what he is by eliminating the meaningless distractions of
wealth, pomp, and position. It is also a world separated
from the present by time and space. Poet and divine,
Thomas Drant observes that "the mallice, & curiositie of
new time hath driven awaye the simplicitie of old tymes"
before declaring, "Let old thynges prevayle." In As
You Like It, the oppression of the first scenes is heightened by timely reminders of a better past, not so distant as the golden age, but in the same relationship of happy then and unfortunate now. In Duke Senior's court, old things once again prevail. The forest gathering of loyal men is clearly intended by Shakespeare to embody certain principles of content familiar to the Renaissance audience.

The pastoral elements add a further dimension to the play's interest in the happy life. If the golden world represents what a simpler, more contented society would be like, the agricultural life is a particular version of that contentment. The angry Arthur Warren finds that "A little cottage, common cloth, short meales,/ Is safest Seate, best Rayment, surest health." The happy, charitable man enjoys just such a life of rural bliss according to a poem by Joshua Sylvester:

His field, with Corne, abundant crop shall cover,
His Vines with Grapes, his Hedge with Roses over;
His Downes with Sheepe, his Dayery-grounds with Neat:
His Mount with Kids,

Content and health (the best of earthly blisse)
Shall evermore remaine with him, and his.

More analytical and down-to-earth about the virtues of rural life is the aggressive plowman of John Rastell's dialogue-debate, Of Gentylnes and Nobyltye (1523?). The plowman argues that his estate is superior to that of a knight or a merchant because it is the most
self-sufficient. In this self-sufficiency, the plowman takes his merriment:

But these covetous and ambicious wretches—
They set there myndys in honoure and ryches,
So much that they be never content;
So they lyf ever in payn and torment.
But a man that can this meanys fynd
To have fode and cloth and a mery mynde
And to desyre no more than is nedefull—
That is in this worlde the lyf most joyfull. 28

The representative of pastoral content in *As You Like It* is the shepherd, Corin. Though a rude country fellow, Corin—like Rastell's plowman—is able to hold his own in debate with a sophisticated wit like Touchstone because the premises of his existence are firm and secure. But Corin's content is emphatically no idyll. When we first meet him (II.iv.), he is one of the oppressed of the play, with a master of "churlish disposition." And he knows that money and means are friends as good to have as content (III.ii.24-26). But despite these brushes with life's unpleasant side and the bantering gibes of rubber-mouthed Touchstone, Corin manages to insert a beautiful justification of his life into his dialogue with the clown:

I am a true laborer: I earn that I eat,
get that I wear, owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness, glad of other men's good, content with my harm, and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck. (III.ii.73-77)
It is a set piece, a gathering of familiar images and teachings that places Corin as firmly in a moral-economic tradition as the images of good husbandry do for Iden in the passage from 2 Henry VI discussed in the previous chapter. The Renaissance audience would hear echoes of sermons and treatises on content in Corin's words that reinforce the notion that Arden can be a golden world, infinitely preferable to a corrupt dukedom. An analogous passage from a series of verse meditations by Robert Aylett, The Brides Ornaments (1625), demonstrates how closely Corin's words echo traditional matter.

Aylett's subject in the meditation is temperance:

In this estate I no man doe envie,
I reape with joy the crop, that I have sowne,
Without least care but onely to attend it,
The Lambes I weane, are daily greater growne:
What have I but to praise him that doth send it?
And with a cheerefull heart unto the poore to lend it.

The circle from city to forest, dukedom to Arden, duke to shepherd is closed when both representatives of the covetous and ambitious city, Oliver and Duke Frederick, retire to simpler ways of life away from the world (V.iv. 180-82), and Oliver bestows all his goods on his brother, content to "live and die a shepherd" (V.ii.11-12). The suddenness of both conversions is perhaps best explained by plot requirements and the need to tie loose ends. But
within the larger moral-economic pattern of the drama, such transformations are both desirable and plausible. Neither Oliver nor Frederick was content in his estate. Both persecuted virtue for reasons they did not understand. When offered the chance of happiness, they grab it. It is true that with all his lands newly restored, Oliver may return inland at the end of the play. But it will be as a different man. For if we follow the logic implied in the concept of content, happiness does not reside in being a shepherd in Arden, but in being a man who recognizes the simplicity of any good life in the court or in the forest, who knows the pleasures of self-sufficiency, who knows himself. Accepting a shepherd's life, in this play and in a moral-economic frame, means considerably more than grazing a flock of sheep.

In any case, the return inland of all the protagonists of As You Like It (except Jaques) is prophesied in the return of lands and revenues that follows the marriages (V.iv.170-75), a reimbursement made possible by Frederick's retirement. We can be confident that the restored dukedom will shine with the virtues championed by Duke Senior in his woodland court. Le Beau's hope of meeting Orlando "in a better world than this" seems destined for fulfillment (I.ii.284). But the ultimate success of a new society will depend on
how closely the behavior of its individuals approximates the ideals of a golden age. The forest court must, therefore, provide a paradigm of human relationships if it is to espouse a workable ideal. That model is suggested in a moving episode—the entrance of Orlando and Adam into Duke Senior's camp—that depicts the power of liberality to soothe human misery.

The concept of liberality familiar to Renaissance England was derived from an amalgam of Christian and Classical sources. Aristotle defines the virtue in the *Ethics*. The Old and New Testaments provide an ample number of texts to illuminate the proper relationship of man's wealth and man. Using these two basic sources and a host of others, the Elizabethan-Jacobean moral philosopher or homilist constructed a model of conduct based on tradition, but cognizant of his age's peculiarities. Robert Allen's *Treatise of Christian Beneficence* (1600), for example, concludes with a "florilegie" of appropriate sources and aphorisms that runs forty pages.

Because writers were able to draw from a variety of early thinkers, we cannot expect the Renaissance to produce catechetical consistency in defining liberality. Where definitions differ, they do not so much conflict as illuminate different facets of the same jewel. Robert Allen's lengthy description of liberality has
been cited in the first chapter. Thomas Cooper's version is similar, but places greater emphasis on the ability of an individual to generate the wealth that must be distributed. To Cooper, giving is "an imparting of what the Lord hath given us, as either cast upon us extraordinarily by his providence, or obtayned by ordinary meanes of our labour and industry." The French Academie adds the qualification that liberality "consisteth not in wasting much wealth, but in succouring the afflicted willingly, and in helping everie one according to abilitie." The Aristotelean median between prodigality and covetousness, the virtue is closely related to others, especially magnificence:

Bountie, Beneficence, Benignitie
In name though divers, one in substance be,
Benevolence and Liberalitie
Make actions, and affections agree.

According to Robert Allen, man most nearly approximates the actions of God when he is liberal. To Nicholas Haward, the action is not so important as the state of a benefactor's mind, where the goodness of a gift is truly interpreted. The action of giving is found to parallel the generosity of nature, the bounty of the sun, moon, trees, and earth. By the clouds giving rain, the cows milk, the birds feathers, man is taught how to act liberally. Consequently, a good society, one that is
godly and in harmony with nature, gives freely and charitably as a sign of its election. For, in the belief of the most generous of commentators, all spare goods and money belong rightfully to the poor.

But giving is never to be haphazard. The moral philosophers, once confident that they have explained the nature of liberalitas, usually proceed to define precisely how the virtue is to be administered. The second chapter of Allen's treatise on beneficence, "What Graces or Vertues are requisite to the right maner of Giving," sets down a number of conditions on gift and giver, among them that a benefit must be free, not impair an estate, not result in vice, and that a donor must be virtuous, thankful to God, and cheerful. Two Guides to a Good Life (1604) lists ten circumstances that guide liberalitas; William Baldwin offers an economical summary: "In giving these things must be considered, what thing, and to whome, how, where, & wherefore thou givest."38

The size of a man's gifts must always be measured out according to his means. Even Christian writers allow a man to first secure his own properties before sharing them with others, on the reasonable grounds that the wasting of an estate—even for good purposes—destroys the source of liberalitas. Magnificence, lavish spending in the public sector, is a virtue reserved for monarchs
and public men who have the ample means of state at hand to support the displays of power and authority necessary to preserve order in a society. A man gives properly only if he gives as much as he can within his means. Finally, the liberal man—who graciously accepts recompense, but gives without expectation of return—must be mindful of the recipient, neither condescending in generosity nor hateful in the face of ingratitude.

Each part of this general scheme receives amplification, clarification, and amendment in the particular applications of a sermon or a treatise. A hierarchy of giving is commonly defined so that the good Christian is never in doubt to whom he must direct his charitable impulses. The similar schemes of John Downname and Thomas Cooper recommend this order of preferment to those who would give alms:

1. Those in danger of death.
2. The whole Church and Commonwealth.
3. Ourselves: "for charitie and mercie beginne at home."
4. Our wives, parents, and children.
5. The faithful: our spiritual kindred.
6. Our benefactors.
7. Our kindred and near neighbors.
8. The inhabitants of our city, shire, and country.
9. The poor of other nations, and strangers.
10. Enemies.39

Nicholas Haward is typical in insisting that giving should be spontaneous, unanticipated, and unhesitating. The liberal man should never hold off generosity because he
has not been asked. Haward also inquires at length into the possibilities of charitable reciprocation between father, mother, and siblings, and more to our purpose, between master and servant. In The Line of Liberalitie (1569), Haward refutes the suggestion that hired men are incapable of conferring benefits on their masters, relying on his premise that "only it is to be regarded of what mind he was that did the benefit, and not of what degree."  

Proper receiving is, likewise, a part of liberality. Allen defines it as "a sober, reverend, and thankfull accepting of that which is Christianly given, with a mind to imploy it conscionably, and in the feare of God, to the same ends, whereunto it was of the Christian and godly benefactor intended and given." The rewards for proper giving and receiving are tangible evidence of Providence. "The most liberal men are the most rich men in all the world," Allen advises, because God rewards charity with greater wealth and more goods. Aylett rhymes in a similar spirit:  

'Tis Bountie that doth fill our garner's full  
He sparing reapes that sparingly doth sowe,  
True bounty's noble hand no want did ever know.  

The punishments meted out to the illiberal donor or the ungrateful recipient are more fittingly the subject of an investigation of covetousness. Suffice to
say that the Elizabethan-Jacobean counted among the enemies to **liberality** usury, excess in diet, excess in apparel, hunting, dicing, gaming, theater-going, bear-baiting— in short, any activity that thrived by oppression or waste. But **ingratitude** was the chief villain that could alone extinguish the charitable spirit in a man. Homilists consequently advised that "the miscarrying of some part of our almes, should not discourage us in sowing the seedes of our beneficence, nor make us give over our spiritual merchandize, but cause us rather to exercise our selves in these Christian duties with more diligence." Yet an age that regularly hanged men for petty thefts legislated no penalties for what many commentators believed was the most heinous of crimes, **ingratitude**, because "the worthines of so precious a thynge as a Benefit is, shalbe quite lost if we make marchandise of it."46

The concept of **liberality**, in all its power and complexity, is given shape and substance by Shakespeare in the hundred lines that form the moral-economic center of *As You Like It*. Between Orlando's entrance into the exile's camp with sword drawn and his exit, sword sheathed, hand in hand with the Duke (II.vii.88-200), we are treated to a moral pageant, devoid of sermon or
strictures, that moves the heart and yet is as subtle and unyielding to precise analysis as music. We can, however, observe the moral attitudes in the scene and the careful juxtaposition of images, recognizing that the whole action itself contrasts with the short scene that follows immediately (II.i.) between Duke Frederick and Oliver. Here, at the moral-economic fulcrum of *As You Like It*, the ethic of liberality practiced in the Duke's camp is affirmed by the dramatist's choice of language, action, and song.

Hunger, perhaps man's most basic need, drives Orlando into the tranquil circle of exiles. He acts for himself and for Adam, who had collapsed for lack of food in an earlier scene (II.vi.), when he dashes into the camp, draws his weapon, and demands sustenance from the Duke and his company, which includes Jaques. Orlando had feared that, leaving the inland world of Frederick, he must turn beggar or thief. Adam's gold had prevented immediate penury, but proves useless to them in a forest where they find no markets. So circumstances force Orlando onto the "thievish living on the road" he had resisted, the sort of life many soldiers returning from war faced in Elizabeth's England. The situation of such men, and Orlando, is described by Romeo when he attempts to buy illegal poison from an apothecary:
Art thou so bare and full of wretchedness,
And fearest to die? Famine is in thy cheeks,
Need and oppression starveth in thy eyes,
Contempt and beggary hangs upon thy back;
The world is not thy friend, nor the world's law,
The world affords no law to make thee rich;
Then be not poor, but break it, and take this.
Apoth. My poverty, but not my will, consents.  
(Shakespeare,RJ IV.1,68-75)

Orlando's choice appears to be the same as the apothecary's. Because he believes the savage forest offers him no friendship, Orlando must transgress the law to survive. But when Orlando threatens the Duke and Jaques with death, the Duke first chastises the youth, and then offers him comfort:

Duke S. What would you have? Your gentleness shall move us, more than your force move us to gentleness.
Orlando. I almost die for food, and let me have it.
Duke S. Sit down and feed, and welcome to our table.  
(Shakespeare,II.vii.102-05)

The Duke acts in a manner exactly prescribed by the moral commentators. He discovers what Orlando's need is and does not hesitate a moment to take care of it. Orlando is surprised. What he knows of the world, the inland civilization of Frederick, leads him to expect that Arden, a forest, must be even more treacherous than the town:

Pardon me, I pray you.
I thought that all things had been savage here,
And therefore put I on the countenance
Of stern commandment.  
(Shakespeare,106-09)
But civilization resides in the fellowship of men, not in place. Indeed, both Orlando and the Duke share a remembrance of a better time and a golden age in the court when men cared more for each other:

Orlando. If ever you have look'd on better days,
And know what 'tis to pity, and be pitied,
Let gentleness my strong enforcement be,
In the which hope I blush, and hide my sword.
Duke S. True is it that we have seen better days
And have with holy bell been knoll'd to church,
And sat at good men's feasts, and wip'd our eyes
Of drops that sacred pity hath engend'red;
And therefore sit you down in gentleness.
(113, 117-24)

Shakespeare thus fuses the impulse to liberality with the desire for content, suggesting that a society based on the former can attain the latter. In the society set up by Duke Senior, the conventions of proper giving are scrupulously observed. Orlando may be almost dead from hunger, but his faithful companion, Adam, suffers from both hunger and old age. The hierarchy of giving prescribed by Cooper and Downname requires that Adam be cared for first. The company in Arden would have it no other way:

Orlando. Then but forbear your food a little while,
Whiles, like a doe, I go to find my fawn,
And give it food. There is an old man,
Who after me hath many a weary step
Limp'd in pure love; till he be first suffic'd,
Oppress'd with weak evils, age and hunger,
I will not touch a bit.
Duke S. Go find him out,
And we will nothing waste till you return.
(127-34)
The contrasts are strikingly apt. The gentleness and the bounty of nature are evoked in the youth's image that makes him the doe and the octogenarian a fawn to be fed. Adam, who has served for so long "in pure love," now finds himself in a new role. Paraphrasing Lear, we might ask, handy-dandy, which is the master, which is the servant, except that, in the beautiful moment that follows, the question becomes irrelevant. All men are servants.

Assured that the etiquette of liberality will be observed and that Adam will be fed, Orlando offers the proper rejoinder: "I thank you, and be blest for your good comfort" (II.vii.135). Thanks and blessing are more than a man can rightfully expect for generosity; man confers the former while God determines the latter.

On the stage, few scenes are more moving (especially in comedy) than Orlando's return to the camp with Adam cradled in his arms just as Jaques concludes his set-piece, the Seven Ages of Man, "sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" (166). Adam and Orlando, a living emblem of youth and age welcomed into a circle of exiles, declare Jaques' homily inadequate by their very presence. But from the other side, it is Jaques who prevents the scene from sliding into the maudlin. For throughout the play, he reminds the audience of another view of man, one tainted perhaps by overscrupulous
inquiry and scholastic quiddity, but a legitimate perspective nonetheless. To Jaques, the fraternity of exiles from Frederick's oppressive rule is, in its turn, guilty of usurping the privileges of the natural inhabitants of the forest, the deer. Jaques' tearful meditation on a wounded stag (II.i.) narrated by a lord for the Duke's amusement, contains, for all its lugubriousness, an element of truth and sadness. For if nature can offer a paradigm of generosity, it also contains patterns of covetousness and sin. The society Jaques imagines among the deer may not represent all "humanity," but it does portray an ineradicable aspect of man:

"Ay" quoth Jaques,
"Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens,
'Tis just the fashion. Where do you look
Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?"
Thus most invectively he pierceth through
The body of the country, city, court,
Yea, and of this our life, swearing that we
Are mere usurers, tyrants, and what's worse,
To fright the animals and to kill them up
In their assign'd and native dwelling-place.

(Il.i.56-63)

Jaques is silent after Adam is brought in, but his presence reminds the audience of the way men can be—in fact usually are—and thus adds the complication Shakespeare characteristically includes to prevent moral simplifications or reductions. But where the playwright's sympathies lie is clear. The contrasts between scenes II.vii. and I.i. further demonstrates why men must
choose fellowship over fear and ambition. If the exiled Duke's camp is characterized by gentleness and generosity, Duke Frederick's court can claim only what are their opposites. Villain preys on villain as Frederick greedily seizes Oliver's property and lands until he brings his brother, dead or alive, back inland for trial. No trust or love motivates the characters in this short, harsh scene that ends with Oliver's suddenly become an exile. The elder brother is dispossessed just after the younger has found a new fortune.

Within II.vii., the full richness of these moral-economic issues—the initial fear of Orlando, the openness of the Duke, the reversal of roles between master and servant, the dissonance of Jaques' philosophy—is captured by the peculiar mocking of Amien's song, "Blow, blow, thou winter wind." Though it is about ingratitude and its lyric seems to deny human goodness,

Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.

[Then] heigh-ho, the holly!

This life is most jolly,

(II.vii.181-83),
taken in concert with the action occurring on stage—Adam and Orlando sharing the exiles' food—the song, in fact, absorbs the subtleties and expands the vision of the scene, the beauty of generosity, until the audience must wonder why men would ever be unkind when virtue has such power to comfort. Though we know that ingratitude exists,
that men can be cruel and calculating, we cannot, for just that moment of song and supper in II.vii., believe it.

After this scene, with a model of human conduct dramatically established in Duke Senior's camp, As You Like It turns to lighter thoughts of love. But not before the Duke fixes one more image of human dependence and support on the mind's eye. He is speaking to Orlando:

I am the Duke
That lov'd your father. The residue of your fortune,
Go to my cave and tell me. Good old man,
Thou art right welcome as thy [master] is.
Support him by the arm. Give me your hand,
And let me all your fortunes understand.

Hand in hand, with wandering step, they have found an Eden in Arden. And it is within.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1 One of the more enlightening and thorough studies of the love/wealth equation in Shakespeare's works can be found in John Russell Brown's Shakespeare and His Comedies (London: Methuen, 1957). The third chapter of the book, "Love's Wealth and the Judgment of The Merchant of Venice," traces Shakespeare's use of commercial terminology to express the concept of love in the comedies, in Romeo and Juliet, and in the sonnets. Russell shows that commercial imagery is an economical way of presenting the ways love can be confining and possessive and, conversely, the ways it can be free, bounteous, and joyful. Russell's analysis of the major comedies shows how Shakespeare uses the natural relationship between love and wealth, with its inevitable associations with trade, commerce, and usury, to create dramatic patterns and poetic images which win our support for love that is free and bountiful. His analyses of the sonnets and The Merchant of Venice are particularly good.


4 Niccholes, Marriage and Wiving, p. 15.

5 Breton, p. 30.

6 For a Renaissance version of this legend, see William Averell's A Dyall for Dainty Darlings Rockt in the Cradle of Securitie (London: 1584), sigs. E2r-F3r.


8 Oliver, pp. lxviii, lxxviii-lxxix.


10 Compare Falstaff's language here with RJ II.ii.82-84 and TC I.i.98-104. Note also Pistol's indignant reply to the suggestion that he carry one of Falstaff's missives to the ladies: "Shall I Sir Pandarus of Troy become, And by my side wear steel?" (MWW I.iii.75-76).

12 For a discussion of the sinfulness of defrauding the beneficiary of a will, see Henry Wilkinson, The Debt Book (London: 1625), pp. 13-14: "I am persuaded very few Will's, are executed by the common sort of men, in estates of any value, without some notable fraud . . . partly concealing legacies from those who cannot demand them, out of ignorance of the Will; to whom I say, that so long as wrong reckoning is no paiment, that the debt remaineth in the sight of God, however it bee crossed out of their accounts. They shall also finde, that for being unfaithfull in the dispensation of earthly talents, they shall never be trusted with the true treasure."


14 Gore, p. 16.

15 Gore, p. 30.


Sith the perfect riches is suffisance,
He is more rich, content with poverty,
Then hee that hath of treasures aboundance,
Which no man may possesse well with suertie.
Rich is hee that can himselfe satisfie,
With fewest things, which bee both safe and sure,
Where fortunes gifts bee doubtfull to indure.

19 Heywood, Proverbs, p. 159.

This nostalgia is frequently associated with Adam. After Oliver treats him ingratiably, the old servant remembers better times: "God be with my master, he would not have spoke such a word" (I.i.83-84). Later, Adam comes to stand for a better world in Orlando's estimation: "O good old man, how well in thee appears/ The constant service of the antique world" (II.iii.56-57).
39 Downame, p. 130.
40 Haward, fol. 110.
41 Allen, p. 137.
42 Allen, p. 95.
43 Aylett, Brides Ornaments, p. 140.
45 Downame, p. 241.
46 Haward, fol. 107.
CHAPTER III: PRODIGALITY AND WEALTH

Not all of Shakespeare's treatments of moral economics are studies in virtue. Aristotle observed that a virtue ordinarily resides between extremes of vice. Liberality in this schema is framed by prodigality and covetousness. Neither of these sins was peculiar to Renaissance England, but certain economic changes and developments in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries broadened the opportunities for men in conspicuous commercial positions and occupations to act badly, either by spending their wealth too liberally or by distributing their charity too niggardly. Of the two vices, prodigality seems the more attractive to the literary imagination. But the prodigal is almost always tracked and preyed upon by the covetous man. Together they threaten the security of a society (whether in the real world or in a play) by undermining its economic stability, fostering vice, and stifling good works.

