

**“Nothing brings me all things”:  
the isolation of Timon in *Timon of Athens***

by A.M. Kinghorn

**Timon of Athens** (1) fits the mediaeval definition of tragedy as a fall from prosperity to wretchedness but not in the kathartic sense. It cannot be said to relieve or lift up the audience into any high emotional state, mainly because the spectators find it impossible to identify themselves with the central character, a misanthrope converted to that condition by worldly experience. The theme of the play is in fact misanthropy and **Timon** is a drama of disillusion, or rather a loss of illusion. Since it fails to inspire on the personal level (2) it is tempting to read it as a commentary upon the shattered idealism of the Italian Renaissance at its most fundamental, wherein a joy in life itself and a marvellous optimism gave European Man confidence and hope of realising perfection in this world, a sharp contrast to the attitudes of rejection encouraged by the monastics.

Shakespeare makes his audience see through the sham by holding up the symbol of Athens, the perfect city, on which Renaissance idealists desired to model their own urban society. He accomplishes this in the first two Acts but he with-holds this truth from Timon until Act III. What Shakespeare condemns, the “piety and fear” and the virtues of classical civilization as represented by Athenian society, is also the dream of Elizabethan London, which the playwright now mistrusts, possibly as a result of some personal experience. The romantic view of the city also condemned it along with all social systems, claiming that they constituted a self-perpetuating cycle of evil, constantly accelerating. Blake’s poem “London” is a clear statement of this conviction

and although Shakespeare's opinion is not made nearly as definite, he does seem to be reaching towards just such a pessimistic conclusion in **Timon** and finally in **The Tempest**. (3) Timon's abandonment of society made him a pioneer of such alienation and even a prototype of modern prophets of doomsday.

However, Timon's reasons for misanthropy are really selfish; he is poor, without friends, and he takes the world's ingratitude upon his own head, arrogantly condemning all human culture. As a dramatic character he lacks humanity, emerging as a personification right from the start of the action. In Act I he is introduced as a familiar Renaissance figure, like Skelton's Magnificence, best by corrupt and sycophantic ministers. (4)

*You see how all conditions, how all minds,  
As well of glib and slippery creatures as  
Of grave and austere quality, tender down  
Their services to Lord Timon: his large fortune,  
Upon his good and gracious nature hanging,  
Subdues and properties to his love and tendance  
All sorts of hearts: yes, from the glass-fac'd flatterer  
To Apemantus, that few things loves better  
Than to abhor himself even he drops down  
The knee before him, and returns in peace  
Most rich in Timon's nod*

(I.i. 53-63)

explains the Poet to the Painter as they watch the Senators passing by.

Apemantus, appearing later in the same scene, is the dramatic medium through which Shakespeare makes the audience understand that Athens is corrupt:

**TIM.** Thou art proud, Apemantus.

**APEM** Of nothing so much as that I am not like Timon.

(*ibid.* 189-90)

but Timon disregards his advice. He is rich, prosperous, can afford to be generous, loves his fellows and assumes the role of the liberal Christian, free-giving and free-spending to the point of prodigality. Eventually he squanders his fortune, his outgoings exceed his income and the unpaid bills begin to mount up. By the end of Act I Timon's descent from riches to wretchedness is well under way and it is indeed only in this first scene that he is assured his charitable role in life. The audience watches him innocently playing the part of Lord Bountiful and listens to Apemantus's surly refusal to partake of the food at the lavish banquet, a common symbol of extravagance and the wasteful luxury of a "consumer" society.

**APEM** *I scorn thy meat; 'twould choke me, for I should ne'er flatter these, O you gods! What a number of men eats Timon, and he sees 'em not.*

(*ibid.*ii. 38-40) (5)

Timon, blind to all this, waxes rapturous because he has been given the opportunity to provide for his friends but his steward, the loyal Flavius, is anxious to speak to him. Timon puts him off and Flavius informs the audience in an aside that his master.  
... commands us to provide, and give great gifts, And all out of an empty coffer.

(*ibid.* ii. 189-90)

The magnificent man is no longer magnificent, though he does not yet realise his position and even when he is confronted with the full knowledge of his immense debts he still believes that his friends will bail him out. First refusals do not daunt him and he makes excuses for the senators. Not until II, iv, after he has been denied by a succession of false friends, does Timon begin to reveal his disillusionment by raging at his servants. Even so, he still goes on trying to persuade the senators and former hangers-on to his purse-strings to help him in his new-found need. What he does is to hold another feast. This is a much more moderate one than that staged in the first Act, to say the least, for the dishes, when uncovered, prove to be full of warm water, which Timon throws in their faces with accompanying insults:

*Live loath'd and long,  
Most smiling, smooth, detested parasites,  
Courteous destroyers, affable wolves, meek bears,  
You fools of fortune, trencher friends, time's  
Cap-and-knee slaves, vapours and minute-jacks!*

(III,vi,89-93)

a diatribe followed by a curse on Athens for rejecting him, couched in extremely condemnatory terms. His change is extreme.

*Burn house! Sink, Athens! Henceforth hated be  
Of Timon, man and all humanity!*

(*ibid.*, 100-101)

More than any other Shakespearean character Timon has a morbid hatred of mankind. (6) In his role of wealthy magnate, he is all generosity and wasteful liberality. Then, in self-imposed exile, he is found grabbing for roots and heaping curses on the whole human race. Apemantus is the cynical philosopher who mocks Timon when he is rich and when he is penniless. He asks Timon the same questions as Timon had asked him in Act I, i, quoted above, and receives the same answer as he had given Timon, whose circumstances have completely altered:

**APEM** *Art thou proud yet?*

**TIM** *Ay, that I am not thee.*

**APEM** *I, that I was  
No prodigal*

(IV,iii,279-282)

and eventually they fall to cursing each other. Timon utters his speech about the corrupting power of gold and apostrophises the "sweet king-killer" and "bright defiler of Hymen's purest bed". Apemantus hears out his conclusion regarding approaching death in silence and finally leaves with a contemptuous parting shot, a devastating one-liner:

*Live, and love thy misery!*

(sc.cit., 398)

Timon's self-indulgence continues and his degeneration is marked for the audience by Flavius, who is appalled at his master's condition but is unable to lift him out of his misanthropic depression. Offering to help, he too is rejected. Act V brings back the Poet and the Painter, who get similar treatment when Timon suspects their motives. His excessive misanthropy has taken him over and when the Athenian senators arrive to speak to him on behalf of the city, with the aim of persuading him to go back and be reinstated with authority extending to absolute power to rid them of the upstart Alcibiades. Timon tells them that he does not care what happens to Athens and its population. His ironical claim to love his country encourages the senators to think that he may yet change his mind but in the end he merely invites anyone with ambitions to prevent Alcibiades's wrath to accept his (Timon's own) solution which is to hang himself on Timon's tree before he cuts it down. His final speech is a message to Athens:

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

(V,i, 214-22)

and he retires to his cave to die. Though physically dead, Timon's curse is left on his grave-stone, proclaiming his misanthropy to posterity.

*HERE LIES A WRETCHED CORSE, OF WRETCHED SOUL BEREFT: SEEK NOT MY NAME, AND PLAGUE CONSUME YOU WICKED CAITIFFS LEFT!*

*HERE LIE I, TIMON, WHO