The canons of liberality, in a positive way, define what makes covetousness an improper use of wealth. We shall discuss the vice later to illuminate the relationship between wealth and evil. Prodigality is less
easy to tag as an evil, or even as an affront to *liberality*. Modern economic practice encourages the conspicuous consumption that increases demand in the marketplace and creates prosperity. *Prodigality*, in Shakespeare's age, was likewise encouraged by the increase of trade and wealth in the Elizabethan and Jacobean years, which created a class of wealthy men capable of lavish expenditures. These men, often the sons of wealthy landowners, investors, or merchants, became favorite targets of the dramatists and the concern of moralists and preachers.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the economic conditions which gave rise to the profit inflations that built capitalism in the West and produced a new class of wealthy men, often independent of the land, include an influx of American gold into the western economies, the expansion of trade, the increase in material investment (mining, iron production, weaving), and the wider availability of credit. The relative stability of agriculturally-based medieval economies (where the sovereignty of a lord on his manor ordering his villages according to ancient laws of husbandry and producing goods and materials at the level of sustenance was unchallenged) cracked under the pressures of individual enterprise and a commercial market in which a clever
investor or merchant, willing to gamble his capital, could acquire a huge fortune quickly or buy a government monopoly. But even such investors were subject to the new economic forces which capitalism set into motion and which very few, if any, understood: inflation and recession. Prices of commodities rose at an alarming rate in the sixteenth century, but because rents and wages did not keep pace, the advantage for many years was with the capitalist. A cry that would grow familiar in capitalist economies was heard throughout England:

But now the price of all thynges hath lepte, such a leape,
That nother, fode, clothing, nor any thing is good cheape.
In whom the faulthe is truly I can not tell,
But I would to God, that all thynge were well.¹

As more and more the prosperity of England began to depend on foreign trade, especially in wool, an upset or disruption in the foreign markets had severe economic repercussions at home. Capitalism created new wealth, some movement within the social classes, new industries, and new conditions of poverty. Although the two were transmutable, money began to replace land as a standard of value. Wealthy city merchants frequently took advantage of landed gentlemen, whose expenditures on inflated commodities outran their depressed incomes from rents, by buying the costly, ill-run manors out
from under them. Hobs the Tanner in Thomas Heywood's Edward IV (1579?) comments on the ineptitude of many landholders and merchants when forced to deal with the newly important commodity: "He that cannot keepe land that lyes fast, will have much a do to hold money, its sliperie ware, tis melting ware, tis melting ware." Some of those who held on to the land attempted to work it more efficiently by enclosing the commons and, consequently, dislocating thousands of agricultural laborers. The popular outcry against land-grabbing was loud and persistent through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, long after the worst decades of enclosure had passed.

Thus the potential for having great wealth in the complex system of Renaissance economics was almost always accompanied by the threat of poverty caused either by a reversal of fortunes or by the dislocations inherent in the commercial system itself. While the wealth of England increased, the new prosperity was not distributed equitably. More often than not (as indicated by the complaints against inflation and enclosing), the beneficiaries of change were few. It is not surprising, then, that in an economy plagued by recession and endemic poverty, men of new and conspicuous wealth should be the targets of moral chastisement and stern warnings
against the improper use of wealth.

The story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15.11-31) was, for the homilist or moral commentator, a familiar point of reference when discussing the wasteful or otherwise improper uses of wealth. While the parable told by Christ is concerned primarily with forgiveness, it also emphasizes indirectly those themes or considerations which were of concern to the moralist assaulting prodigality.

The prodigal generally begins his disreputable career by defying the authority of a parent. The biblical example of a younger son dissatisfied with his life typifies human impetuosity in face of God's manifest generosity. Raised in plenty, the unthrift begins to believe he holds a special station in life: "Men not regenerate by grace make the Lord a debtor to them, not content to receive good things from the Lord, they challenge Patris bona quasi sibi debita, their Fathers goods as debts due to them for their merits, and good deservings." Parents who refuse to cater to the desires of their children are often disobeyed. John Carr, author of The Ruinous Fall of Prodigalitie (1573), regards such disobedience as a form of prodigality itself. Frequently, the prodigal youth paints his father in the colors of a miser, a not inevitably unfair characterization since
God, it was thought, most aptly punished a covetous man
by blessing him with a spendthrift son:

My father was a man well knowne
That us'd to hoard up money
... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 
But I his sonne will let it fly,
In taverne, or in ordinary.7

The wastrel of Christ's parable goes off to a for­
eign land to spend his prematurely-granted patrimony, but
in Shakespeare's England, the wealthy spark had only to
journey to London to empty his pockets. There he could
frequent the tavern, the theater, and the rich shops of
the Royal Exchange, or indulge in gambling, whoring, and
bear-baiting, or entangle himself with clothiers, usurers,
and lawyers.8 Thomas Dekker fashions an allegorical por­
trait of the prodigal courted by the parasites and hangers-
on of London as a contestant in an imaginary race with a
miser:

The second that ran, and made the bravest show, was
a yong Gallant, his name, Prodigality, loved of many
Ladies for his good gifts, and followed by many rich
Citizens sons, who were preferd unto him by their
fathers Mony: he sat in a Chariot, open on every side,
foure Horses drew him, (Rashnesse, Luxury, Folly, and
Hanger-on) his Coach-man being drunke, A Whore whipped
him for­ward, and made all Fly; at the backe of the
Chariot, two leaped of & were drawne after him, viz:
Beggery and a Foole ... after him and close by him
rid many Merchants, Mercers, and Silke-men, who had
great Wagers on his head, but he gave them all the
slip, and was before hand with them still.9

Such behavior was not lightly regarded by moralists who
preferred to characterize unthrifts as sinks of corruption
and servants of the devil. William Cowper, for one, defines all offenses against God in terms of waste. "Sin," he says, "is a profuse and unthrifty spending of all that God hath given thee, yea, of thy body and soul also at the length." Moreover, prodigality can be a sin against charity when wealth that should be used to succour the poor and needy is used instead to feed riot, intemperance, and licentiousness.

The sin is swiftly punished. In the parable, the prodigal's fall is accompanied by a dearth throughout the land. A similar relationship between falls from prosperity and the moral condition of England is drawn by Carr. A life led too high in a world steadily decaying morally will end in poverty and thievery. Joseph Hall's character of "The Unthrift" emphasizes this inevitable decline: "He feels poverty before he sees it, never complains till he be pinched with wants; never spares till the bottom, when it is too late either to spend or recover." The beneficiary of the prodigal's losses is the thrifty man, the winner in Dekker's imagined stakes:

The Defendant whom he [the prodigal] challenged was . . . Hans-thrift (a Dutchman) vigilant in his course, sullen in laying his wager, provident in not venturing too much, honest to pay his losses, industrious to get more (twenty sundry wales) if he should happen to be cheated of all; his Horse was not so swift as sure, his Attire not curious, but rich & neate: they set out both together, but before Prodigallity came halfe
way of his journey, Thrift got the start of him, out-went, out-wearied, out-spent him; tother lost all, this won what the other lost.¹⁴

Like the prodigal son, the Renaissance unthrifty, having revelled away his patrimony, is reduced to humiliating poverty. In this condition, he is able to appreciate for the first time why his prodigal ways offend humanity. The poor man is at the mercy of others. In the name of charity, he must accept the stony bread or husk of corn.

In "A Sermon Exhorting to Pitie the Poore" (1573), Henry Bedel, the vicar of Christ Church, condemns those that "casteth to Dogs that which by nature is created for man, so that al order and honesty, vertue and pietie cleane set aside, every man followeth his pleasure and filthynes gredely." He continues: "Let the Glutton lerne nature to suffise, and leave hys surfet, then shall the poore bee fed with that, that hee often times either vomiteth forth, or worketh as a means to destroy his lyfe."¹⁵

Curiously, although moralists believed that an equitable distribution of wealth can eliminate poverty and that the rich far outnumbered the poor, they were generally satisfied with the maintenance of a beggarly class, on the grounds that God created the poor so that the wealthy might practice virtue. In fact, the wealthy were to be grateful to the poor for providing them the opportunity to act charitably. Robert Bagnall advises
that the rich should cultivate the good favor of the needy with gifts and money so that they will pray to God for their benefactors.\textsuperscript{16}

But, as in all ages, the poor in Renaissance England were readily suspect and classified according to the nature of their indigence.\textsuperscript{17} The author of \textit{Greevous Grones for the Poore} (1621), who fears that poor parents breed their children to lives of idleness, discriminates carefully between the blind, the lame, the sick, and others unable to relieve their misery, and the thieves, rogues, strumpets, beggars, filchers, and cut-purses who pretend poverty, but are simply too lazy to work. They are the caterpillars, wasps, and drones who devour the fruits of the commonwealth. \textit{Greevous Grones} compares the sustenance of the truly impotent in a society to the natural process by which the body supports a withered limb without injury. The idle poor, on the other hand, are as running sores which infect and ruin an entire commonwealth.\textsuperscript{18} God's moral economy requires that those who can work must labor: "There must be no ciphers in God's Arithmetike, no mutes in his Grammar, no blankes in his Kalendar, no Drones in his Beehive, no loysterers in his Market-place, and Vineyard, no idle Stewards in his Farmes."\textsuperscript{19}
And so, according to the somewhat tortuous argument of William Loe in *The Merchant Reall* (1620), while the wealthy man must be ready to sell all his goods to the poor, the intention suffices, "alwaies to be willing, but not alwaies to do it." Monk-like poverty is not the Christian ideal. For if it is better to give than receive, Loe argues, the generous and industrious rich man may be as holy as the mendicant.  

The prodigal youth, then, thrown into penury and disgrace, may garner some pity for his distressed condition, but he is just as apt to be abused, sneered at, and hounded for his idleness. Attitudes toward poverty and a change in fortune were no less complicated in the England that Shakespeare knew than they are today. John Carr sums up the whole sequence of events that comprises the prodigal career: "Thus you may see always that Prodigalitie doth consume wealth, good name, and fame, it abateth honour, it disgraceth a man's credit, it causeth hate of friends, and reapes the losse of favour, yea, and more than this, it draweth the displeasure of God towarde us."  

What usually follows is repentance and recovery of fortune. The biblical prodigal, finding his way back into his father's arms, inspires the concluding homiletics of most treatises on the subject. The unthrifty must
abjure rich robes, fantastic dainties, bad company, and vagabond pastimes to reestablish in his life the moral husbandry that leads to God and salvation.

On the stage, the prodigal fared little better than his counterparts in treatises and sermons, but at least he was popular. In defending the moral efficacy of the theater, Thomas Nashe in Pierce Peniless (1592) includes prodigality as one of the vices— along with pride, lust, whoredom, and drunkenness—which plays, far from approving, "beat . . . down utterly." But, in the process of learning virtue, the young, gamesome unthrifty, entangled with gamblers, whores, and taverners, cut a lively theatrical figure. Typically, the stage prodigal is a young man who inherits his wealth from a worthy but often miserly father. Endowed with an ample patrimony, the youth quickly feasts it away, acquiring in the course of his debauches, companionship, but few real friends. Instead he falls prey to tight-fisted usurers, conniving merchants, or sinister relatives who sign away the prodigal's lands and rents, piece by piece, until nothing is left to sustain him. The youth despairs and falls into miserable and demeaning poverty before repenting his sins, learning the advantages of proper husbandry, and--by one artful device or another--winning
back his fortune, often with the help of a bride.

Massinger opens his comedy, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1633), with his prodigal, Francis Welborne, already sunk in his fortunes, forced to listen while Tapwell, an alehouse keeper, narrates the lamentable history of the youth's wantonness. The story is representative:

Your dead father,
My quondam master, was a man of worship,
Old Sir John Welborne,
... [He] kept a great house.
Reliev'd the poor, and so forth; but Hee dying,
And the twelve hundred a year coming to you,
Late Master Francis, but now forlorn Welborne--
... You were then a Lord of Akers; the prime gallant;
And I your under-butler; note the change now.
You had a merry time of 't. Hawkes and Hounds,
With a choice of running horses; Mistresses
Of all sorts, and all sizes; yet so hot
As their embraces made your Lordships melt;
Which your Uncle Sir Giles Overreach observing,
Resolving not to lose a drop of 'em,
On foolish mortgages, statutes, and bonds,
For a while supply'd your loosenesse, and then left you.

... Your land gone, and your credit not worth a token,
You grew the common borrower, no man scap'd
Your paper-pellets, from the Gentleman
To the beggars on high ways, that sold you switches
In your gallantry.23

While the stage prodigal is usually the son of a landed aristocrat, he can also be the scion of royalty or poverty. Hobs the Tanner in Heywood's *Edward IV* laments to the king that he has a lazy, foppish, unthrifty son destined for the gallows, while it is the king's behavior in
Dekker's *If This Be Not A Good Play, the Divell Is In It* (1602) who is transformed by the devil from a moderate, even-handed ruler to one in the thrall of a wanton passion. Both men eventually reform.

Giles Overreach in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* is probably typical of the vultures who prey on careless youth. Scheming and ruthless, he swindles his nephew of all his wealth, treats him like a common beggar, and hopes to see him hang. "I must have all men sellers/And I the only Purchaser" might serve him as a motto, but Giles' plotting goes too far. He is undone and falls into madness. Less villainous, but equally typical are the louts, Tom Tosse and Dick Dicer, who contrive against *Prodigalitie* in the moral play, *Liberalitie and Prodigalitie*:

Dick. I pray thee tell me, is this brave *Prodigalitie*, so full of money as he is said to be?
Tom. Full quotha? he is too full, I promise thee.
Dick. And will he lash it out so lustily?
Tom. Exceedingly, unreasonably, unmeasurably.
Dick. Then may such mates as we that be so bare, hope some way or other to catch a share.

Something of the misery and shame of the well-to-do gentleman fallen on hard times is expressed in the words of Scumbroth from *If This Be Not A Good Play* (1610):

What saies the prodigall child in the painted cloth? When all his money was spent and gon, they turned him out unnecessary; then did hee wepe and wist not what to don, for he was in's hose and doublet verily, the best is there are but two batches of people moulded...
in this world, that's to say Gentlemen and Beggers;
or Beggers and Gentlemen, or Gentlemen-like Beggers,
or Beggerlike Gentlemen. As the tapster's narrative in *A New Way To Pay Old Debts* indicates, the pain of a descent into poverty is exacerbated for the prodigal by the confusion of gentlemanly and beggarly roles he is forced to play. He must endure the clucking of tongues and contumely of the very men responsible for his dearth until he can effect his reformation. Quicksilver in *Eastward Ho!* (1605) is an unthrift only too willing to "take Virtue's purse" and live within his means, as are young John Gresham in *If You Know Not Me* and Pennyboy Jr. in Jonson's *The Staple of News* (1631). Even Prodigalitie himself, in *Liberalitie and Prodigalitie*, condemned to death for murder, pleads his willingness to change his ways.  

If these stages of the prodigal story—disobedience, wantonness, indigence, repentance, and recovery—are paradigmatic of the unthrifty's career in homiletic and theatrical literature of Elizabethan–Jacobean England, then Shakespeare's most notable prodigals are deviations from convention.

Antonio and Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* are prime examples of spendthrifts, but without exception (and unlike Timon) they are generous and noble in their
commercial dealings. In an article entitled "Prodigality and Time in The Merchant of Venice," Sylvan Barnet treats the moral economics of this play with sensitivity and perception, noting that though both Bassanio and Antonio are prodigals associated with the biblical story, they are drawn in contrast to Shylock, who so stifles charity and risk that he destroys life. The implication of the moral pattern of the drama is "that the calculating shall perish and that the generous shall thrive in the course of time." 28 Antonio is hated by Shylock for his policy of lending money gratis (I.iii.42-45). This difference between the two men as lenders defines the difference between liberality, which is giving out of love for others, and covetousness, which is self-love. 29

Since most commentators on liberality insist that a man secure his own estate before propping up that of another, it is not surprising to find some moral thinkers whose words bring a sharp rule down upon Antonio's knuckles. Henry Wilkinson, for example, observes that while "I know we should beare one anothers burthen, and so fulfill the law of Christ, even of charity, .... to beare anothers burden till I sinke under mine own, is no charity but folly; and to pull another out till my selfe sticke fast, is no discretion but destruction both to mee and mine." Wilkinson makes an observation
particularly stinging to a merchant who has lost his argosies: "no man hath a perpetual gale of prosperity."\textsuperscript{30} Yet the play makes clear that we must not prefer Shylock's carefulness to Antonio's seeming lack of calculation. For, while Antonio undermines his own financial standing by his loan to Bassanio, Shylock—to the moral commentators—undermines all order and governance not only by his usury, but also by his insistence that the fine points of the law be executed. "Justice will not stay where mercie is not," William Perkins declares in his \textit{Treatise of Equitie} (1604), and there is a parallel relationship between mercy and \textit{liberality}.\textsuperscript{31} Shylock squeezes the law as he squeezes his ducats, but loses to the prodigals in a poetic world where mercy and justice promise commercial rewards.

The prodigal as hero is, perhaps, the most unusual aspect of Shakespeare's use of the unthrift pattern in \textit{The Merchant of Venice}, but we should also note that Antonio—unlike most of his unthrift companions—is a self-made man. Salerio's description of Antonio's merchant fleet in the first scene of the play is a gracious testament to the merchant's skill and pre-eminence:

\begin{quote}
Your argosies with portly sail
Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,
Or as it were the pageants of the sea,
\end{quote}
Do over peer the petty traffickers
That cur'sy to them, do them reverence,
As they fly by them with their woven wings.
(I.i.9-14)

Like Petruchio, Antonio has increased any patrimony he
may have started life with. But despite his wealth, he
remains a good Christian by maintaining the careless
attitude toward riches that Barnet stresses in his analy­sis. For a discrimination made by William Perkins applies
here: it is no sin to be rich when riches are not sought
as a principal happiness of life.32

Shakespearian prodigals more famous than Antonio
and Bassanio, Prince Hal and his rowdy mentor, Falstaff,
play a comic game of debauchery in an historical England
shaken by civil war in 1 & 2 Henry IV. Like Antonio and
Bassanio, Prince Hal must, at several points in the action
of 1 & 2 Henry IV, conform his free spirit to the mold of
law and order, but the unthrift prince proves more
shrewd and calculating even than the rebels who plot
against his patrimony.

We have already noted how fast the prodigal tag
sticks to Falstaff in The Merry Wives of Windsor. The
word is actually used only once in each part of Henry IV.
The first time it is a reference to the tattered condition
of the soldiers whom the fat knight recruits to serve in
the king's war (1HIV IV.ii.34-35). But the second allu­sion to the biblical story, by Falstaff himself,
identifies the man with his kind. Falstaff, urging Mistress Quickly to pawn her plate and tapestry to raise some cash for him, declares that "Glasses, glasses is the only drinking, and for thy walls, a pretty slight drollery, or the story of the Prodigal, or the German hunting in waterwork is worth a thousand of these bed-hangers and these fly-bitten [tapestries]" (2HIV II.i.143-47). The knight is inadvertently right. The hostess could benefit from the constant warning against prodigals that a painted cloth on waste might provide. John Taylor, in An Arrant Thiefe (1622), discovers in a cheap trousers' lining just such a painted linen of Dives, Lazarus, and the Prodigal Son mentioned once before by Falstaff (2HIV IV. ii.25-26) and describes it:

He rip'd the other breech, and there he spide,
The pamper'd Prodigall on Cookhorse ride:
There was his fare, his Fidlers, and his Whores,
His being poore, and beaten out of Doores,
His keeping Hogs, his eating huskes for meate,
His lamentation, and his home retreat,
His welcome to his Father, and the Feast,
The fat Calfe kill'd, all these thinges were ex-prest. 33

But the prodigal on the cloth is not Falstaff who is neither pampered nor made to endure the unthrift's punishment. He is less a prodigal than the cause that prodigality is in other men--and women. He fits this role of vice perfectly, even declaring himself "Fortune's steward" (2HIV V.iii.130-31), a title more than casually
embraced if we recall that in *Liberalitie and Prodigalitie*, a moral interlude on waste and thrift, Fortune is the arch-enemy of virtue, and Liberality declares himself "Virtues Steward." Yet if not exactly a prodigal, Falstaff does enjoy the roisterer's life:

Come sing we a bawdy song, make me merry. I was as virtuously given as a gentleman need be, virtuous enough: swore little, dic'd not above seven times--a week, went to a bawdy-house not above once in a quarter--of an hour, paid money that I borrow'd--three or four times, liv'd well and in good compass, and now I live out of all order, out of all compass. *(1HIV III.iii.13-20)*

The great tun of flesh, the waste of waist, is to other men looking on an image of what a disordered, unthrifty life is, without being the thing itself. Falstaff has too much spirit and individuality to stand for *prodigality*; instead he manages to contain it within his wide girth. He is the willing corrupter of the youth willing to bankroll his habits: "The truth is, I am only old in judgment and understanding; and he that will caper with me for a thousand marks, let him lend me the money, and have at him" *(2HIV I.ii.191-94)*. He makes a fool of poor Mistress Quickly, not only squelching her intentions to arrest him for debt, but almost simultaneously persuading her to pawn her gown to make him yet another loan *(2HIV II.i.)*. And he thinks to make similar use of Prince Hal when the old king lies stone
cold in the Jerusalem chamber. But Hal, instead, presses on Falstaff the title that sticks and condemns him: "The tutor and feeder of my riots" (2HIV V.v.62). Instead of commanding the laws and exchequer of England, Falstaff becomes a bankrupt, what Sir Miles Sandys describes as "a Thiefe in an Honourable Kind." Shallow would be content with half the thousand pounds Sir John owes to him at the end of 2 Henry IV. But Fortune's steward is Fortune's victim, and the valiant robber of Gadshill can do nothing but accept his indecorous and demeaning poverty, a thief of sorts to the end.

Prince Hal, a youth engaged in dicing, whoring, and thievery, comes closer to the conventional pattern of the Prodigal Son. The tradition long associated with the youthful Henry V presents the playwright with a convenient vehicle for portraying the king, and Shakespeare does not neglect its possibilities. He seems most concerned with reiterating the prodigal's career, from disobedience to reformation, on Henry IV's deathbed and thereafter, although much of both plays is taken up with the debauches of Hal's we first hear about in Richard II (V.iii.1-12).

A dying Henry IV registers the complaint of all fathers plagued by unthrifty sons when he thinks that Hal has too hastily grasped his patrimony, in this case a golden crown:
See, sons, what things you are!
How quickly nature falls into revolt
When gold becomes her object!
For this the foolish over-careful fathers
Have broke their sleep with thoughts, their brains with care,
Their bones with industry.  (2HIV IV.v.64-69)

When Hal returns to the chamber, the declining monarch, in language more bitter yet, draws a portrait of an England unmuzzled in its carouse, "peopled with wolves," to match the character of "the fift Harry" (IV.v.119-37). The frightening and vivid passage is a fair projection of Hal's princely escapades onto a national scale, and it serves to remind the audience of the wantonness that precedes a prodigal's reformation. The Prince of Wales is quick to persuade his father of his intended good governance. However, Hal does not throw off his prodigal's garb before the king, but rather before the man he has most offended, the man who has most instructed him in the consequences of his irresponsible behavior—the Lord Chief Justice. The Justice, we learn, has on an unspecified occasion rebuked, rated, and "roughly sent to prison" the man who becomes the supreme ruler of England. It is Hal's closest brush with the poverty and disgrace essential to a prodigal's regeneration. Shakespeare may have inserted the incident at this late moment to highlight the imminent change in the public character of the prince. Hal's father is dead, so he designates the chief
justice as his new father to whom he can return, like the biblical prodigal, reformed, humbled, and ready for his new station in life:

There is my hand.
You shall be as a father to my youth,
My voice shall sound as you do prompt mine ear,
And I will stoop and humble my intents
To your well-practic'd wise directions.

(V.ii.117-21)

But for one quibble, Hal would seem to be the complete prodigal, the perfect replication of the biblical pattern, from disobedience to reformation. But the quibble is a serious one. Hal is not an absolute prodigal precisely because his reformation is patterned and foreseen:

My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.

(1HIV I.ii.213-15)

Paradoxically, the conscious manipulation of repentance that differentiates Hal from other unthrift youths of the Elizabethan stage also drives him unswervingly down a path of conventional behavior. If Hal is to be regarded as a prodigal son, he must act like one. But since Shakespeare's portrait of Hal uses the archetype chiefly as a point of reference, it cannot be a serious inquiry into the prodigal nature. For Hal's unthriftiness is, as he declares, only a dream. He has never truly been what he pretends to be. In some respects,
Richard II and Timon of Athens are Shakespeare's most serious studies of the prodigal nature. Most stage prodigals are infected by a vice that is both explicable and curable by the dictates and ministrations of moral philosophy. But in the characters of Richard and Timon, Shakespeare suggests that moral philosophy may not entirely understand the mentality of the prodigal nature. Is a spendthrift nature subject to recovery and reformation? Shakespeare says no, and in the dramas offers precise reasons why.

Shakespeare takes great pains to fit Richard II into a moral-economic pattern by which his audience could quickly recognize, understand, and judge the monarch, as he had done with Iden in 2 Henry VI. The first acts provide ample evidence of Richard's unthriftiness. In the very first scene of the play, Richard seems to be a model of temperance—wise, peace-loving, and moderate in thought and action. But by the third scene, the voluble king stands in contrast with Bullingbrook who is
so sparing of words that Gaunt urges him to be less a miser (I.iii.253-57). The future king, condemned to exile, has reasons for his silence, and the touch is light, but deliberate. For the next two acts spotlight the unthrifty governance of Richard and his chorus of sycophants, Bushy, Bagot, and Green. The king himself provides the first strong indication of his prodigal nature when he declares that he must farm out his realm to pay the costs of a war and "too great a court/ and liberal largess" (I.iv.43-44). Gaunt amplifies the fault in an indictment surcharged by the honesty and urgency of a deathbed. First we hear (from York) that Richard is surrounded by flatterers who fill him with news of the vain fashions of Italy (II.i.17-23). A minor vice again, but one often associated with prodigals and of some significance when one considers the importance the commons play in determining the fate of Richard. For commentators who condemn fashion typically denounce the waste in clothing as excess that deprives the poor what is owed to them: "Do they think that it is lawful for them to have millions of sundry sortes of apparell lying rotting by them, when as the poore members of Jesus Christ die at their doores for wante of clothing."
The charges against Richard, accusations that flesh out an unthrift character, quickly escalate in number and seriousness. In the course of seven lines stuffed with aphoristic metaphor, Gaunt likens the king to a violent fire, a sudden storm, a spurring rider, a choking feeder, and a cormorant, all of which speed their own destruction by the unchecked haste of their activity (II.i.33-39). More specifically, Richard and his flatterers have pilled the wealth of England by parceling out royal lands, forcing loans, issuing blank charters, and taxing the commons heavily. Says Gaunt, "The waste is no whit lesser than thy land" (II.i.103), while Northumberland notes that Richard has nothing to show, not even a victory in war, for all the revenues he has collected (II.i.252-55). England is in dearth, like the land of the biblical prodigal, and the signs and omens portend economic disaster and turmoil:

Rich men look sad and ruffians dance and leap,  
The one in fear to lose what they enjoy,  
The other to enjoy by rage and war.  
(II.iv.12-14)

Gaunt dies a bankrupt; the king is one. But in seizing Bullingbrook's patrimony to prosecute his Irish war, Richard goes a step too far in threatening the very rights of succession that make England his.
Princes were granted a limited right to the property of other men. James Maxwell, in *The Golden Art or The Right Way of Enriching* asserts that the king or prince, because he is an image of God on earth, has a claim "not unto all, but unto a certaine part of each of [his] subjects goods." But this right, which allows for reasonable taxation, does not extend to a subject's entire property.\(^37\) Richard's seizure of Bullingbrook's lands and revenues is an attack on justice that undermines royal security, just as his harsh taxes on the commons also are a factor in his eventual downfall. Thomas Becon, writing on the subject of poverty, cites a proverb that fits the circumstances of the play: "The increase & prosperitie of the comons is the kynges honoure, but the decaye of the people is the confusion of ye prince."\(^38\) La Primaudaye similarly warns that a prince's waste can lead to the financial ruin of the very men who support the royal perogatives, a danger on the minds of men like Northumberland, Willoughby, and Ross, whom Shakespeare portrays as unhesitating in their willingness to switch loyalties when they and England are threatened with ruin (II.i.224-300).

The objects of the king's affection, the courtiers represented by Bushy, Bagot, and Green, are as hated as his excesses. In Bullingbrook's accusation, the men
responsible for the king's wanton habits and the sad condition of England are "the caterpillars of the commonwealth." It was a favorite term of abuse hurled against flatterers and monopolists in Shakespeare's day. Caterpillars were often identified in moral tracts using garden metaphors as the consumptive enemies to order in government. To the commons, the king's toadies, "base men ... made great," are simply contemptible and deserving of death, a sentiment sensed by the fearful trio which evokes from Bagot the political wisdom that underlies Becon's earlier proverb: the common's love "Lies in their purses, and whoso empties them/ By so much fills their hearts with deadly hate" (II.ii.129-31). The king himself, believing for a moment that Bushy, Bagot, and Green have made peace with the rebellious Duke of Herford, lets slip a string of abusive epithets against the trio that suggests a long held, if repressed, suspicion of their motives, or at least a familiarity with the appropriate images of moral philosophy:

Dogs, easily won to fawn on any man!  
Snakes, in my heart-blood warm'd, that sting my heart!  
Three Judases, each one thrice worse than Judas!  
(III.ii.130-32)

But the sternest warning against sycophants and what
they can do to a man with the means to be prodigal begins
with the words of Gaunt and is completed by the king's
own observation:

A thousand flatterers sit within thy crown,
Whose compass is no bigger than thy head;

(II.i.100-01)

For within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps death his court. (III.ii.160-62)

Both Richard and Timon are undone to death by their
flatterers, though Richard's are at least severely
punished for their sin.

In a play as intensely concerned with wills and
rightful inheritance, executors and patrimony, fathers
and sons as Richard II, we might expect Shakespeare to
show Richard as the typical unthrifty offspring of a
careful sire. And he does, through two generations.
Gaunt first bares the accusation to Richard, conjuring
up the wrath of a grandfather:

O had thy grandsire with a prophet's eye
Seen how his son's son should destroy his sons,
From forth thy reach he would have laid thy shame,
Deposing thee before thou wert possess'd,
Which art possess'd now to depose thyself.

(II.i.104-08)

In the same scene, York, who later in the play chastises
his own son for spending his honor "As thriftless sons
their scraping fathers' gold" (V.iii.69), reminds
Richard of the husbandry of his father, the Black Prince:
His noble hand
Did win what he did spend, and spent not that
Which his triumphant father's hand had won.
(II.i.179-81)

York grieves to make the comparison between father and son, but it is as important a character revelation as the discovery that Petruchio has increased his father's store. Both Richard and his rival, Harry, are possessive of what they claim to be their own. The king finds an ally in the earth, the land itself which, he is confident, must recognize him as lawful sovereign (III.i.4-26). Bullingbrook, on the other hand, acutely aware of the injustice done against him by the king in the seizure of Gaunt's holdings, advertises himself as a "wandering vagabond" whose only payment for service can be thanks gilded with the hope of expectations. With his goods given away "to upstart unthrifits," Harry wars for what is his own, and ultimately for what Richard III calls the "golden fee"--the crown. In betraying two patrimonies, his own and Bullingbrook's, Richard ultimately fulfills Gaunt's prophecies and dispossesses himself:

For what can we bequeath
Save our deposed bodies to the ground?
Our lands, our lives, and all are Bullingbrook's.
(III.ii.149-51)

Shakespeare summarizes Richard's prodigality and its consequences in the emblematic and metaphoric scene that takes place in the Duke of York's garden.
Three husbandmen, in the course of lopping, pruning, and trimming their plants, diagnose the problems of an unthrifty government and prescribe the remedy:

Why should we in the compass of a pale
Keep law and form and due proportion,
Showing as in a model our firm estate,
When our sea-walled garden, the whole land,
Is full of weeds, her fairest flowers chok'd up,
Her fruit-trees all unprun'd, her hedges ruin'd,
Her knots disordered, and her wholesome herbs
Swarming with caterpillars? (III.iv.40-47)

The king as gardener is a common Renaissance analogy. Thomas Crewe, in his Nosegay of Morall Philosophie, makes a typical comparison between sovereignty and husbandry:

Q. How should a prince behave towards his subjectes?
A. Like a good Gardiner, that gathereth the leaves and not the rootes, or a good shepherd.

Elizabeth, in Heywood's If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody, speaks a piece on husbandry and royal authority which emphasizes the need to weed out hurtful growths in the land. In Richard II, the garden scene functions to conventionalize the king's wrongs, to place him in an explicable moral tradition. The scene is filled with the language of waste and superfluity; we hear of prodigal weights, unruly children, noisome weeds, superfluous language. The verbs alternate between the actions that typify Richard's reign (stoop, suck, choke, wound, seize, throw down) and the relatively salutary amputations of
Bullingbrook's (bind up, cut off, root away, pluck up, trim, dress, lop). The king's vice, his unthrift character, and the problems it causes the nation would need no exposition beyond this scene if Shakespeare were interested only in the relationship of moral philosophy and history. But Richard is more than an emblematic unthrift prince in Shakespeare's mind. Since history precludes the possibility that the dramatist make his protagonist's fortune recoverable, Shakespeare must extrapolate his presentation of a prodigal course beyond the which's of convention into the why's and wherefore's.

What typifies Richard's prodigality in the play is not so much his actual spending—which we see little of—but what we might describe as a hubris of possession, an absolute certainty that howsoever he acts within his realm, he cannot be challenged. Believing himself born to command, the young king adopts a variety of question-able revenue schemes without ever considering what the possible consequences of such action might be—even after observing the popularity of his potential rival, Bullyingbrook (I.iv.42-52). He is amazed that a dying Gaunt would dare criticize him (II.i.115-23); and, more incredibly, he replies to York's powerful argument against the seizure of Herford's lands with a curt, one may dare say
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cocky, "Think what you will" (II.1.209-10). Richard believes himself to be so far above other men that neither their hearts nor their hands can touch him. Leaving York his penniless deputy in England (II.iii.104), the proud ruler goes off to subjugate Ireland. He returns to an England wounded by rebel arms, yet retains an absolute confidence in the power of nature and heaven to secure him against his enemies. He fails to anticipate the dangers to his throne or to counteract them, choosing to rely on regiments of militant stones. His supporters, Aumerle and the Bishop of Carlisle, give him polite but much needed counsel:

Car. Fear not, my lord, that Power that made you king
Hath power to keep you king in spite of all.
The means that heavens yield must be embrac'd,
And not neglected; else heaven would,
And we will not. Heaven's offer we refuse,
The proffered means of succors and redress.
Aum. He means, my lord, that we are too remiss,
Whilst Bullingbrook, through our securitie,
Grows strong and great in substance and in power.
(III.ii.27-35)

Richard's reply is a famous one, expressing an overweening confidence in the power of his kingship to dazzle the thievish usurper, concluding with the declaration that for every soldier Bullingbrook has raised:

God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
A glorious angel; then if angels fight,
Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right.
(III.ii.60-62)
Unfortunately, this poor Richard has spent all his angels, and some of Herford's too.

The moralists had a name and definition for the pride that accompanies Richard's prodigality: carnal security. John Downname, in a *Treatise of Securitie* (1622), explains that carnal security "is a Vice or vicious habit, whereby forgetting or neglecting both the justice and power of God in punishing sinne . . . we doe cast off all feare of him, and so quietly and securely goe on in sin without repentance, promising to ourselves immunity from all punishment." Downname further observes that security is often the condition of a country before a disaster, men holding an inordinate and erroneous opinion of their own sufficiency. They believe they can "with their policie either prevent all dangers, or quit themselves out of them, if they be fallen into them." 44

We have already seen that characteristically the prodigal regards his portion of wealth as a debt due him from God or his father. Yet the moral philosophy of Shakespeare's age also warns: "Ye are not Lords of what you have,/ But must account of ech thing make." 45 The victim of carnal security, like Richard, eagerly claims what is his property (and more), but will not be held responsible for its proper use. As a consequence, he is deaf to the
constant warning that no man can be secure. In another work, Downname details the possible disasters that can strike even the good husbandman as a lesson to those who believe they can stand above Providence. But Richard's is an unusual case of carnal security in that, unlike the common sinner, he does not attempt by hook and crook to secure himself against all possible changes of fortune. Rather he avoids all material responsibility for his sovereign actions by putting himself entirely in the hands of God. But Providence will not be blamed for the evils men do, and Richard is unmistakably and willingly a prodigal. So, while he is confident that God and a crown will secure him from all misfortune, the king does not act in a manner to deserve the blessings of either. Instead he prepares himself for a fall by creating a self-image that cannot be sustained. In this, and in other aspects, Richard of England resembles Timon of Athens.

Both men have self-concepts tied to the sun and to deity. Richard's almost-godhead stems from his position as God's anointed minister in the realm. We have already noted his belief that, as a consequence of his special relationship with God, he will be preserved from rebellion by angels if necessary. Later, when Northumberland forgets to kneel in his presence, Richard
asserts the source of his authority in demanding that
the lord "show [him] the hand of God/ That hath dismiss'd [him] from [his] stewardship" (III.iii.77-78). The certain implication is that only God may make or break a monarch. When confronted by the turned loyalty of his sometime followers, Richard inevitably thinks of another God-man and king, Christ:

Did they not [sometimes] cry "All hail!" to me?
So Judas did to Christ; but He, in twelve,
Found truth in all but one; I, in twelve thousand:

And again:

Though some of you, with Pilate wash your hands,
Showing an outward pity, yet you Pilates
Have here deliver'd me to my sour cross,
And water cannot wash away your sin.

Likewise, the flatteries engendered from Timon's endless hoard of gifts include salutations that address him as royalty, and greater. "Plutus, the god of gold,/ Is but his steward," a lord declares in painting Timon as a breeder of fortunes (I.i.276-80). "He's the very soul of bounty!" another observes (I.ii.209), and Timon is himself conscious of a separation between his fellow citizens and his own wealthy person. But unfortunately, the generous Athenian learns that the bounty that makes gods does indeed mar men (IV.ii.41) and, exactly like Richard, if never as explicitly, Timon after his downfall,
127

is associated with Christ. 47

Blind to the dangers that surround them, deaf to all but the soothing charms of their coteries of admirers, both Timon and Richard are too secure to mend their ways or heed the good advice offered to them. Richard ignores York and Gaunt, Carlisle and Aumerle; Timon is warned of his impending fiscal collapse by Flavius and Apemantus, and he later refuses the assistance of Alcibiades. It is no surprise then when neither Timon nor Richard recognizes an affinity with other men until his personal world is shattered. Then with the force of revelation comes Richard's discovery that "I live with bread like you, feel want,/ Taste grief, need friends" (III.ii.175-76)---and he calls this subjection. Timon, likewise, grows so disturbed when made level with the great mass of humanity that he swears off man for the company of beasts (IV.i.35-36). This transformation from godhead to man, from man to beast is central to Shakespeare's perception of the unthrift. For in his two most serious renderings of the concept, Shakespeare shows that the destruction of security and the deprivation of the means to be wanton does not result in the reformation of the truly prodigal nature, but in an opposite moral extreme. The world of the prodigal is compressed to nothing.
We must consider that a prodigal nature, reared from birth in an unending stream of material goods, knowing no contradiction, understanding no condition of dearth, cultivating not the roots of wealth but passively enjoying its fruits, is ill-prepared for adversity. Knowing only excess in spending and emotion, the prodigal at the first bump in the road tumbles off the applecart and reacts in the only way he knows how—excessively. In times of misfortune, the habitual unthrift is not so likely to reform as to spend his grief in the same wanton passion he had traded with prosperity. He travels from one extreme to another not because he is unable to understand a middle ground, but because he is habituated to acting outside it. That Shakespeare understands this psychology is clear from the words he gives to Timon explaining why his fallen state is more burdensome than Apemantus' chronic indigence:

Hadst thou like us from our first swath proceeded
The sweet degrees that this brief world affords
To such as may the passive drugs 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 followed
The sug'red game before thee. But myself,
Who had the world as my confectionary,
The mouths, the tongues, the eyes, and hearts of men
At duty, more than I could frame employment;

I to bear this
That never knew better, is some burthen.

(IV.iii.252-62, 266-67)
For Timon, the transformation from universal lover to misanthrope comes swiftly. In the course of one bitter speech, Timon swears off all ties of fellowship with his species, and takes to the woods to live a solitary, barren existence which suddenly he prefers (even after finding gold) to the luxury he had known in Athens (IV.i.). In Richard II, the prodigal's wrestling with adversity is drawn out at greater length, as if here Shakespeare were interested in the process of change itself, whereas in Timon of Athens, he concentrates on depicting the effects of such a transformation. The dismantling of Richard's world, which takes place over three separate scenes, is—on one level—an explicit statement of an unthrift's self-dissolution after a fall from fortune.

In Richard II, the revelation of self that begins with the return of the king to England to suppress rebellion and concludes with his deposition involves the steady diminution to nothingness of Richard's role in life and his desires. The amplitude of his perception of the world is displayed in III.ii., where the king vacillates between the showy defenses of his divinely ordained realm and a hasty retreat to plots of earth that narrow to a grave. Learning that Bullingbrook has mustered a strong following, and that his own forces have
disbanded at the mistaken report of his death, Richard rallies momentarily when reminded who he is:

I had forgot myself, am I not king?  
Awake thou coward majesty! thou sleepest.  
Is not the king's name twenty thousand names?  
Arm, arm, my name! a puny subject strikes  
At thy great glory. (III.ii.83-87)

But more bad news steals the sudden wind from Richard's sails, and the man who believed his native soil favored by the touch of his royal hands (III.ii.10-11) swings violently to an opposite course when confronted by the first serious challenge to his authority. Suddenly the monarch of angels reduces his personal realm to his mortal body which he is only too eager to dispose of:

Let's choose executors and talk of wills;  
And yet not so, for what can we bequeath  
Save our deposed bodies to the ground?  
Our lands, our lives, and all are Bullingbrook's,  
And nothing can we call our own but death,  
And that small model of the barren earth  
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.  
(III.ii.148-54)

Before the scene ends, he imagines his wall of flesh bored through, and expresses the desire to pine away in "Richard's night" (III.ii.170,209,218).

At Flint Castle (III.iii.), Richard, plagued by memories of what he has been, submits to Bullingbrook's will and authority even before the usurper makes any indication of his intentions. If Richard cannot be everything, he will be nothing. Rather than be debased
a little, rather than compromise and shift, the king resigns his jewels, palaces, apparel, goblets, sceptre, and subjects for an enforced monastic penury (III.iii.147-52). Most significantly, he would trade his:

large kingdom for a little grave,
A little little grave, an obscure grave--
Or . . . be buried in the king's high way,
Some way of common trade, where subject's feet
May hourly trample on their sovereign's head. (III.iii.153-57)

Here we glimpse precisely the luxury of imagination that grips the destitute prodigal, a spending in grief and self-abnegation as magnificently wanton in its own way as the destructive waste that caused the unhappy turn of fortune. At this point in his career, Richard is temperamentally incapable of a reformation or recovery. He is the same man he was as king, operating in changed circumstances. Appropriately, he descends from the ramparts of the castle and sets off for London, resigned to Bullingbrook's will.

The deposition scene, which follows on the heels of the emblematic gardening scene, completes the story of the prodigal's destruction. Richard himself, more aware of his faults than Timon ever is, takes the role of painter, once again luxuriating in the contrasts, and the dazzling splashes of color that mottle his complexion. This step-by-step portrayal of the
abdication of power coupled to the minute depiction of its psychological consequences and reverberations in the mind of the man both performing and witnessing the act is a repetition-in-little of the prodigal king's entire history. He enters Westminster Hall in an excess of emotions and imagery. He spends ten words for every one of Bullingbrook's. He debates and vacillates, and finally makes the ironic declaration that can serve as the epitaph for many a prodigal: "mark me how I will undo myself" (IV.i.203). With legal bindings now in the same words prompted earlier by despair, and with not a few tugs at the heartstrings, Richard surrenders his prerogatives, his balm, crown, manors, rents, and revenues: "Make me, that nothing have, with nothing griev'd" (IV.i.216). Left without title or name, he repeats his desire to melt away, but then curiously, asks for a mirror in which to view this "bankrout of . . . majesty" (IV.i.267). As he gazes at his face, Richard rehearses his crimes—the emphasis on his prodigal sins, the entertaining of flatterers, the support of a huge and unfaithful retinue. A moment of truth for both king and traitorous spectators, the breaking of the glass and the destruction it implies for Richard parallel in spirit and emotional impact the moment in Timon of Athens.
when the noble, royal lord, abandoned by friends and hounded by creditors, stages a last banquet (III.iv.). At the feast, Timon breaks his ties with Athens and his former glory by confronting his "friends" with their greedy natures and pelting them with water and stones. Both men, Timon and Richard, enjoy a moment of theatrical triumph before plunging into their self-made prisons.

Yet once again, the process of Richard's withdrawal is enacted in more detail than Timon's. The glass in a thousand shivers on the ground, his greatness and royalty behind him, Richard, for a moment, toys with a middle role. He plays flatterer to the new king for an uncomfortable dozen lines, ingeniously examining the wit in Bullingbrook's observation that Richard has been the cause of his own sorrow (IV.i.292-304). But circumstances will not allow Richard to hold a sinecure in the usurper's court. Nor can a prodigal man shift, bend, and compromise with the deftness of practiced courtiers.

For Richard, it is the best of times, or the worst:

K. Rich. Then give me leave to go.
Bull. Wither?
K. Rich. Whither you will, so I were from your sights.

(IV.i.313-15)

Richard desires nothing so much now as to retire from the company of men, even if that retreat is to the Tower of London. For Richard as for Timon, humanity has been bred
out to animals and he has indeed been "a king of beasts" (V.i.35).

Though more voluble and thorough in laying down his curses than Richard, Timon is less aware of his own responsibility for creating the world that destroys him. Yet his desires, after the melting of his fortune, are exactly the same: "I am sick of this false world, and will love nought/ But even the mere necessities upon 't" (IV.iii.375-76). We need only substitute Timon's cave for Richard's imagined grave to underscore the similarities in their thinking. Like his fellow royal unthrift, Timon harbors a dream of dissolution and death:

> I was writing of my epitaph;  
> It will be seen to-morrow. My long sickness  
> Of health and living now begins to mend,  
> And nothing brings me all things.  
> (V.i.185-88)

Both prodigals seek to conclude their dazzling careers in the smallest plot nature will allow. Instead of the sounds of gibing Englishmen tramping over his head, Timon imagines the surge punding over his grave, asserting his oblivion (V.i.214-19). Aware like Richard of what he has lost in his life, Timon salutes the world with a final allusion to his former greatness, "Sun hide thy beams, Timon hath done his reign" (V.i.223).
From monarchy to basest penury is a steep decline. The play of *Richard II* underscores this fall by repeated allusions to a motif of king and beggar. The most notable assertion of the idea occurs in the almost comic scene in which Bullingbrook, now Henry IV, is caught between the opposite entreaties of the Duke and Duchess of York over the treasonous cause of their son, Aumerle. Says the king, "Our scene is alt'red from a serious thing,/ And now chang'd to "The Beggar and the King" (V.iii.79-81). Most editions gloss this passage as a reference to an old ballad of King Cophetua and the Beggar-Maid. \(^{48}\) The hint of a comic turn in the action makes the identification a plausible one. But Bullingbrook, by introducing the title at this point, also gives an alternate name to the play in which he is a participant. The rebellious Herford, stripped of his patrimony, had characterized himself as "a wandering vagabond" (II.iii.120). Only a few scenes later, the deposed king is the one addressing the usurper in the humbled tenor of a suitor, "I'll beg one boon/ And then be gone and trouble you no more." (IV.i.302-03). More important, Bullingbrook's mention of the ballad title is separated by only a short scene from Richard's closing soliloquy in which he examines, in tandem, the relative conditions of a
beggar and a king. He uses those very words. So it seems that Shakespeare introduces the ballad title less for the purpose of commenting on a comic situation than for highlighting the reversal of fortunes that occurs in the play by tying the English political situation to a moral-economic musing on the relative happiness of the rich and poor, the beggar and the king. Moralists regularly asserted an essential identity between men of the most opposite stations in terms of wealth, power, and authority. This is exactly what Richard discovers in his final soliloquy—that content does not reside in power, position, or material goods, but in sweet proportion, in conforming one's nature to one's station, whether sovereign or base. The unthrift imagines he is content when the world is at his command and wealth flows from his coffers like an undammed vernal stream. But prodigality implies inevitable beggary, which brings its own pains, along with the knowledge that what had been imagined as a prosperous condition was only a time to feed parasites and flatterers. Thus neither wealth nor poverty is tolerable and the prodigal knows no middle ground to which he can retreat:

Sometimes I am a king;
Then treasons make me wish myself a beggar,
And so I am. Then crushing penury
Persuades me I was better when a king;
Then I am king'd again, and by and by
Think that I am unking'd by Bullingbrook,
And straight am nothing. But what e'er I be,
Nor I, nor any man that but man is,
With nothing shall be pleas'd, till he be eas'd
With being nothing. (V.v.32-41)

These vacillations occur entirely within the king's mind
where the play of the beggar and the king has now re­
treated. In a sermon, Humphrey Sydenham observes that
"our desires multiply strangely to pursue all those
things Imagination hath propounded, in so much, that we
prosecute them (oftentimes) without Rule, or Measure."49
What we observe in Richard is a mind able to fathom the
concept of measure, an imagination capable of giving
form to proportion (in music), but unable to apply such
limits to his own life, imaginative or otherwise, without
declining into oblivion. Richard's exquisite sensitivity
and intelligence do not alter his nature, but make us
more aware of it. Like Timon, who traces the ungracious
nature of man directly into the animal kingdom (IV.iii.
327-45), Richard finds in the acquiescent conduct of his
steed under Bullingbrook a parallel to his own servitude
(V.v.84-89). Both men have known fortune's full turn;
neither has known measure.
In both Richard II and Timon of Athens, the protagonists are men of influence whose behavior determines the welfare of their states. In both cases, they are victimized by the flattery and corruption that their wealth and power attract and create. And in both plays, the corrupt political entities which the deposed prodigals leave behind must be purged by men of stronger, more ruthless, and more practical characters, Bullingbrook and Alcibiades. The purifications achieved by King Henry and his Athenian counterpart are necessary—the garden must be weeded—but not wholly salutary. For the monarch on a usurped throne, the crown does not rest easy. Civil broils threaten—Richard has promised a scourge of plagues—and most ironically, Henry's son seems a prodigal (RII V.iii.1-12). In Athens, while we approve of Alcibiades' humanity in sparing the city, we are left skeptical about the sincerity of its reformation. But whatever the reformers achieve, England and Athens suffer a loss with the demise of their prodigal sons, for Richard and Timon, in their time, bear an undeniable touch of magnificence.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III


3 See, for example, Thomas Cooper, The Arte of Giving (London: 1615), p. 64.


7 "There's Nothing to be Had Without Money" (London: 1633).

8 Ibid.


10 Cowper, p. 491.

12 Carr, sig. Al.


14 Dekker, p. 333.

15 (London: 1573), sigs. C2v-C3r.

16 The Stewards Last Account (London: 1622), p. 3.


21 Carr, sig. E4r.


24 A New Way to Pay Old Debts, II.i.32-33; V.i. 355-73.

25 A Pleasant Comedie Shewing the Contention Betweene Liberalitie and Prodigalitie (1602, facsimile rpt, Old English Drama, 1912), III.ii., sig. D1r.

26 In The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker (London: John Pearson, 1873), III, p. 325.


28 PMLA 87 (1972), 26-30. The citation is from p. 30.

30 *The Debt Book* (London: 1625), pp. 95, 97.


32 (London: 1603), pp. 113, 118.

33 Sig. B3r.


35 I use the "Bullingbrook" of the Riverside edition throughout instead of the more familiar "Bolingbroke."


39 Richard II, II.iii.166 for "caterpillars;" III.1.8-30 for the charges against Bushy and Green.


44 (London: 1622), pp. 6-16.

45 Francis Seager, *The Schoole of Vertue* (London: 1582). The citation is from a grace after dinner.


CHAPTER IV: WEALTH, EVIL, AND COVETOUSNESS

Timon's moral-economic difficulties include at least one dimension substantially ignored in the comedies we have studied and only briefly examined in Richard II, that of evil. With the exception of The Merchant of Venice, none of the works is seriously concerned, from an economic point of view, with exploring the sinister relationship between wealth and evil that moralists term covetousness.

Prodigality is a sin and, hence, reprehensible, but paradoxically, unthrifty is not -- at least in the examples we have analyzed -- evil men, partly because the consequences of their vice are visited chiefly on them. The prodigal is his own victim, and the victim of others. The evils he is shown to be responsible for -- the waste, the encouragement of flattery, the indulgence of the sensual appetites -- are undeniably damaging to a society. But they are not vicious, nor totally self-centered.

The portrait of Richard II in this study is somewhat distorted because the moral-economic perspective has screened some of his sins, notably his involvement
in murder. But that the elements of his unthrifty nature can be singled out without reference to his political machinations suggests strongly that prodigality itself is reasonably free of homicidal tendencies. Prince Hal is also involved in some unsavory activities including robbery, but again, the prodigal's sin verges on sport. Hal returns the stolen money. Only the covetous man, the more sinister of the sinful pair that stands acolyte to liberality, demands his pound of flesh at the point of a knife.

Because covetousness (also called avarice or greed) has a number of aspects, no single, simple definition is likely to be entirely representative of what the moralists taught. Jeremiah Dyke, a puritan divine, in a sermon entitled "A Counterpoison to Covetousness," follows the dictates of Augustine in characterizing the vice as the desire for more goods than a man needs, as a laboring after superfluity. \(^1\) William Perkins, approaching covetousness differently, finds the essence of the sin to be an inordinate care for earthly goods. \(^2\) William Whately combines these concepts and adds several more in the definition of covetousness he settles on in his excellent sermon, A Caveat for the Covetous (1609). Greed, says Whately, "is the dropsie of the minde, an
horseleach humor after wealth, which evermore cryes give, give. It is that makes the heart as a grave for money, or a devouring sepulchre, or a hell for goods, that will not be satisfied, though you cast very much into it. In few and plain terms, It is the desire of having more than what a man hath already, that being sufficient for necessary maintenance.”

Even more indicative of the disdain Shakespeare's age had for the man whose first allegiance is to gold are the characters and caricatures of the miser, the usurer, and the vice, Covetousness, that appear in various moral writings. Richard Barnfield describes the villain of his dream-vision, *The Combat Between Conscience and Covetousness* (1598), as a man clad in a cassock made of the skin of poor folk, hungrily eyeing a bag of gold. Robert Greene likens the covetous to "the Serpent *Hydaspis* [which] is so insatiate, as the more he drinketh, the more hee is a thirst, and the more he desireth, the further is he from the end of his covetous imaginations." The distasteful character of a covetous man assembled by Joseph Hall includes the observations that he is servant to himself, the seller of time (a charge repeatedly pressed on usurers) and the loudest voice against prodigality. When in distress, the niggard would hang himself, except
that he is too cheap to buy the rope. William Loe records an apt simile on the miser; he is, like the medlar, "never good till dead & rotten."

In his homiletic anatomy of the vice, Whately lists four general signs of covetousness and their practical manifestations in a variety of professions. The first mark of the avaricious man is an excessive carking about earthly needs, and a continual doubting of Providence. The sinner plagues his soul with questions: "How shall I doe if a deere yeere come? how if I live till I be so old, or till I be lame or blind." The next sign is niggardliness and the tendency to spend earthly goods on the devil's poor (the idle, riotous, and sinful) rather than on God's (the laborious and the thrifty). The third is too much worldly business, the constant buying, selling, bargaining, and related travail that deprives a man of time for God and his soul. The last mark is injustice and the use of injurious and indirect means to gain wealth. These four signs can be observed in covetous men of all professions. Officers of the law admit the vice in accepting bribes or exacting extortion, while God's ministers too frequently practice a variant—simony. Covetousness is attributed traditionally to landlords and tradesmen who rack rents, burden tenants,
use false weights, ingross commodities, prey on men's ignorance, steal another's bargains, or support lewd enterprises. Individuals who are guilty of unlawful gambling, deceitful promises, or usury are also practitioners of the sin. Jeremiah Dyke's list of evils encouraged by avarice includes the deification of gold, disrespect for the Sabbath caused by those who use it for profit, the spurring of lust made possible when pleasure can be bought to avoid the entanglements of marriage, and a host of mercantile "vipers and snakes"—defrauding, over-reaching, enclosure, and the like. And, of course, the moralists lay on covetousness the most familiar charge, that of hoarding wealth to the good of no man:

Like to the Ape thou kill'st with cherishing,  
And thou would'st hugg Pecunia to death:  
Thou would'st even choake her midst thy pampering,  
And with thy kisses clean sucke out her breath,  
In a close chest, thou mean'st to have her pent,  
And keep her there in lasting prisonment.

Typically, the homilists imagine the miser's gold and silver rusting in his possession for lack of proper employment.

The multiple guises of covetousness, the many characters in which the vice can work its wiles, is typified in William Wager's moral interlude, Inough Is As Good As A Feast (1565), by the dissembling nature of the villain and his retinue. Commanding the loyalty
of Precipitation, Temeritie, and Inconsideration, Covetousness makes his appeal to Worldly Man disguised as Policy, while his friends pretend to be Ready Wit, Agilitie, and Reason. La Primaudaye in The French Academie, even more inclusive than Wager in his indictment of avarice, concludes a lengthy discussion of sins against liberality with the assertion that covetousness is the root of all evil.

Wealth itself does not escape untainted from its association with men who make ill use of it. "As the touchstone trieth gold, so gold trieth men," says William Baldwin, citing Plato. "Riches are the Winges and armes of Concupiscence, which . . . flie into the bosome of pleasure," another writer warns. In The Godly Merchant (1613), William Pemberton, in the course of recommending a moderate love of earthly gain, pauses to consider the actual nature of precious metals: "Gold and silver what are they? Their matter is mud, of the basest element." The author of A Most Rare and Wonderful Tragedy (1584) adds that "certayne diseases are naturally . . . contayned, & secretly inclosed" in this intrinsically worthless substance. And though earthly composition is no shame in itself--man himself being of the dust of the ground--money is demeaned by being a human creation taking value from the traffic it bears in human
wants and desires. Man, for all his sin and weakness, is stamped in God's own image.

The mischief money does takes many forms. Thomas Lupton, the author of miscellaneous moral works, in the prologue to his morality drama, All For Money (1578), provides an extremely thorough catalogue of questions that is virtually an heuristic of the evil-doings of gold:

What mettayle is this money that makes men so mad?
What mischief is it thereby is not wrought?
What earthly thing is not therefore to be had?
What hath bene so loved but money hath bought?
What vertue or goodnes of us so much sought,
Who doth not wishe for money, and that every day:
I would I had thus much money eache one doth say:
Howe many for money have been robbed and murthered?
Howe many false witnes and for money periured?
Howe many wyves from their husbands have been enticed?
Howe many maydens to folly for money allured?
Howe many for money have spirites and devilles conjured?
Howe many friends for money have bene mortall foes?
Mo mischieves for money then I can disclose.
Howe many Kings and Princes for money have bene poysoned?
Howe many betrayers of their countrey for money every day,
Howe many with money from true judgement are led:
Did not the prophete Balam curse Gods people for money?
Did not Iudas for money his master Christ betraye?
Whereof he had no ioye, when he the same had done,
But like a damned wretch honge him selfe full soone.

Exactly because the influence of money permeates every aspect of society and of individual life, as Lupton's almost endless litany proves, does a moralist like Thomas Crewe answer his catechetical "What is money?"
with the somewhat oblique and metaphorical reply, "A Lampe or Soule amongst dead and blynde men: and he that hath it not, is now-adayes dead amongst the quicke." Crewe is less indirect in a subsequent entry in his Nosegay of Morall Philosophie (1580): "Q. Why did Propertius thinke gold to be the strongest thing of this world? A. Because it breaketh cities, walles, hearts of men, fayth, lawes, and all orders, and to say trueth we live in this golden age, wherein it rayneth so." The word play on golden age in Crewe's answer is particularly ironic since his concept of the age of money is the very antithesis of the perfect content the golden age actually represented in the Renaissance.

A commodity like gold that dominates human life is apt to be held in great, even worshipful, esteem. Volpone is, perhaps, the most famous of the element's votaries, but he is not the only one. Money in Liber-alitie and Prodigalitie (1602) enters on stage, singing his own praises:

The God of this world, So mightie of power,  
As makes men, and marres men, and al in an houre.  
Yea where I am, is all prosperitie,  
And where I want, is nought but miserie.  
(I.v.)

And the author of A Most Rare and Wonderfull Tragedy, inveighing against usurers, concludes his narrative of
the death of a money-lender with a description and condemnation of gold-worshippers. It is an idolater who would "make a God of . . . gold, and a Saint of . . . silver; if covetous men be not Idolaters, aske Paule. Col. 3.5. But certainlie they are, for the bagges of a covetous man are his chappel, his covetous heart the altar, his soule the sacrifice, and his gold his God."21

The most serious offense of gold is the evil it brings to human relationships. It can destroy the natural bonds of life, turning black white in Timon's words, sending the youth after the cankered crone for her money, or elevating to a tribunal men more criminal than those they judge. Or gold can become an ultimate value, repudiating natural inclinations toward bounty and generosity for "higher" concerns of greed and security. John Heywood cites an epigram on silver and friendship that explores the relationship between the two:

Hast thou any bowde sylver to lend me Ione?  
Nay: hast thou any broken sylver for me? none,  
Hast thou any clypt sylver? I had, but tis gone.  
Hast thou any crakt grote? crakt grote? nay not one.  
No sylver, bowde, broken, clypt, crakt, nor cut,  
Hers a freend for freendshyp, not woorth a crakt nut.  

What is "bowde" and broken in this little poem is not silver, but friendship. And the speaker, who asks for silver, is as much at fault as Ione who refuses to give it to him. For the speaker is the one who draws the
lesson: no silver/ no friendship. What is needed to put silver and gold in their places is strong, fine language like Meercraft's in The Devil Is An Ass (1616): "Sir, money's a whore, a bawd, a drudge;/ Fit to runne out on errands: Let her goe."23 An even more proper observation is made by Hobson the Tanner in Heywood's If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody (1605) as he rushes off to save a man accused of theft:

A hundred thousand pound cannot make a man:
A hundred shall not hang one by my means;
Men are more worth then monie.24

William Perkins puts wealth into its proper perspective by defining three levels of goods: the necessary, the abundant, and the superfluous. We may ask God only for the first and we should desire no more since earthly goods, subject as they are to casualty, moths, cankers, and thieves, cannot be considered true wealth at all.25 They cannot guarantee health, ease, sleep, honor, comfort, security, or a good stomach. Their possession is a burden.

Men who do trust in wealth to the degree of avarice are subject to a variety of punishments, including an eternal one. The turn of fortune visited upon the prodigal is also the covetous man's prophesied chastisement, though his undoing may be less directly caused by his own lack of policy. Providence, that
should have been his comfort, manages his ruin. While in health, thecovetous man will be denied the comfort of his goods. When in misfortune, he will not be assisted.

In Wager's interlude, Worldly Man, thoroughly corrupted by Covetousness and at the height of his power, is suddenly stricken with diseases, deprived of his wealth, and ferried off to Hell by the devil. According to Dyke, God smites not only the body, goods, and soul of the greedy, but also their posterity. We have already observed this in the theater, typically, when the miserly father is "blessed" with a prodigal son who wastes the wealth of a lifetime in a few acts. In this way the sins of the son punish the evil of the father.

Musings on covetousness in Shakespeare generally toe the line of the moral philosophy of his age. For example, describing what moves Tarquin to undertake his crime leads Shakespeare, in The Rape of Lucrece, to write this intricately paradoxical observation on the avaricious character:

Those that much covet are with gain so fond,
That what they have not, that which they possess,
They scatter and unloose it from their bond,
And so by hoping more they have but less,
Or gaining more, the profit of excess
Is but to surfeit, and such griefs sustain
That they prove bankrout in this poor rich gain.
(lines 134-40)
Much more direct are the warnings against riches that Duke Vincentio offers condemned Claudio in *Measure for Measure*:

If thou art rich, thou'rt poor,  
For like an ass, whose back with ingots bows,  
Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a journey,  
And death unloads thee. Friends hast thou none,  
For thine own bowels, which do call thee [sire],  
The mere effusion of thy proper loins,  
Do curse the gout, sapego, and the rheum  
For ending thee no sooner. (III.i.25-32)

But Renaissance moral-economic thought did not condemn all wealth or ascribe entirely to the anti-acquisitive attitudes of its often medieval ethical heritage. Instead, alongside the often vituperative attacks on wealth thrived a counter-tradition which praised riches, championed the judicious pursuit of material prosperity, and honored the merchant as a hero. In this tradition, the arguments made against gold were turned around. If certain diseases were endemic to the possession of wealth, then it is equally true that certain precious stones had healing properties. If gold, silver, and jewels were basely derived from the earth, so are all of God's creatures. Attacks on the actual substance of the precious metals—mere mud—were countered by an appreciation of those specific qualities and beauties for which they were valued. William Stafford's
even dulls the romance of the shiny metals a little with its practical explication of their coinage properties. Silver and gold are relatively light, divisible, and portable substances notably subject to impressions. Gold uniquely cannot be burnt or debased by fire, is untouched by rust, defiles nothing it touches, needs no processing, can be drawn into leaves, and is rare. So while monies do not deserve deification, they can be materials of some intrinsic value, even beauty.

A more serious defense of money on surer logical grounds is offered by Roger Bieston in The Bayte and Snare of Fortune (1550), a dialogue which early promises to be no more than another explanation of how man, the superior creature, becomes the subject of his servant, money. But The Bayte and Snare actually reaches a more sophisticated and moderate conclusion. In the dialogue, Money is frank about his powers. He can do all the evil things Lupton claims for him in the prologue to All For Money. But, countering Man's accusation that Money is the cause of all evil, the allegorical representative of specie insists that he is also the upholder of authority and, with it, justice. Man, not Money, is responsible for living without measure and desiring more than is
sufficient. For all the evils Money is blamed, he proposes counterbalancing charities and good works. At last Money overcomes Man's strongest argument against him by asserting that false witness—and not thirty pieces of silver—bought Christ's death. Allegorical humanity capitulates, drawing this thoughtful conclusion:

If man with his money would be so reasonable
To use it in vertue, and with good entent,
The usage thereof should never be damnable.

Even in usury the culprit is not money, but the man who would try to take from it more than its actual value. For as the Spirit points out to the Flesh in a dialogue entitled *The Ruinate Fall of the Pope Usury* (1580?), money is made "to pass between man & man, as a thing having ful value, neither to be diminished nor augmented." Like all things in Shakespeare's England (or so it seems), money is governed by a moral economics of proportion, mean, and proper estate.

The great Renaissance mercantile adventurers who, like the merchant Antonio, gambled their wealth on the success of perilous expeditions, were, in the eyes of many moralists, playing an essential role in the divine plan of human commerce. "God hath ordeyned that no countrey should have all commodities," explains William Stafford, so that "they have neede one of anothers help &
thereby love and societe [will] growe among all men the more." This concept is depicted emblematically in The Tryumph of Honor and Industry (1617), a brief masque written by Thomas Middleton to celebrate the swearing in of George Bowles as Lord Mayor of London. An apostrophe to industry, honor, fame, and other virtues expected from a Lord Mayor, the work makes interesting connections between trade, commerce, and love. The first invention includes this stage direction: "presenting India (the Seate of Merchandise) this India sits on the top of an Illustrious Chariot, on the one side of her sits trafficke or merchandize, on the other side, Industry, both fitted and adorned according to the property of their natures, Industry holding a Golden Ball in her hand upon which stands Cupid, signifying that Industry gets both wealth and love, and with her associate trafficke or Merchandize, who holds a globe in her hand, knits love and peace amongst all Nations."  

To serve this grand concept of providential distribution of resources, the ideal merchant must possess remarkable talents and virtues. Nicholas Breton's character of "A Wealthy Merchant" indicates some of the ways an adventurer can get wealth without injury to his conscience or the good of others. Unlike the unworthy
merchant, who is little more than a land-bound peddler
prospering by wit and deceit, the great traveler:

... is a discoverer of Countries and a finder out
of commodities, resolute in his attempts, and royall
in his expences ... he is the exercise of the ex-
change, the honor of credit, the observation of Time,
and the understanding of thrift: his studie is num-
ber, his care his accounts, his comfort his Con-
sience, and his wealth his good name ... by his
Sea Gaine, he makes his land-purchase, and by the
knowledge of Trade, findes the key of Treasure. ... In
summe, hee is the Pillar of a City, the enricher
of a Country, the furnisher of a Court, and the
worthy servant of a King.35

Typically, the successful merchant, with money and credit
at his disposal, must be an able bargainer, diligent in
selling, truthful in his promises, and affable in his
words.36 The specific evils a merchant must avoid are
succinctly catalogued in a poem by Francis Davidson
in which the speaker is an honest trader:

I never did forestall, I never did ingrosse
Nor custome did withdraw, though I return'd with
losses;
I thrive by faire exchange, by selling and by
buying,
And not by Jewish use, reprisall, fraud, or lying.37

That merchants were not universally popular is
clear in the defensive tone of sermons preached about and
to them. Daniel Price, in a homily, "The Merchant" (1608),
defends the mercantile trade as an honest profession
sanctioned by Christ in parable (Matt. 13.45-46). Price
cites the charitable works of the merchants and contrasts
them to the doings of idle men without professions. William Loe traces a parallel between commerce and life in his sermon, "The Merchant Reall" (1620). Like the good merchant, the good Christian must search for the pearl of great price and be willing to sell all for Christ. Pushing the analogy to its logical extension, Loe posits faith as the gold by which we are made able to buy "the most precious commodity, salvation," and death becomes "but a blessed exchange."

English merchants did not need to rely on biblical references and analogies of salvation to justify their existence. Like other professional men, they stood on their own integrity, as a piece of theatrical propaganda like Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* aptly demonstrates. A hodgepodge of royal panegyric and youthful philandering, the play is essentially a mirror for merchants. In his characterization of Sir Thomas Gresham, the founder of the Royal Exchange, and his fellow merchants, Heywood emphasizes the risks businessmen must take and their need to accept fate, whether good or bad. Merchants are shown to be worthy men, if not by instinct, then by their susceptibility to admonition and good example.
Gresham is the star of Heywood's production, and his introduction by his fellow merchants follows the lines of the mercantile ideal:

**Factor of Gres.** He ([i.e. Gresham]) is a Marchant of good estimate,
Care how to get, and fore-cast to encrease,
(If so they be accounted) be his faults.
**Barbary Merchant.** They are especiall vertues, being cleare
From avarice and base extortion. 39

One of Gresham's many projects is to line a hall in his exchange with portraits of merchants who have distinguished themselves by their generosity. The showing of the portraits occasions a little sermon from Sir Thomas, one of several that moves his comrades to virtue:

Why should not all of us being wealthy men,
And by Gods blessing onely rais'd, but
Cast in our mindes how we might them exceed
In godly workes, helping of them that need. 40

Gresham permits himself one moment of splendid waste to demonstrate that his attitude toward wealth is the proper one, that, not having asked God for more than necessity, he is resigned to misfortune should it come, just as he is grateful for prosperity. When the loss of 60,000 pounds follows hard on the foundering of a ship bearing his expensive paintings, Gresham's response is to smash a costly pearl and take it in his drink, explaining,
I doe not this as prodigall of my wealth,  
Rather to shew how I esteeme that losse  
Which cannot be regain'd.  

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *  
We are not like those that are not liberall  
Till they be dying, what we meane to give,  
We will bestow, and see done whilst we live.  

The honor bestowed on Sir Thomas Gresham in Heywood's play shows the esteem in which England could hold a man who followed a respectable profession—even a monied one—with diligence and honesty. (The usurer, however, because his business was innately sinful like that of a procurer or bawd, cannot be included in this group.)

Moral philosophy rigorously maintained the distinction between covetousness, which is a sinful elevation of wealth and security for its own purposes, and merchandizing, which can be avaricious, but is not so by nature. Monied professions, though often storehouses of abuse, are only the most obvious of the many human endeavors that invite the near occasion of covetous desire.

* * * * *

The connection between wealth and evil in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida provides some elucidation of the point. Shakespeare frequently uses commercial metaphors to describe a relationship of love, in Romeo and Juliet for example:
I am no pilot, yet wert thou as far
As that vast shore with the farthest sea,
I should adventure for such merchandise.

(II.ii.82-84)

Romeo here is as honest and adventurous in these sentiments as those men he takes for his exemplars. In the sonnets too, commercial models sometimes are employed to define relationships aptly without unduly burdening them with the moral and ethical baggage that can accompany mercantile concepts, as in Sonnet 87:

Farewell, thou art too dear for my possessing,
And like enough thou know'st thy estimate;
The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;
My bonds in thee are all determinate.

But in *Troilus and Cressida*, metaphor fades and love actually becomes as commercial as the terms by which it is described. Whereas Romeo, the adventuring mariner, finds Juliet as valuable to him as a lover as the most precious cargo can be to an expectant merchant, Troilus regards Cressida as an actual cargo to be traded for, obtained, and used. The same analogy serves each wooer, but different notions of commerce are operating. In isolation, Troilus' use of commercial metaphor would be devoid of decidedly negative connotations if Shakespeare had not inserted the allusion to Pandar:

Her bed is India, there she lies, a pearl;
Between our Ilium and where she resides,
Let it be call'd the wild and wand'ring flood,
Ourself the merchant, and this sailing Pandar
Our doubtful hope, our convoy, and our bark.
(I.i.100-04)

But we learn in the lady's soliloquy a scene later that Cressida too regards their love as a marketable commodity, and that she intends to reserve herself in a way that will increase her value:

Men prize the thing ungain'd more than it is. That she was never yet that ever knew Love got so sweet as when desire did sue.
(I.ii.289-91)

And at what should be the apex of their love, at the tender and awful moment when Troilus and Cressida learn they must be parted, Troilus resorts to a description of their relationship that proves, once again, to be more factual than metaphorical:

We two, that with so many thousand sighs Did buy each other, must poorly sell ourselves With the rude brevity and discharge of one.
(IV.iv.39-41)

Love bought and sold, with the aid of a pimp, is more precisely styled as lust, and Shakespeare does not pretend that Troilus' desire is anything else:

O, be thou my Charon, And give me swift transportance to these fields Where I may wallow in the lily-beds Propos'd for the deserver!
(III.ii.10-13)

The association of love and commerce in the play is not incidental, but follows a definite moral-economic logic.
For lust, unlike love, consumes and destroys. By sanctioning Paris' rape of Helen, Troy becomes the citadel of lust, and within that stronghold, Troilus and Cressida share the only kind of emotion they see championed.

Alex Nicchole's *A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving* (1615) provides a lengthy study of the contrast between love and lust worth extended quotation for the acuity of its indirect comment on the motives that propel the action of *Troilus and Cressida*:

Lust, the destroyer of Love, the supplanter and undermyner of chastity, the Spring-frost of beauty, the tyrant of the night, the enemy of the day, the most potent match-maker in all Marriages under thirty, and the chiefe breaker of all from eightenee to eighty, that protests that in a hote bloud that it nere performes in a cold, a regarder onely of the present, and to that effect will with Esau sell a birthright for a messe of pottage, no longer esteeming the object then the use ... that for a minutes ioy, will incurre a months sorrow, that for one drop of water will mud the whole fountaine that gave it, for one sweete fruit will blast the whole Tree that bare it; whereas the effect of love is contrary, oppressing folly, surpressing fury, aiming to preserve, not to destroy, and to that end, regards the end, by subduing passions and motives that would seem to oppose the tranquility thereof. ... Lust is more spacious than love, hath no meane, no bound, but, not to be at all, more deepe, more dangerous then y Sea & less restrayne, for the Sea hath bounds, but it hath none; not woman but all woman-kind is the range there of and all that whole sect not able to quench it neither.42

Troy, a city driven by a policy of lust, heads toward inevitable destruction. And while its course seems a
prodigal waste of lives, the sin it practices is actually **covetousness**. As Niccholes explains, "In love there is no lacke, in Lust there is the greatest penury, for though it be cloyed with too much, it pines for want." For essentially, as Sapience in an interlude entitled *The Trial of Treasure* (1567) argues, lust leads men ineluctably to covet and usurp the possessions of others.

The same interlude underscores the relationship of lust to lucre, the latter being mistress to the former under the guise of Lady Treasure, a creature more beauteous than Helen, Minerva, or Cressida. The blurring of terms and relationships that results (love, lust, lucre, mistress, treasure) actually helps define what lust is more generally: an unwonted desire for earthly goods. Whatever the goods be, flesh or gold, the desire for and single-minded attachment to them is destructive. Similar sentiments are expressed in *Romeo and Juliet* by Friar Laurence (II.vi.9-15), or in a single line of *Venus and Adonis*: "Love surfeits not, Lust like a glutton dies" (1. 803). In *Measure for Measure*, lust and whoring are described as forms of usury (III.ii.1-27) and, as if she has overheard, Cressida discourses about the difference between desire and performance in precisely the one to ten ratio that represents the highest rate of interest
allowed in Shakespeare's England:

They say all lovers swear more performance than they are able, and yet reserve an ability that they never perform; vowing more than the perfection of ten, and discharging less than the tenth part of one.

(III.ii.84-87)

The commercial metaphors applied in the play underscore the ill-advised cupidity of Troy. Its losses in lives and materiel are not matched by what it gains in keeping Helen. And keeping Helen is dishonorable as well as a bad bargain. Shakespeare's harsh judgment of Priam's kingdom is not unique. The Trial of Treasure, for one, makes a similar point in alluding to the Troy story:

What helpeth it to have Helene in Troye,
If the conscience of man continually sting,
Elation and Pride, no commoditie doth bring,
But is often knowne the forerunner of shame;
And the blotte of immortal memorie and fame.

To teach the instability of wealth, Robert Bagnall uses King Priam as an example of a man whose great fortune and power is quickly dissipated. And Vertue in Acheley's Massacre of Money describes Pecunia as "the worlds Helena," thus highlighting an identification between lust and lucre. In Shakespeare's play, it is, appropriately, the lustfully avaricious Troilus who defies the sound reason of Hector, and argues successfully against the suggestion that Helen be returned. In calling for
Helen's release, Hector once again alludes to the ten percent interest paid for the use of a commodity:

Since the first sword was drawn about this question
Every tithe soul 'mongst many thousand dismes,
Hath been as dear as Helen, I mean, of ours.
If we have lost so many tenths of ours,
To guard a thing not ours nor worth to us
(Had it our name) the value of one ten,
What merits in that reason which denies
The yielding of her up? (II.ii.18-25)

Troilus' rebuttal is fashioned in language that sounds bounteous and noble, but actually reflects what Niccholes observes of the voluptuous disregard of lust for proportion and order:

Will you with compters sum
The past-proportion of this infinite,
And buckle in a waist most fathomless
With spans and inches so diminutive
As fears and reasons? (II.ii.28-32)

Knowing Shakespeare's fondness for puns on Falstaff's waist/waste, it is difficult not to hear the same irony in this passage. For Troilus has already set aside all consideration of consequences, and finds the immediate objects of lust, whether Helen or his own Cressida, more appealing than Hector's sound logic, which is never more convincing than in the observation on value: "'Tis mad idolatry/ To make the service greater than the god" (II.ii.56-57). Yet Hector capitulates before the juvenile reasoning of Troilus, who berates his fellow Trojans for being thieves "unworthy of a thing stol'n,"
and of Paris, who would undo an evil by persisting in it (II.ii.61-96; 146-62). Honor is at stake.

But more than honor, what is really on the line in *Troilus and Cressida* is value. The sound inherent worth of things as defended by Hector (II.ii.53-56) is undermined in the action by the philosophy of the statement that precedes it, what W. R. Elton calls a turning point in Renaissance thought, Troilus' pointed question: "What's aught but as 'tis valued?" (II.ii.52). 

Achilles ponders much the same question, if not so succinctly then at least with additional clauses of detail:

And not a man, for being simply man,
Hath any honor, but honor for those honors
That are without him, as place, riches, and favor--
Prizes of accident as oft as merit,
Which when they fall, as being slippery standers,
The love that lean'd on them as slippery too,
Doth one pluck down another, and together
Die in the fall. (III.iii.80-87)

Thus the value of all commodities, of honor as well as of love, comes to be rated not by intrinsic qualities or what is within, but by the intensity of desire, by how much a man covets a thing. This is the point of the mercantile allusions and the associations suggested between love and lucre in the play. The action of *Troilus and Cressida* takes place in a free market of human flesh. The Greeks trade war and lives for the
return of Helen. Troilus and Cressida treat each other as objects. Achilles has his masculine whore (V.i.17) and surveys Hector as he would a piece of meat (IV.v. 237-38). And Cressida is finally bartered for Antenor (III.iii.18-29).

The moral economics of this complex play proves to be relatively simple, explaining what happens when human relationships are reduced to trading and the standard of value becomes covetousness or desire. We can perhaps best understand Hector's opting for honor and the retention of Helen, despite his refutation of the chop-logic of Troilus and Paris, as a futile attempt to base the immorality and stupidity of continued war on a commodity which he values in kind with his comrades: their several dignities. But, as Hector's death proves, there is little room for honor in a world of lucre.

* * * * *

Another land infected by commodity and covetous desire is the Denmark of Prince Hamlet. Though less occupied with a moral-economic theme than Troilus and Cressida, Hamlet makes sufficient allusion to specific commercial and monetary abuses to lead Arnold Kettle to suggest that Hamlet's dilemma is related to "a general seventeenth-century historical dilemma involving the
transition from medieval feudal society to the bourgeois society which superseded it." And while Hamlet is not a commercial play with an economic thesis, the moral-economic excesses it does detail contribute to the creation of the dank and scheming atmosphere in which its characters operate, a strange world of spectacle and gloom, noise and silence, prodigality and feigned thrift.

The luxury of Elsinore is not remarkable in itself; royal magnificence would sanction a certain degree of pomp, festivity, and surfeit. But Claudius' regimen, and the model it sets for the entire kingdom, is never presented as healthy grandeur in the play, at least not when the condition of the kingdom is the subject of Hamlet's musings:

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't, ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.

(I.ii.133-37)

Hamlet's is a general complaint here, a dissatisfaction with "things as they are," but the play leaves little doubt of the specific nature of the court's dissipations. Appetite tops the list. Hamlet complains of Gertrude's hanging on Claudius "as if increase of appetite had grown/ By what it fed on" (I.ii.143-45).

The ghost of Hamlet's father is similarly disturbed by
the "luxury and damned incest" rotting the state of Denmark (I.v.83), while Laertes, giving counsel to his sister, has prodigal maids on his mind (I.iii.36-37).

Uncontrolled appetite also characterizes that "vicious mole of nature" which abroad, Hamlet tells us, so tarnishes the reputation of the Danes, their love of drink:

The King doth wake to-night and takes his rouse, Keeps wassail, and the swagg'ring up-spring reeds; And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down, The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out The triumph of his pledge. (I.iv.8-12)

The cacophony of roaring voices and braying trumpets ripping through the silence of the night explains well enough why the Danish court might fall in the estimation of those not native to the custom. But addiction to drink is also, predictably, a violation of the dictates of moral philosophy. Baldwin, La Primaudaye, and Stubbs all condemn drinking to excess, the last comparing the inebriated man to a dangerous animal: "a man once drunk with wine or strong drink, rather resembleth a brute beast, then a christian man; for, doth not his eies begin to stare & be red, fiery & blered, blubbering forth seas of teares? doth he not frothe and fome at the mouth like a bore? ... Are not his wits & spirits as it were drowned? Is not his
understanding altogether decayed." If we recall that the play ends with Gertrude dead from a poisoned cup and Claudius made to finish off the draught (V.ii.309-26), then what we learn early of the Danes'—notably Claudius'—addiction to drink anticipates an irony in the destruction of the royal couple.

Corrupt associations cling to Claudius as prodigal ones find their magnetic center in Falstaff. Even Guildenstern's seconding of the king's determination to send Hamlet to England, a defense of majesty's right "to keep those many many bodies safe/ That live and feed upon your Majesty" (III.iii.9-10), is tainted by the suggestion in "live and feed" of sycophantic and parasitic relationships between monarch and court. Hamlet himself chooses a string of commercial images to degrade his uncle's character in the closet scene:

A murtherer and a villain!
A slave that is not twentieth part the [tithe]
Of your precedent lord, a Vice of kings,
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,
And put it in his pocket. (III.iv.96-101)

(In contrast to Thief Claudius, who stole away the life of his father and popped in between Hamlet and the crown, the prince characterizes the pirates who make possible his escape on the journey to England as "thieves of mercy"—IV.vi.20-21.) In the assessment of his nephew,
Claudius rules a corrupt and unappealing Denmark where: "in the fatness of these pursy times/ Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg" (III.iv.153-54). Hamlet hones his critique of the debauches of Claudius' court by attributing to it a seeming-concern for good husbandry: "Thrift, thrift Horatio, the funeral bak'd meats/ Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" (I.ii.180-81). So Hamlet would cynically explain the hasty marriage of his mother to his uncle. The idea haunts him and is repeated—perhaps part of the dozen or sixteen lines of Hamlet's composition—by the Player Queen in the mousetrap: "The instances that second marriage move/ Are base respects of thrift, but none of love" (III.ii.182-83).

The most outspoken proponent of what proves to be mock-thrift, however, is the Lord Chamberlain. In giving advice to his son, Laertes, Polonius displays some familiarity with the apothegms of husbandry:

Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy, rich, not gaudy,

Neither a borrower nor a lender be,
For loan oft loses both itself and friend
And borrowing dulleth[th] edge of husbandry.

(I.iii.70-71, 75-77)

He later denies his trust in Laertes by commissioning Reynaldo to spy on him. But Laertes has apparently
learned his lesson. Returning to Denmark to avenge the death of his father, challenged by Claudius how he will support himself, Laertes declares "for my means, I'll husband them so well,/ They shall go far with little" (IV.v.139-40). Polonius would teach his daughter, Ophelia, a similar concern for worldly exchange in matters of love (I.iii.88-136). She has been, so Polonius has heard, "free and bounteous" of audience with the Lord Hamlet, and he reprimands her generosity in a short homily that turns her innocent expression, "He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders of his affection to me," into the occasion of a series of commercial plays on tenders, pay, sterling, dearly, brokers, investments, suits, and bonds. She must temper her prodigal soul and, like Cressid, increase her value in the marketplace by scarcity:

Be something scanter of your maiden presence,
Set your entreatments at a higher rate
Than a command to parle. (I.iii.121-23)

Ophelia obeys the letter of her father's law, but is uncorrupted by its commercial spirit, to judge by her ability to discern between gift and giver when returning Hamlet's remembrances. She will not keep them, whatever their worth, when that which gives them value in her mind--Hamlet's affection--is withdrawn: "Rich gifts
wax poor when givers prove unkind" (III.i.100).

Hamlet is given the chance to offer final comment on Polonius' husbandry when he spears him behind the arras in his mother's bedroom, "How now? A rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!" (III.iv.23). Ducats return to mind when he ponders the most emblematic moral-economic absurdity of the play, Fortinbras' troops marching to take a portion of Poland's land which a captain observes "hath in it no profit but the name./ To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it" (IV.iv.19-20). Hamlet characteristically pierces through to the heart of the matter, stripping away politics, policy, and honor to reveal that two thousand men and twenty thousand ducats are on the line "even for an eggshell" (IV.iv.25-66). What follows, however, seems incredible, originating from so perceptive a critic of prodigal enterprise as Hamlet; he surrenders to the illogic of Fortinbras' war and uses it as a model against which to compare his own behavior:

Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honor's at the stake. How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That for a fantasy and trick of fame
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!
(IV.iv.53-66)

The decision to act upon this paradigm, to cynically
divorce action from value, is arguably a cause of Hamlet's
demise. But the transformation of a man even so noble
as the prince is not totally inexplicable in a court and
world that offers only one example after another of
"thrift following fawning," (III.iii.62) and blind
armies marching off to conquer unwanted frontiers.

For chief of the moral-economic faults of Den­
mark is its uncertainty about values and, consequently,
about the righteousness of action. Claudius knows that
his power and position are maintained by a gilded hand
that buys out justice. But he also realizes that,
while there may be no shuffling in heaven, in the "cor­
rupted currents" of this world such shifting can preserve
his stolen majesty and state. The very scene in which
he ponders his guilt--indeed agonizes over it--proves
him right (III.iii.36-98). For Hamlet refuses to take
Claudius' life at prayer because he cannot know the
value of the king's repentance: "And how his audit stands
who knows save heaven?" (III.iii.82). Hamlet, of course,
is unsure of his own worth and role, his discontent
stemming—if John Gore's lesson on happiness cited in an earlier chapter can be applied here—from his failure to know himself. The prince, enamored of the beggar-king paradox, delights in explaining to Claudius "how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar" (IV.iii.30-31). But perhaps most important, he chooses to portray his princely self on several occasions as that very beggar: "So poor a man as Hamlet" (I.v.184); "beggar that I am" (II.ii.272); "I am set naked on your kingdom" (IV.vii.43-44). And then there is Hamlet's exchange with Polonius over the care of the players, words that express the liberal, forgiving spirit of man's best nature:

Pol. My lord, I will use them according to their desert.
Ham. God's bodkin, man, much better: use every man after his desert, and who shall scape whipping? Use them after your honor and dignity—the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in. (II.ii.527-33)

The sentiments originate in a mind profoundly aware that the worth of every man, his guilt or innocence, cannot be judged—not even aided by the secret intelligences of a ghost. So the call to action here, as in the later scene with Fortinbras' troops, is also separated from intrinsic or normative values. However, the beggar-prince's instructions to Polonius tie honor to
bounty, not blood. And between these two moments of moral-economic judgment, or more precisely, these two attempts to make assessments of value in a world confused by shifting and sometimes contradictory demands of prodigality and thrift, corruption and conscience, Hamlet changes from a man given to liberality to one eager to twirl a rapier. The motifs of waste and thrift do not propel that change, but help to create the atmosphere (or poetic texture) in which such an alteration of character, such a corruption, is explainable.

Without an excess of stratagems or patternings, Shakespeare makes Hamlet's Denmark seem rapacious and foul, mean and hypocritical by the skillful introduction of recognizable moral-economic themes. Like Troy, Denmark is disposed to trade human beings at marketable prices. Hamlet, finding that he cannot do that, discovering that the human mind cannot be audited or that human actions defy valuation, is forced to act either on the logic that leads to bounty or on the passion that serves revenge.  

* * * * *

Macbeth also demonstrates how Shakespeare can use commercial motifs to generate an appropriately evil poetic and dramatic ambience. In both Macbeth and
Hamlet Shakespeare uses intimations of corruption and commercial disaster to highlight his theme of evil and to give depth and contour to his projection of villainy on a national scale. But Macbeth is, in some ways, a more systematic study of order and chaos than Hamlet because in it the cycle from order to disorder to order is complete. The economic leitmotif of the play follows the cycle, beginning in bounty, suffering through avarice, and concluding in measure.

The play opens with a bounteous King Duncan presiding over an uneasy balance of rising and falling military fortunes: "What he [i.e. the Thane of Cawdor] hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won" (I.iii.67). For his action in battle, Macbeth will reap an abundance of honor. But rising fortune is the surest test of content and, if the Thane of Glamis wins reward and power unbidden ("by chance" says Macbeth), he should be grateful according to the moral philosophers and not covetous of additional, superfluous honors. John Gore's definition of content, the fitting of a man's mind to his estate, applies here. Banquo, speaking of Macbeth early in the play, sets Gore's definition into concrete imagery, that of clothing:
New honors come upon him,  
Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould  
But with the aid of use.   (I.iii.144-46)

The play thereafter recounts the gory history of Macbeth's attempt to mold his new clothes to a self he does not know and to find content in his usurped trappings. But kingly estate does not fit Macbeth's criminal character. Early, when called Thane of Cawdor before he has learned of his new honor, he asks, "Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?" (I.iii.108-09). And yet he takes upon himself an even heavier mantle, one to which he has far less title—Duncan's. By the end of the play, he cannot hide his improper habiliment from his enemies who observe that:

He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause  
Within the belt of rule.  
.......................................................................................  
Now does he feel his title  
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe  
Upon a dwarfish thief.   (V.ii.15-16, 20-22)

This unconcealable failure to accept his proper station is a violation of proportion and mean, as the first two lines make clear. Carr, in The Fall of Prodigalitie (1573), like other commentators on the vice, points to inappropriate dress as a sign of the sin. "It is not meete to see a beggar weare a rich robe," he declares and the lesson applies fittingly to Macbeth. 53
Some intimation of the moral-economic upset to wrack Scotland is heard in the report of Cawdor's death, the thane whose fall lifts the wings of Macbeth's fortunes. His passing is marked by a strange, unexpected reversal of custom and values:

Nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving it. He died
As one that hath been studied in his death,
To throw away the dearest thing he ow'd,
As 'twere a careless trifle. (I.iv.7-11)

An honors ceremony follows the epitaph, in which a grateful King Duncan rewards his valiant warriors, Macbeth and Banquo. To paint Macbeth's villainy its blackest, Duncan is portrayed by Shakespeare as a man of studied graces and benignity. His goodness, if anything, is suggestively excessive, even wanton by his own admission. He speaks and rewards in hyperbole:

O worthiest cousin!
The sin of ingratitude even now
Was heavy on me. Thou art so far before,
That swiftest wing of recompense is slow
To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserv'd,
That the proportion both of thanks and payment
Might have been mine! Only I have left to say,
More is thy due than more than all can pay.
(I.iv.14-21)

Like Macbeth before, Banquo is paid for his service, and the monarch, "wanton in fullness," breaks into tears of joy, his pleasure spilling out into physical manifestation (I.iv.33-35). Blinded by his
own enthusiasm and excesses almost like Timon of Athens, Duncan rejoices in the worthiness of Macbeth: "in his commendations I am fed;/ It is a banquet to me" (I.iv. 55-56). This immediately follows an aside in which Macbeth’s murderous thoughts are shared with the audience. After a last gift to Lady Macbeth, Duncan goes to his bed, gaining from Banquo the significant report that the king is shut up for the night "in measureless content" (II.i.17). Macbeth will never know similar peace. The killing of Duncan is properly described in a series of commercial images that creates a sense of destruction, pillage, the upset of what is revered, and the triumph of wantonness and dearth:

Here lay Duncan,
His silver skin lac’d with his golden blood,
And his gash’d stabs look’d like a breach in nature
For ruin’s wasteful entrance. (II.iii.111-14)

Duncan, silver and gold, gored and wasted, becomes the emblem of a nation soon to be plundered, a holy idol dashed from its pedestal by a barbarian hand. Macbeth’s words turn the murdered sovereignty of Scotland into a treasury pillaged by a robber, an image that prefigures the action of the middle acts of the play. Duncan, like Prodigal Timon after him, is the victim of his own goodness. He is plundered and destroyed by the man he
raised to greatness. His gifts to Macbeth of power and position, like Timon's of talents and jewels, are the instruments of his downfall; but Duncan's bounty, unlike Timon's, is never morally questioned (although the king's judgment must be suspect, especially in the appointment of Thanes of Cawdor).

Yet in Macbeth the focus is not on bounty itself and its downfall, but on the destroyer of largess—Macbeth—and on the ambition that corrupts him and prevents his happiness. By his actions in suppressing the rebellion against Duncan, the new Thane of Cawdor knows that he has earned a new status in Scotland; the verb he uses to describe his action is a commercial one, and the color of his glory is gold:

He [i.e. Duncan] hath honor'd me of late, and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon. (I.vii.32-35)

Macbeth is right. The honor he has fits him. Moral economy directs that he be satisfied with what he has won honorably. Nothing shows better Macbeth's appreciation for what is proper to him as a thane of Duncan and as a man than his moral-economic declaration of the mean and proportion in human behavior: "I dare do all that may become a man;/ Who dares do more is none"
(I.vii.46-47). The man who reaches beyond his proper station and imagines himself above his kind, like Richard II crushing rebellion with legions of angels or Macbeth communicating with spirits to learn how he may best shape his own fate, is doomed to become less than a man, a beggar or a king of beasts. And for a man, being just that--a man--is the only hope for content: "If chance will have me king, why chance may crown me/Without my stir" (I.iii.143-44). To labor for abundance, to murder for superfluity is, according to the moral philosophy of content, dangerous to a man's soul and well-being on earth. Such labor destroys inner peace and oppresses those menials upon whose backs new riches and honors are erected.

But Macbeth is spurred by the witches' proph­ecies, by his wife's challenges to his manhood, and by what is surprisingly easy to ignore, his own driving ambition, to kill Duncan and his own sleep. That action, the murder of a king and the consequent rise to supreme power, is put into moral economic focus by a line in the porter scene:

Knock, knock, knock! Who's there, i' th' name of Belzebub? Here's a farmer, that hang'd himself on th' expectation of plenty. (II.iii.3-5)
This condemnation of hoarding would have been received sympathetically by an audience familiar with the un­scrupulous behavior of some farmers in times of dearth. But Shakespeare's point is moral, not social. The farmer expecting plenty is Macbeth ruining the storehouse of Scotland's royal bounty. But the hoarding is hanging. The expectation of plenty will never be fulfilled. Instead Macbeth follows elusive content down the winding path of greater and greater involvement in evil until he has strayed beyond recovery. In fact, his first act—the murder—is his hanging. Not even a capable reign and the security of an heir can wash hands stained with innocent blood.

Lady Macbeth feels the weight of Banquo's threat to the succession and admits that covetousness—the desire for more than what is rightly one's own—is insatiable because it is, by definition, divorced from fulfillment:

Nought's had, all's spent,
Where our desire is got without content;
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy. (III.ii.4-7)

"Desire got without content" is a workable definition of covetousness. For the Macbeths, insatiable desire has made content impossible, and so they pursue a substitute that, by comparison, offers slender comfort: security.
But according to Renaissance moral philosophers, while content is possible on earth, security is not. No man can control fate or fortune. Content teaches a man to accept his estate whatever it may be, howsoever rapidly it may alter. To seek security is to attempt to steady fortune, to control one's future. John Downname blames the sin of carnal security on the erroneous opinion men have of their own power and sufficiency. They believe they can "with their policie either prevent all dangers, or quit themselves out of them, if they be fallen into them." And so, to secure his reign, Macbeth commissions the slaying of Banquo, kills Macduff's family, and lays to waste the husbandry of Scotland. He hears the witches' prophecies, but not this warning: "And you all know, security/ Is mortals' chiefest enemy" (III. v.32-33).

References to thrift and waste in Macbeth paint a more consistent and detailed portrait of corruption than similar allusions do in Hamlet. Over Scotland is a heaven of order and proportion; we hear of it just before Duncan's death from the trustworthy Banquo commenting on the starless night which breeds a storm: "There's husbandry in heaven,/ Their candles are all out" (II.i.4-5). But no such careful rule protects the
The economy of Scotland during Macbeth's reign. The loyal must flee and their fatherless children must take for their protection the scripture's promise of comfort even for the sparrow:

L. Macduff. Sirrah, your father's dead, And what will you do now? How will you live? Son. As birds do, mother. L. Macduff. What, with worms and flies? Son. With what I get, I mean, and so do they. (IV.ii.30-33)

The sad plight of the country is evident in a discontented lord's list of what he desires to see returned to Scotland: food, sleep, proper feasting, honor, homage, and honors—the essential elements of a primitive "dryght" and of a feudal economy (III.vi.29-37). Indeed, Macbeth's banquets become virtually a symbol of the bloody corruption of the court. Macduff, the tyrant's predestined destroyer, avoids them and for his abstention wins Macbeth's enmity.

Our contemporary sensibilities may find the most convincing testimony to Macbeth's ill husbandry in the declaration of the doctor attending Lady Macbeth that once away, he would not return to Dunsinane, no, not even for profit (V.iii.61-62). And if there were any doubt that Macbeth's ambition and subsequent quest for security were directly responsible for the condition of Scotland
and that the usurper was morally culpable for all the evil which emanates from Dunsinane, Macbeth's invocation to the witches erases it. In this horrifying speech, the king expresses a willingness to sacrifice his entire country if need be for personal content. Here Macbeth achieves the dimensions of archetypal villain; he is confusion, plague, famine, the evil one himself:

I conjure you, by that which you profess  
(How e'er you come to know it), answer me:  
Though you untie the winds, and let them fight  
Against the churches; though the yesty waves  
Confound and swallow navigation up;  
Though bladed corn be lodg'd, and trees blown down;  
Though castles topple on their warders' heads;  
Though palaces and pyramids do slope  
Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure  
Of nature's germains tumble all together,  
Even till destruction sicken; answer me  
To what I ask you. (IV.1.50-61)

No charge fits Macbeth better than the one leveled against the sons of Duncan suspected of killing their father, that of "thriftless ambition." No better epigram for the play could be found:

'Gainst nature still!  
Thriftless ambition, that will ravin up  
Thine own live's means! (II.iv.27-29)

And while Macbeth is the guilty man and thief, Duncan's sons must steal away from their native land under that onus: "There's warrant in that theft/ Which steals itself, when there's no mercy left" (II.iii.145-46).
We need not here recount the muster of forces and prophecies that spell Macbeth's ouster and death. The men who march against Dunsinane, Malcolm, Macduff, and stalwart Siward, are devoted to order and good husbandry. An entire long scene in this short play is devoted to establishing the credentials of young Malcolm and assuring us that Macduff is a man of principle (IV.iii). As Malcolm lists his faults to Macduff, we hear once again the threat of a court abused by the paradoxical combination of prodigality and meanness that cankered Denmark. Malcolm lays claim to every evil, but Macduff comments on only two (though he grudgingly admits that a king may indulge both these vices and yet reign): boundless intemperance and avarice. Intemperance here means lust, and we have seen how lust is tied to avarice. So until he swears off these vices, Malcolm promises to be, like Macbeth, a tyrant spurred by inordinate desire to the ruin of the country. But Malcolm's iniquity is a ruse, a test of his friend Macduff's loyalty:

I am yet
Unknown to woman, never was forsworn,
Scarcely have coveted what was my own,
At no time broke my faith. (IV.iii.125-28)

There is hope in this admission for better times.
The forces of order march, battle is engaged, and the tyrant is slain. Siward assesses the cost of victory in frank commercial terms: "Some must go off; and yet, by these I see,/ So great a day as this is cheaply bought" (V.ix.2-3). But among the slain is the English general's son, and his father's reaction to the death—what seems an irrelevant study of some twenty lines coming at the climax of the play—establishes a model for measure and order. Siward will allow no excess of grief, no more than what is proper to the boy/man:

Malcolm. He's worth more sorrow,  
And that I'll spend for him.  
Siward. He's worth no more;  
They say he parted well, and paid his score,  
And so God be with him! (V.ix.16-19)

Terse, almost cold, but more truly becoming to the dead than, for example, the maudlin explosion of grief that shakes the House of Capulet when Juliet is discovered in her drugged sleep (IV.v.). Malcolm takes Siward's battlefield instructions to heart and addresses his people for the first time as King of Scotland in words that promise soothing for the country's hurt and a restoration of order "in measure, time, and place." For the first time since the night of Duncan's death, heavenly husbandry is matched by the promise of husbandry on earth. And
the moral-economic disruption caused by the slaying of King Duncan is ended. Peace and prosperity may follow.
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV


3 P. 25.

4 Sig. D1r.


7 The Marchant Real (London: 1620), p. 98.

8 Whately, Caveat for the Covetous, pp. 30-65.

9 Counterpoison Against Covetousness, pp. 17-27.


12 Sig. B2.


15 Two Guides to a Good Life (London: 1604), sig. B2r.

16 P. 69.

17 Sig. B6.


19 Lupton, All For Money, sig. A2v.
20 Sig. Glr.
21 Sig. C3r.
25 *Reformation of Covetousnesse*, pp. 6-14, 44.
26 Whately, *Caveat*, pp. 105-17.
28 *Inough Is As Good As A Feast* (London: 1565?), sigs. Fl-Gl.
30 Pp. 57-59.
32 Sig. A2r.
33 *Compendious Examination of Certain Ordinary Complaints*, p. 49.
34 Sigs. A4v- Blr.
37 *Davidson's Poems, or a Poeticall Rapsodie* (London: 1621), p. 3.
38 Pp. 101, 103.
...
offering here a comment on her son's moral corruption in the last scene, actually turning his expression on him the moment before she drinks the poison set out for Hamlet.

51 A third alternative for Hamlet, one he plays with intellectually, is to leave action and event to Providence: "the readiness is all" (V.i.219-24). Because our concern in this chapter is with the ways the concept of covetousness contributes to the atmosphere of evil in some Shakespearian tragedies, we need not digress into an explanation of the relationship of Providence to content, and what it means for Hamlet. But it is worth noting that the teachers of moral philosophy consider an acceptance of Providence essential to the attainment of some measure of happiness, and Hamlet is capable of reproducing their best sentiments. Compare for example Hamlet's praise of Horatio:

for thou hast been
As one in suffer'ring all that suffers nothing,
A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards
Has ta'en with equal thanks; and blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well co-meddled,
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please,'

(III.ii.65-71)

with William Pemberton's less personalized but similar meditation in The Godly Merchant (London: 1613), p. 31:

Happy, happy yea thrice happy is that soule that is so quietly setled, and so well composed, that it is not much shaken and tossed with discontent!

These thoughts lead Pemberton into a consideration of Providence which, he points out, is aware of "the falling of a sparrow." The notion is common enough—God will provide sufficiency for all who labor diligently in their proper professions. But labor and profession are fighting words for the Danish prince who knows neither what to do nor who exactly he is.

52 This chapter would have included an analysis of Othello along these lines, but that study has been done by Robert Heilman in Magic in the Web, Action and Language in Othello (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press,
His sub-chapter, "Iago as Economist" (pp. 73-85), is an investigation of the moral economy of the play.

53 Sig. Flr.

54 For an alternate explanation of Duncan's golden blood, see W. A. Murray's "Why was Duncan's Blood Golden?" Shakespeare Survey, 19 (1966), 34-43. Murray's view is that Duncan represents sainthood defiled by Macbeth. Such an interpretation is not incompatible with the belief that Duncan's murder represents bounty destroyed. However, the juxtaposing of gold, silver, waste, and ruin makes the moral-economic connection, to me at least, more immediate than the religious one.


56 Even if the passage from which this citation is extracted is non-Shakespearian, its significance is not diminished. Shakespeare's collaborator—if he existed—recognized precisely what Macbeth's desire and problem was in pointing a witch's finger at security.
CHAPTER V: TIMON OF ATHENS

In the plays examined in the three preceding chapters, Shakespeare uses moral-economic conventions and concepts to highlight or support other, more dominant aspects of the works. In Timon of Athens, moral-economic concepts become the drama. Critics tend either to ignore the economic ethics of Timon's situation or to simplify it by placing blame largely on Timon or on Athens. But the moral-economic argument of the work cannot be reduced to a bare statement of right and wrong. The play carefully balances a paradigm of liberality between the particular evils of prodigality and covetousness in such a way as to avoid the simplified choices of moral drama for the more complex, more problematic discriminations of tragedy. The conclusion of Timon offers no saving or satisfying judgment upon the foolishness of Timon's prodigality, the bleakness of the Athenians' greed, or the power of liberality to salve the wounds of sin. Alcibiades' choice to save the city is an operative one, and little more. Unlike most other dramatists of his time, Shakespeare, in writing an economic drama, creates a world as complex as the real one, in which economic vices and virtues seldom
exist in a pure state, separable and distinguishable. The achievement of *Timon of Athens* from a moral-economic point of view is the very problematic nature for which it is often dispraised—the constant questioning of human motives and action in a commercial sphere and the refusal to retreat to the simplifications conventions can offer.

* * * * *

Liberal actions are most in evidence early in *Timon of Athens*, although they persist throughout the play. Indeed, prior to the first banquet scene, Timon acts almost like Bounty itself, his prodigal sins being minor. What reservations an audience may have about Timon's entertaining the merchant, jeweler, poet, and painter are dispelled by his generosity toward Ventidius, whom he frees from prison, and toward his servant who needs money to marry. Timon uses his wealth properly to correct injustices caused by greed.

In the matter of Lucilius' betrothal, the economic ethic that informs Shakespeare's comedies supports the righteousness of Timon's action in providing the servant with the money he needs to wed the venal citizen's daughter (I.i.110-46), even though that action may contribute to the cash-nexus of the city. The unappealing old Athenian, who speaks as if he had bred his daughter
for the market place, complains:

I am a man
That from my first have been inclin'd to thrift,
And my estate deserves an heir more rais'd
Than one which holds a trencher.

(117-20)

Timon, knowing his servant to be honest, asks only two questions before playing the role of deity and conferring a blessing of wealth on the pair: "Does she love him? . . . Love you the maid?" (131, 134). Although he may err in granting more blessings than he has to give, Timon gains an audience's sympathy by completing a pattern love began and overcoming the mercantile father who would deny his daughter the fruition of her desires. His use of wealth here to win love is like Fenton's in The Merry Wives of Windsor when the young gentleman bribes the tapster of the Garter to furnish him with a vicar for his secret marriage.

Timon's openhandedness with Ventidius is subject to slightly more criticism since money is made to serve money, the youth presumably in prison for debt. But in this case, Timon seems to diagnose a weakness in the man which his action is designed to correct: "'Tis not enough to help the feeble up,/ But to support him after" (I.i. 107-08).
As important as his own actions in creating the impression of a liberal character are remarks made about Timon by reputable or unbiased observers. Even Timon's creditors are capable of registering useful impressions of what Timon is like, "that honorable, complete, free-hearted gentleman of Athens, thy very good lord and master," in the words of the tight-fisted Lucullus (III. i.9-11). More evidential is the First Stranger (who stands detached from corrupt Athenian values), commenting on the ingratitude of Timon's creditors:

For my own part,
I never tasted Timon in my life,
Nor came any of his bounties over me
To mark me for his friend; yet I protest,
For his right noble mind, illustrious virtue,
And noble carriage,
Had his necessity made use of me,
I would have put my wealth into donation,
And the best half should have return'd to him,
So much I love his heart. (III.ii.76-85)

Timon's faithful steward offers testimony almost as convincing, but Flavius' vision is limited by his unswerving devotion to his master and his failure to ascribe to Timon responsibility for the evils that flow from his bounty. And yet his remarks have authority since he knows what good there is in Timon to spark such devotion:

Poor honest lord, brought low by his own heart,
Undone by goodness! Strange, unusual blood,
When man's worst sin is, he does too much good;   
Who then dares to be half so kind again?   
For bounty, that makes gods, do still mar men.   
My dearest lord, blest to be most accurs'd,   
Rich only to be wretched, thy great fortunes   
Are made thy chief afflictions.  

(IV.ii.37-44)

In these portraits and in the early scenes,  
Timon displays elements of a Christian ideal in his behavior. When Ventidius, his father now dead, rightfully tries to repay Timon that debt he owes for his recovery from prison, Timon sweeps away the offer with the rhetorically splendid "there's none/ Can truly say he gives if he receives," and caps his eloquence with the declaration (soon put to test) "more welcome are ye to my fortunes/ Than my fortunes to me" (I.ii.10-11, 19-20). He does seem "the very soul of bounty" as a lord declares (209) and believes in good conscience that what he does is not compromised by motives other than goodness: "Come, sermon me no further./ No villainous bounty yet hath pass'd my heart" (II.ii.172-73).

The most important defense or explication Timon offers for his liberality is in the speech he makes to his banquet guests following Apemantus' grace. The address is in prose, and lacks polish or plan. Instead it advances on the enthusiasm of Timon's observations about his generosity, and ends in a breakdown of tears:
O, no doubt, my good friends, but the gods themselves have provided that I shall have much help from you: how had you been my friends else? Why have you that charitable title from thousands did not you chiefly belong to my heart? I have told more of you to myself than you can with modesty speak in your own behalf; and thus far I confirm you. O you gods, think I, what need we have any friends, if we should ne'er have need of 'em? They were the most needless creatures living, should we ne'er have use of 'em; and would most resemble sweet instruments hung up in cases, that keeps their sounds to themselves. Why, I have often wish'd myself poorer, that I might come nearer to you. We are born to do benefits; and what better or properer can we call our own than the riches of our friends? O, what a precious comfort 'tis to have so many like brothers commanding one another's fortunes! O, joy's e'en made away ere't can be born! Mine eyes cannot hold out water, methinks. To forget their faults, I drink to you.

(I.ii.88-108)

Little quarrel can be made with Timon's professed ideal of shared benevolences, even when carried to an exchange of fortunes and riches. Bishop Sands, in his study of man's commercial relationships as quoted in John Blaxton's The English Usurer, shows how close Timon comes to an expression of the Christian model: "Every man is to his neighbour a debtor, not onely of that which himselfe borroweth, but of whatsoever his neighbour needeth: a debtor, not onely to pay that he oweth, but also to lend that he hath and may conveniently spare: to lend I say according to the rule of Christ, Luke 6. Lend looking for nothing thereby." The mutual trust of lender and debtor is essential to the proper functioning of the
relationship, since the attractive rhetoric of the ideal can easily mask a sinister motive, as for example in the case of Middleton's Shortyard, an accomplice of the grasping merchant, Ephesian Quomodo, trying to bilk the country-gentleman, Richard Easy:

Why, our purses are brothers; we desire but equal fortunes; in a word, w'are man and wife; They can but lie together, and so do we.

But Timon's generosity is pure; after all, he is the lender in the transaction, opening his full coffers to friends even before they have indicated a need for assistance.

What mars Timon's splendid outburst is the denial of true liberalitas and friendship implicit in it. Despite declarations of love, Timon's ideal of friendship seems to be built primarily upon a practical consideration: what good are friends but as we use them and as they use us? Unhappily, Timon is so great--or at least he so conceives himself--that he will not allow reciprocity in what he mistakenly believes is a commerce of love. Thus he spurns Ventidius' offer of recompense and denies the young man the sort of pleasure in giving that he enjoys (I.ii.8-13). Timon violates the sanctity of friendship by basing it on a commercial concept of fortunes and undermines his own notion of trade by forbidding the
necessary exchanges of wealth. For his paradoxically stingy generosity he incurs what Apemantus describes as the "poisonous spite and envy" of those he seems to benefit (I.ii.139). Like a typical prodigal, Timon holds himself above his fellows so far that he does not suspect their hatred and envy until it is too late. And then having denied reciprocity in practice and gained the loyalty of trencher friends only, Timon assumes that he has as much claim to the wealth of others as he gives them to his own. His vision of brothers commanding one another's fortunes is spoiled by the situation he has created and by human nature which creates both flatterers and fools.

Specifically, Timon's early offenses against liberality occur in the administration of the virtue, in giving for the wrong reasons, in the wrong amount, to the wrong people, for less than virtuous ends. In contrast to the moral philosophers who carefully limit the types of recipients who may be the object of beneficence, Timon holds to a single qualification: "th'art an Athenian, therefore welcome" (I.ii.35-36). Moreover, the men who take Timon's gold, jewels, and plate are all of sufficient means without his benefactions. Timon's liberality is directed to men among the least deserving,
far down the list of the prescribed order of giving, as defined by John Downname and Thomas Cooper. The Athenian lord is never seen in an action that aids the needy or the poor; his toleration of Apemantus (I.ii.23) is, however, noteworthy.

The sheer amount of Timon's dole is apt to win him plaudits, but it would not be mistaken for liberality by the moral commentators who directed that a man first secure his own estate before helping others. To give without care or stop, "senseless of expense" as Timon does, even with good intentions, is to be an enemy to virtue. Liberality is destroyed when the means to give are ravened up. In refusing recompense, Timon further cripples his own ability to do good.

If Timon is not precisely a model of human bounty, his actions at least raise an interest in the issue. And the play offers other reminders of charitable action and genuine compassion. The words of the First Stranger already cited, for example, expressing a conditional intention to put wealth into donation for assistance to the fallen lord "had his necessity made use of me," suggest proper charity and gratitude. Both Alcibiades and Apemantus, at critical moments in the argument of the drama, offer gifts to what they believe is a needy
Timon. But most pertinently, the faithful steward, Flavius, and his fellow servants come closest to being a community bound by an ideal of mutual giving. These men, sent by Timon to request the monies he needs to stay solvent, are witnesses to the brutal ingratitude of Ventidius, Lucullus, Lucius, and Sempronius. They forthrightly condemn the rich men, and stand by their lord until his house breaks.

Flavius is the most remarkable of the servants, pledged to Timon by love, _liberality_, and gold. The portrait of this serving man is a subtle one. Flavius is trained in Timon's commercial world to believe that love and wealth are much the same thing. His concern for his lord's over-bounteous ways is certainly genuine ("'Tis pity bounty had not eyes behind"), but gold has limited even Flavius' _liberality_. He worries about imminent dismissal—"Well, would I were gently put out of office/ Before I were forced out!" (I.ii.201-02)—and limits his tenure of servitude, even at the end of a most charitable speech, with what seems to be an almost unconscious recognition of the world's commercial ways: "I'll ever serve his mind with my best will;/ Whilst I have gold, I'll be his steward still" (IV.ii.49-50).
And yet, granting these reservations the dramatist insists on, we still regard Flavius and the servants as the most hopeful model of economic ethics in the play. The failure of Timon's fortunes inevitably causes dislocations in spheres beyond his personal one, following the principle that moral philosophy teaches "first, how every man should govern himself honestly, how he should guide his family wisely and profitably. And thirdly, it sheweth how a City or a Realm or any other common weale should be well ordered and governed, both in time of peace, and also warre." A disruption in one of these three interrelated estates leads to turmoil in all. As a consequence of personal ill-husbandry, Timon's household, his most immediate family, is broken up and dispersed. Timon's servants meet for the last time in a short scene that follows their master's bitter, solitary curse on Athens which ends: "And grant, as Timon grows, his hate may grow/ To the whole race of mankind, high and low" (IV.i.39-40).

The servants stand in poignant contradiction to Timon's blanket condemnation of humanity. True, they gather to lament their own broken fortunes and poverty, but like disciples of a beloved master, they also meet to reaffirm their fellowship:
Yet do our hearts wear Timon's livery,
That see I by our faces; we are fellows still,
Serving alike in sorrow. (IV.ii.17-19)

Just as important, gold--put to proper, liberal use--
becomes a symbol of brotherhood, and hands reaching out
(significantly, with reluctance) do not imply greed, but support:

Flav. Good fellows all,
The latest of my wealth I'll share amongst you.

Let each take some;
Nay, put out all your hands. Not one word more:
Thus part we rich in sorrow, parting poor.

Embrace, and part several ways. (IV.ii.22-23, 27-29)

The scene recalls the comradeship of the exiles in As You Like It, where a worthy master and memories of better times hold together a broken household. But the hope for a better future and a return to the golden age that comforts Duke Senior's men in Arden flickers more fitfully among Timon's followers:

Let's shake our heads, and say
As 'twere a knell unto our master's fortunes,
We have seen better days. (IV.ii.25-27)

And whereas Orlando and Adam, starving and desperate,
find a supporting hand in the Duke's camp to lead them to content, Timon "walks, like contempt, alone" (IV. ii.15).
The content which a truly liberal society confers is strikingly absent in Athens. Only Apemantus, the least regarded of its citizens, shows a sense of satisfaction with his position in his grace before feasting (I.ii.62-71). Even at the height of his revels, Timon discovers that his desires are not conformable to his estate: "Why, I have often wish'd myself poorer, that I might come nearer to you" (I.ii.100-01). And again, "'tis not enough to give; Methinks, I could deal kingdoms to my friends, And ne'er be weary" (I.ii.219-21). Alcibiades too suffers from dissatisfaction when the senate refuses to show mercy to a fellow soldier condemned to death for murder. "Soldiers should brook as little wrong as gods," the captain exclaims in closing his threat to the unyielding Senate, after arguing over what a man should endure in life:

1 Sen. You cannot make gross sins look clear; To revenge is no valor, but to bear. Alcib. My lords, then, under favor, pardon me If I speak like a captain. Why do fond men expose themselves to battle, And not endure all threats? Why then, women are more valiant That stay at home, if bearing carry it. (III.v.38-43, 47-48)

And Timon's creditors, bloated as they are with Timon's gifts, live in the anticipation of more ("Ha? what has
he sent?" at the same time that they seek to secure their fortunes by pressing their bills upon him:

Immediate are my needs, and my relief
Must not be toss'd and turn'd to me in words,
But find supply immediate. (II.i.25-27)

There is no indication that any wealthy man in Athens is happy.

But Timon's retreat to the forest outside the gates of Athens does not achieve for him or any of his visitants the same simplification of desire that occurs for some of the visitors to the Forest of Arden. Timon praises his wood to the robbers as a place that offers all the comforts a man needs:

Why should you want? Behold, the earth has roots;
Within this mile break forth a hundred springs;
The oaks bear mast, the briars scarlet heps;
The bounteous huswife Nature on each bush
Lays her full mess before you. Want? why want? (IV.iii.417-21)

But their reply suggests that such a life is not proper to man, that a mere purgation of desire does not make for content: "We cannot live on grass, on berries, water,/
As beasts and birds and fishes" (IV.iii.22-23). Timon charges that they want to eat men, a fair representation of the robbers' desires, but also indicative of his own need to vent his spleen on his own kind. Roots alone are not enough for Timon. Curiously, he recognizes
that Apemantus, in his hereditary misery, never flattered, never knowing a better life, is more fortunate than wealthier men (IV.iii.266-74). And Apemantus speaks the most direct and perceptive comment of the play on content, a statement that is a commonplace through its first three lines:

Best state, contentless,
Hath a distracted and most wretched being,
Worse than the worst, content.
Thou shouldst desire to die, being miserable.
(IV.iii.245-48)

In Timon of Athens, as in As You Like It, the moral philosopher's principle holds true; happiness does not reside in wealth, or power, or even in rural poverty, but in the agreement of a man's nature and his estate.

* * * * *

Timon's nature is prodigal throughout the play, in fortune and in reverse. It may be splitting hairs to discriminate between sins against liberality and prodigal actions, but the play seems to make its own segregation along those lines at approximately the point where convention divides the first and second acts. The liberal Timon errs by omission, the prodigal one by commission.

The acts that make Timon a prodigal seem magnificent, and might be mistaken for greatness, but for the devices of commentary Shakespeare uses to limit Timon's
splendor. Apemantus' persistent whining about the excesses of Timon's court, the feasts, pomps, and vanglories, and his insistence on tracing the connection between a sin and its cause ("He that loves to be flatter'd is worthy o' th' flatterer") prevents the pageant of Timon's bounty from garnering unqualified admiration. The crudeness of his comments deflates the swelling ceremonies and civilities on stage: "What a coil's here! / Serving of becks and jutting-out of bums!" (I.ii.231). But Timon's sycophants, by their compliments, can serve indictments on the lord as scathing as Apemantus' mocks. The Second Lord, overwhelmed by Timon's goodness, chooses what may be to an Athenian the most favorable analogy to explain Timon's bounty:

No meed but he repays
Sevenfold above itself; no gift to him
But breeds the giver a return exceeding
All use of quittance. (I.i.277-80)

Yet by these words, Lord Timon is made to seem an accomplice in usury (even if it is in goodness) and, more important, he shares the usurer's violation of moral economy: the stripping away of proper value from a commodity and replacing it with desire. Even the loyal Flavius in his laments upon his master's bounty stumbles over Timon's sins. Like Richard II before him, Timon is prodigal even in his use of language. Says Flavius:
the world is but a word;
Were it all yours to give in a breath,
How quickly were it gone! (II.ii.152-54)

No group in Athens is more concerned with money and security than the Senate, and it is, aptly, a senator who makes the most pointed comment on Timon's prodigal behavior:

Still in motion
Of raging waste? It cannot hold, it will not. If I want gold, steal but a beggar's dog And give it Timon, why, the dog coins gold. If I would sell my horse and buy twenty moe Better than he, why, give my horse to Timon, Ask nothing, give it him, it foals me straight And able horses. No porter at his gate, But rather one that smiles and still invites All that pass by. It cannot hold, no reason Can sound his state in safety. (II.1.3-12)

The most visible manifestation of Timon's excess is the elaborate banquet and masque of Cupid staged in I.ii. In this scene, Timon's wealth is spent on entertainments most like those ordinarily condemned in treatises on prodigality: feasting, whoring, drinking, and play-going. The ladies—the first to appear in the play—perform as Amazons. More important, Cupid's introduction certifies that we are at a special, emblematic entertainment, a banquet of sense:

Hail to thee, worthy Timon, and to all That of his bounties taste! The five best senses Acknowledge thee their patron, and come freely To gratulate thy plenteous bosom. (I.ii.122-25)
The notion that sin entered the body through an indulging of the senses was common in the Renaissance, and so was the banquet of sense, a traditional literary and pictorial motif. Robert Bagnall, for example, in The Stewards Last Account, identifies the five senses as the gates and ports to the farm of the body by which the corporal frame can be wasted by the same sort of moral corruption that destroys husbandry.

The masque and banquet have their predictable effects on Timon. As the ladies depart for "an idle banquet," Timon, pleased by the entertainment and his company, is stirred into a frenzy of prodigal giving. Over a jumble of treasure-toting servants, departing soldiers, entering senators, Timon's voice is heard declaring the joy he feels in his bounty, the desire he has to deal kingdoms to his friends until he is left with nothing: "All for you. Lights, more lights!" (I.ii.228). Even four centuries later, we feel the wantonness in the wasted flame.

Prodigality continues to be an issue in the play after Timon's fall from fortune because of what was demonstrated about the spendthrift nature in an earlier chapter: it is transformed, but not destroyed by an alteration in circumstances. The distortion of character
brought on by the loss of love and wealth that makes Timon reprehensible and unpalatable in the fourth and fifth acts is directly related to the promptings that make him so free, bounteous, and prodigal early in the play. The turn of fortune permits an audience to see how limited a prodigal's experience of life is. When apprised by Flavius of his bankrupt condition, the result of his lavish giving, Timon defends himself against an imputation of wrong-doing by declaring, "Unwisely, not ignobly, have I given" (II.ii.174). As a self-assessment, the statement is accurate, but not complete. "Unwisely" suggests that Timon acted without practical wisdom in his financial affairs—imprudently, injudiciously. But Timon's lack of wisdom (demonstrated at this point by his continuing belief that despite the poverty caused by his flatterers, he still has friends) indicates a more serious deficiency in his perception of the role he played in Athens, the purposes he had in giving, and the limits of human greed. Timon knows neither himself, nor the Athenians who suck the marrow of his wealth.

Apemantus tries his best to persuade the glittering lord that he is being swindled and victimized, but surrenders at the end of the first act to Timon's obstinacy:
So, thou wilt not hear me now, thou shalt not then. I'll lock thy heaven from thee. O that men's ears should be To counsel deaf, but not to flattery!

(I.ii.247-50)

Beset by creditors, Timon still orders his servants to entertain them (II.ii.44). Such persistent obtuseness is symptomatic of the prodigal nature which has never known check, contradiction, or equality with other men. Thus, with Flavius, the audience is not liable to put much stock in Timon's concession that, had he but known the state of his affairs, he would have acted with greater thrift (II.ii.124-27). I think it essential to Shakespeare's concept of Timon that the audience realize that a prodigal is incapable of rating either his expenses or his emotions according to the demands of practical affairs. Like the masque of Amazons he has applauded, the world of Timon is of his own devising and sustained by his immense wealth. As long as that world exists, he can ignore the inconveniences of the real one.

Timon's fall from prosperity is accompanied by a startling and equally precipitous alteration of habit and attitude. The open-hearted, bounteous lover of mankind turns on his species, his city, and creation itself, uttering curse after horrid curse, uncocking the dregs of
his imagination. His tirade before the gates of Athens
(IV.1.) matches Macbeth’s invocation to the witches as a
catalogue of ills to which a people can be subjected.
The change in Timon, well motivated though it is, occurs
with such speed and violence that the audience may feel
like the servant Flavius who (in a related context) asks:
"Is't possible the world should so much differ,/ And we
alive that lived?" (III.i.46-47). The false friends who
attend Timon’s second feast are equally startled by the
new man Timon becomes: "One day he gives us diamonds,
next day stones" (III.vi.120). (Significantly, both
diamonds and stones are products of the earth, similar
enough in physical characteristics—size, weight, shape—
to suggest an exterior alteration of some basic sub-
stance.)

Obviously, Timon does not take the foundering of
his fortunes as gracefully as, for example, Gresham in
*If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*. But Gresham in that
play has a more conventionally moral attitude toward
wealth than Timon (who probably never would seriously
entertain thoughts of the mutability of wealth while in
prosperity). More important, Timon, unlike Gresham,
whose argosy of paintings is lost by chance on the sea
and whose investments slide on the market, is undone by
the economic villainy of his friends, not by chance. Thus, while Timon's alteration of character is prompted by a change in physical circumstance (the loss of wealth), it is not necessarily recoverable or reversible by subsequent alterations of circumstance.

So, to add to the problematic nature of the play, Timon both changes and does not change. His vision of the world and his attitude toward mankind grow hideously bleak after his taste of ingratitude, and he is so completely disgusted that not even the discovery of gold in the forest can whet his appetite for another round of prosperity. But Timon remains Timon throughout the play, acting through wealth and poverty with the regular and predictable hyperbole of the prodigal mentality. The change in fortune and the betrayal by his friends cause Timon's misanthropy; his prodigality sustains it in heat and purity.

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The relationship between prodigal Timon and the covetous city is exactly that defined by the moral philosophers who explicated the vices. Timon is not the cause of the citizens' avarice, but his extravagances provide the near occasion for their offense. The covetous man tracks the prodigal like a shadow, until he has pilled
all he can from the association.

The world of Athens is corrupt and bankrupting, economically and morally. In general, the charge against Athens is usury. No contemporary economic term (or profession) bore the weight of controversy, vituperation, and denigration that this Renaissance bugbear did. But aside from the bonds and bills thrust at Timon and Flavius, Timon of Athens contains no concrete representations of usury. There are no villains of the status of Shylock, though there are men as scrupulous of possession. There is no signing of a bond, nor does the Athenian Senate concern itself with economic deliberations in its appearance as a tribunal. By repeating the imputation of usury without localizing it in any scene or in individuals, the playwright succeeds in creating the impression that all relationships are tainted by this most serious of economic abuses. Thus Alcibiades—outraged by the Senate's ingratitude—can link that sin with usury to thematically unify his cause in marching against Athens with the injustice done by money-lenders and false friends to Timon. Shakespeare uses moral-economic conventions here in the same way he did in Hamlet and Macbeth to create an atmosphere of evil.
But if the villainy of the play is deliberately unfocused, specific examples of covetous desire are not lacking. The rapacious nature of the city is revealed in particular through the actions of the citizens who refuse to prop up Timon's falling fortunes and of the senators who exile Alcibiades.

Shakespeare's portrait of Lucullus, the first friend to whom Timon's servant makes an appeal for aid, is virtually a catalogue of the marks that distinguish an avaricious nature. His consciousness, waking and sleeping, is full of business: "I dreamt of a silver basin and ew'r to-night" (III.i.6-7); he displays inordinate care for earthly needs and a doubting of Providence: "this is no time to lend money, especially upon bare friendship without security" (41-43); he is shifting and indirect: "good boy, wink at me, and say thou saw'st me not" (43-44); and his voice is the loudest against the prodigality he exploits: "Many a time and often I ha' din'd with him [i.e. Timon], and told him on't, and come again to supper to him of purpose to have him spend less" (23-25). Lucius and Sempronius, the other men Timon appeals to, complete this general character of a vice by adding their supplementary ills of ingratitude and pride. In condemning these men, the
servants who sue for Timon borrow further from the images of moral-economic literature. Flaminius, for example, alludes to the idolatry of gold in flinging back the bribe Lucullus offers, "Fly damned baseness,/ To him that worships thee!" (46-47), and then brilliantly combines the tradition of gold as a disease-carrier with the play's themes of friendship, feeding, and choking:

May these coins add to the number that may scald thee!
Let molten coin be thy damnation,
Thou disease of a friend, and not himself.

(III.i.51-53)

The connection between appetite, feasting, and lust centered in covetous desire that plays an important role in the economic ethics of Troilus and Cressida and Hamlet is even more prominent in Timon. Lust and lucre are equated by a constant emphasis on feeding. The banquet of sense is an early instance where prodigal expenditure supports an avaricious passion. Apemantus comments chorically:

O you gods! what a number of men eats Timon, and he sees 'em not! It grieves me to see so many dip their meat in one man's blood, and all the madness is, he cheers them up too.

(I.ii.39-42)

At the later mock banquet, Timon's friends are welcomed to the table once again by a more cynical host: "Each man to his stool, with that spur as he would to the lip
of his mistress" (III.vi.65-66). Timon has begun to perceive the generic quality of inordinate desire, and hence his so-called "sex nausea" in the second half of the play actually manifests his realization of the traditional connection between different forms of desire. Lust and lucre are covetousness.⁹

Timon also at length realizes (too bitterly) that a greedy society produces an interested brand of friendship:

Is not thy kindness subtle, covetous,
If not a usuring kindness, and, as rich men deal gifts,
Expecting in turn twenty for one?
(IV.iii.508-10)

Indeed, usury is a crime not because of the high interest rates exacted, but for what it does to men. Timon pawns his lands to raise money for his friends from his friends. So, in fact, the usurers in Athens are paid by the plate, jewels, and horses Timon gives them (III.iv.17-24). But they are not satisfied. They permit commercial dealings to destroy human fellowship. "What are the fruits of usury?" asks Bishop Jewell in Blaxton's The English Usurer. His response to this question has its dramatic representation in the city of Athens:

1. It dissolveth the knot and fellowship of mankind. 2. It hardeneth mans heart. 3. It maketh men unnaturall, and bereaveth them of charity,
and love to their dearest friends. 4. It breedeth misery, and provoketh the wrath of God from heaven. 5. It consumeth rich men, it eateth up the poore, it maketh bankrupts, and undoeth many householders.

The same sort of vice that typifies Timon's friends infects the Athenian Senate which, like Shylock, stands behind the shield of law to condemn a soldier to death and Alcibiades to exile. The soldier sentenced to die for a murder committed in the heat of passion, for whom Alcibiades pleads, may be regarded as an analogue of Timon. Timon's prodigality marks him as "hot in blood" and as much a "sworn rioter" as the soldier. Their respective passions step them into the law unwittingly, the citizen encumbering himself with greater and greater debts and the soldier taking the life of a comrade. Both men act from "noble" motives, yet criminally in the eyes of the law. And the good both men have done for Athens outweighs the possible consequences of their malefactions. This is the plea Alcibiades makes for his condemned friend directly, into which we may read a similar appeal for Timon (III.v.7-23, 59-61).

Yet the Senate is deaf to Alcibiades for the reasons that make covetousness vile. The senators pretend to endorse a mean in behavior that suggests the attitude of the contented man:
He's truly valiant that can wisely suffer
The worst that man can breathe, and make his wrongs
His outsides to wear them like his raiment, carelessly,
And ne'er prefer his injuries to his heart.

(III.v.31-34)

But their real concern—as Alcibiades intuits—is with security. The hard law that strikes down a loyal soldier for one grievous, but mitigable crime and that cannot pardon the debts and forfeitures due from Timon is the same one that guarantees the city's prosperity. Bonds must be paid in cash and blood: "We are for law, he dies" (III.v.85-86).

Timon's famous tirades against gold in the fourth act are justified, then, by the powerful grasp covetousness has on the city of Athens.

What is here?
Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold?

This much of this will make
Black white, foul fair, wrong right,
Base noble, old young, coward valiant.

Will knit and break religions
place thieves
And give them title, knee, and approbation
With senators on the bench.

Thou common whore of mankind.

O thou sweet king-killer, and dear divorce
'Twixt natural [son] and [sire]; thou bright defiler
Of Hymen's purest bed!

thou visible god,
That sold'rest close impossibilities,
And mak'st them kiss'ld
That some critics have focused on these passages as evidence of Shakespeare's dissatisfaction with burgeoning capitalism and the acquisitive commercial mentality is not surprising. The rhetoric is powerful and the target well hit. But it is wrong to discover the entire commercial ethic of Timon of Athens in these passages alone. They represent only a portion of the commercial tradition of the Renaissance and, more important, must be read in the full context of the play where they are a prodigal's response to an opposite extreme of vice. It is impossible for Timon in his frame of mind to separate gold as an instrument of villainy from the villainy itself. Nor is he capable of appreciating the trading qualities which join his servants' hands as Flavius distributes his coins or which enable nations to traffick to supply their respective needs. Instead, the irate Athenian upends the commercial vision:

Come damn'd earth
Thou common whore of mankind, that puts odds
Among the rout of nations, I will make thee
Do thy right nature. (IV.iii.42-45)

But that Alcibiades does not take the misanthrope's advice to kill all Athenians when he accepts Timon's gold (IV.iii.130) indicates, however weakly in contrast to Timon's outpourings, that the drama
recognizes an alternative to the misanthrope's attitude toward money. While, arguably, the virulence and eloquence of Timon's apostrophes to gold are unique, the attacks themselves are part of a Christian moral-economic tradition which recognizes that wealth, inordinately coveted and improperly used, will create and serve evil.

* * * *

Segregating for study the particular strains of moral-economic vice and virtue in Timon of Athens demonstrates how thoroughly familiar Shakespeare was with conventional ethics and popular moral attitudes. But in the play, no such facile separations exist. Instead, the action advances according to a conceptual framework that maintains an uneasy balance, a constant argument, between the prodigality of Timon, the covetousness of Athens, and the liberality that preserves mankind in hope. The action, then, is continuously engaged with the entire concept of Renaissance moral-economics, in all its complexity, contradiction, and wisdom as it operates not in the moral drama or sermon, but in practical affairs. The result is a drama that must be, by its very nature, problematic, and which, in its conclusion, must preserve the integrity of its complex argument while still achieving some measure of resolution.
This balance of elements is most in evidence in the later scenes where a parade of visitors comes to speak with Timon in what is, in fact, an extended commentary on a variety of economic and ethical quandaries. For example, in IV.iii., just following Timon's vigorous castigation of the gold he has newly discovered in the forest, Alcibiades, accompanied by mercenaries and whores on his way to conquer Athens, marches by chance into Timon's solitary forest outpost. What follows is a moral-economic exemplum tying together Timon's discovery of the precious metal with the ethics of its use.

Timon, excessive in his rage, remains the prodigal in his distribution of what he now considers a means to buy the destruction of Athens. The whores, Timandra and Phrynia, bespeak the covetous nature of man, acting exactly as Timon says humanity will under the influence of the yellow god: "Believe 't that we'll do any thing for gold" (IV.iii.150). Angry Timon urges the ladies onto a course that will destroy mankind, his gold serving as the pander between lust and disease. The prodigal and the covetous re-enact in near-hysterical passion the more subdued feeding and choking of the earlier scenes. The whores thrive on the gold and abuse Timon heaps in
their aprons and confirm him in his unqualified hatred of mankind, making it all but impossible for him to appreciate the contrast Alcibiades offers.

"I'll take the gold thou givest me,/ Not all thy counsel" says the captain leading his "penurious band" against the town to punish its ingratitude and salve his wounded pride. He is a man of practical affairs not ashamed to admit that he needs help in these circumstances. But his willingness to take the gold Timon has is no exploitation of the fallen Athenian lord. For Alcibiades can say, without fear of contradiction, "I am thy friend, and pity thee, dear Timon" (IV.iii.98) and later, "I never did thee harm." He enters into Timon's presence, ignoring his crudeness, to ask, "What friendship may I do thee?" (71). And most important of all, he proves that he is more than a mouth-friend, offering assistance to Timon before he learns of his former host's new-found riches, and despite his own financial difficulties:

Pardon him, sweet Timandra, for his wits
Are drowned and lost in his calamities.
I have but little gold of late, brave Timon,
The want whereof doth daily make revolt
In my penurious band.

Here is some gold for thee.

(IV.iii.89-93, 101)
Alcibiades is not intended as a paradigm of liberality; such a simplification would vitiate the power of the scene. His soldiers and bawds clamor for money, and what nobility he has is dragged through a quagmire. And yet his presence balances the scene. The operation Timon recommends to him is nothing short of butchery: "Let not the sword skip one." All are made guilty, the aged, the matron, the virgin; "Spare not the babe," Timon exhorts, "mince it sans remorse" (IV.iii.111,119, 123). The mercy Alcibiades ultimately shows to Athens is foreshadowed in his willingness to take the gold that makes it possible for him to threaten the gates of the city, but not take the advice that comes with it. For wealth is separable from slaughter in the logic that dominates the stage at the end of the drama. Alcibiades leaves Timon in the forest with what in context can be regarded as a characteristic concern for the man: "We but offend him. Strike!" (IV.iii.175).

Even better evidence of Shakespeare's skill in balancing a moral-economic argument is provided by the scene between Timon and the banditti, following a confrontation between Timon and his erstwhile mentor, Apemantus. (The cynic, like Alcibiades, plays the liberal part by offering Timon a root and a medlar.)
At long last, it seems, Timon will face a clutch of men allied with him in hatred of humanity and simultaneously worthy of his scorn. What greater threat to the stability of man's relationships with his fellows than those who will take, without compunction, what is not their own? But the thieves who break into Timon's camp display remarkable reticence:

1 Ban. Where should he have this gold? It is some poor fragment, some slender ort of his remainder. The mere want of gold, and the falling-from of his friends, drove him into this melancholy.

2 Ban. It is nois'd he hath a mass of treasure.

3 Ban. Let us make the essay upon him. If he care not for it, how shall's get it?

(IV.iii.398-405)

It is a strange and unpracticed band of criminals that intends first to ask for what it desires, and still has not worked out a plan of action to use if the request is denied. True, the bandits are concerned that Timon's gold may be buried, but--ignorant of Timon's full misanthropy which would nullify the effect of any threat to life or limb--they have the means for coercion in their number. But their naive criminality has an important dramatic purpose, to underscore the truth in their own declaration of profession:
Tim. Now, thieves?
All. Soldiers, not thieves.
Tim. Both too, and women's sons.
All. We are not thieves, but men that much do want. (IV.iii.412-15)

We have elsewhere outlined the Elizabethan concept of thievery and have shown what connections were made between simple thievery ("He that robbes a man of that which is his, is a theefe") and the subtler forms by which professional men bilked their clients and the poor. These ideas operate in the scene between Timon and the banditti to complicate what could have been a simple encounter between thugs and a helpless man. An audience attuned to the preachings of moral philosophy would recognize that the banditti are neither the first nor the most skilled thieves to appear in the play. For in a work populated by avaricious flatterers and greedy money-lenders, the entrance of "real" robbers suddenly suggests comparisons between them and the more deft fur-gowned operators.

The equation between thievery and usury was a familiar one in the Renaissance, and it is worth noting that prostitution was sometimes regarded as the corresponding female offense. In A Pretty Interlude Called Nice Wanton, for example, a brother and sister corrupted by an indulgent upbringing turn to these professions:
"Thief brother, syster whore,/ Two graffes of an yll tree." So the bandits have been preceded on stage by thieves of a different color: money-lenders and whores who seem to prosper in rank corruption. By contrast, the robbers—who would probably appear in the tattered rags of abandoned soldiery—are oppressed by circumstance, walking exemplars of the adage borrowed from classical times, amplified in Lear, and ubiquitous in moral philosophy: "Little thieves are soon taken and hanged; but the greate are so strong in money, that they with their authoritie and freendship breake all." The poor veterans are outcast citizens of a town under the aegis of meanness who harbor no hope of a bountiful hand. (The Athenian Senate is notable for its ingratitude toward soldiers.) Hence the men are driven to their greedy profession by the same evil that led Timon to his misanthropy.

In the presence of the banditti, Timon composes an indictment of all men in all estates, accusing them of a universal thievery. His charges extend to the natural universe so that man is exampled in exploitation by the sun, the moon, and the earth (IV.iii.435-42). It is possible to find analogues to Timon's list of crimes, but more typical of Renaissance moral thought is an
alternative view of the world which interprets the interdependence of created things as a sermon in liberality: "The nobleness of creatures consisteth in giv­ing: the Sunne in givying light, the Moone her light, the starres, their light, y cloudes their water, y trees their fruite, the earth her grasse, y grasse her floures." 16

This world view approximates Timon's earlier ideal of brother helping brother, now purged from his consciousness. Timon's resulting "malice of mankind" startles even the thieves who, like most practical men of affairs, regard their means of livelihood as a profession, not as a link in a vast metaphysical network of evil. Suddenly, Timon reveals to them the hideous nature of universal thievery. Indeed, he seems to steal their profession from them, for when men realize that all their kind—the whole universe, in fact—preys and pillages alike, and that (to paraphrase Macduff's son) there are thieves enow to beat the honest men, then custom gives to crime license and a certain respectability. The soldier-thieves predictably recoil from the universal wolf Timon unchains:
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3 Ban. H'as almost charm'd me from my profession
by persuading me to it.
1 Ban. 'Tis in the malice of mankind that he thus
advises us, not to have us thrive in our mystery.
(IV.iii.450-53)

The scene thus traces the argument by which a prodigal
mentality frightens the covetous almost into alliance
with liberality. That the thieves are not absolutely
converted ("Let us first see peace in Athens") is in
keeping with the problematic nature of the play.

If moderation and liberality do eventually hold
the boards at the end of Timon of Athens, it is not
because they have triumphed, but because prodigality
and covetousness have, in effect, undone each other.
Timon has attained the only satisfaction a ruined, but
unreformed prodigal can expect: "My long sickness/ Of
health and living now begins to mend,/ And nothing brings
me all things" (V.1.186-88). The acquisitive men who
have prospered by the flow of Timon's wealth find the
fountainhead stopped. Their offenses against humanity
have grown so foul that the flesh will no longer endure
it:

Now the time is flush,
When crouching marrow in the bearer strong
Cries (of itself) "No more!" Now breathless wrong
Shall sit and pant in your great chairs of ease,
And pursy insolence shall break his wind
With fear and horrid flight. (V.iv.8-13)
The image of scanty, swollen breath is the same one Hamlet uses to describe the corruptions of the doomed court of Denmark (III.iv.153-54).

Into this ethical vacuum strides Alcibiades, whose moderation in practical affairs comes closest to an authoritative endorsement of liberality by a man of substance and power. The senators who plead for Athens from the city walls seem to realize this as they attempt to train their customary vocabularies of avarice to serve the logic and rhetoric of liberality. The sweet language underscores the irony of the situation as men of covetous inheritance plead for justice from the proud leader of an army of mercenaries. The senators admit the ingratitude of their forebears, offer recompense, and promise Alcibiades content, enforcing their argument with an unexpected pastoral image:

like a shepherd,
Approach the fold and cull th' infected forth,
But kill not all together. (V.iv.42-44)

Alcibiades husbandry is tested severely by another offer made just earlier in the rapid chorus of argument delivered by the two senators who speak for Athens:

March, noble lord,
Into our city with thy banners spread;
By decimation, and a tithed death,
If thy revenges hunger for that food
Which nature loathes, take thou the destin'd tenth,
And by the hazard of the spotted die
Let die the spotted.  (V.iv.29-35)

The temptation melds the wantonness of Timon's vengeful imaginations with the calculating, tenth-taking habits of usurious Athens. It is a choice covetous in intent, prodigal in action which Alcibiades wisely eschews for a more measured, liberal choice:

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.  (V.iv.56-63)

Once again, the characters of the protagonists in the scene undermine the promise of justice, and the appeal to law is even more suspect, particularly when the logic of the Senate's earlier treatment of the condemned soldier is recalled: "we are for law; he dies."

And yet the rhetoric of measure and liberality does control the scene, as much as Timon's prodigality or the Senate's avarice dominated earlier ones. Not by chance does the captain emphasize bounds and regular justice. But, in the end, Alcibiades can offer nor more than a symbiotic prescription for the city's ills:
Bring me into your city,
And I will use the olive with my sword:
Make war breed peace, make peace stint war, make each
Prescribe to other as each other's leech.
(V.iv.81-84)

Leeching is precisely the right image, for *prodigality*
and *covetousness* have, at great cost, destroyed each
other. The only hope now is that Alcibiades will act
with mercy according to the inescapable truths Timon--
tragic in his purity of emotion--could never recognize:
"We are not all unkind . . . All have not offended"
(V.iv.21, 35).
NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1 I do not mean to suggest that critics never blame both Timon's prodigality and the avarice of the city for the evils dramatized in the play. But it is not sufficient to assert simply that the tandem guilt adds complexity to the dramatic situations when the interplay of prodigality and covetousness is exactly what is at issue. Although we are constantly provoked into taking sides, and can usually identify a villain in a particular scene (especially early in the play), the dramatic argument in toto moves away from judgment so that the particular wrongdoings of Timon and the Athenians are subsumed by a more general moral-economic malady. Critics who tend to take Timon's side include G. Wilson Knight, "The Pilgrimage of Hate," in The Wheel of Fire (London: Methuen, 1930); J. W. Draper, "The Theme of Timon," MLR, 29 (1934), 20-31; and E. C. Pettet, "Timon of Athens: The Disruption of Feudal Morality," RES, 23 (1947), 321-36. Critics who find Timon a flawed character unable to deal with society include Irving Ribner, "The Operation of Evil," in Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy (London: Methuen, 1960), and David Cook, "Timon of Athens," ShS, 16 (1963), 83-84. G. K. Hunter's "The Last Tragic Heroes" in Later Shakespeare, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies 8 (London: Edward Arnold, 1966) and R. Swigg's "Timon of Athens and the Growth of Discrimination," MLR, 62 (1967), 387-94 stress the distinctions that Timon's wholesale condemnation of humanity ignores. J. C. Maxwell offers a sensitive summary of the drama that stresses the balance of guilt in the play (but does not take into account the moral-economic foundations of the action) in "Timon of Athens," Scrutiny, 15 (1948), 195-208.


3 Thomas Middleton, Michaelmas Term (1605, rpt. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1966), II.iii.154-56.

4 I have studied Timon's offenses against liberality and friendship in an article, "Liberality, Friendship, and Timon of Athens," Thoth, 16 (1975-76).


11 For the full citation, see Timon of Athens, IV. iii.25-45 and 381-92.


16 For a view of nature similar to Timon's, see John Taylor's An Arrant Thiefe (London: 1622), sig. A6v. The more optimistic words are from Thomas Drant, A Fruitfull Sermon Concerning Almes Geving (London: 1572), sig. A6v.
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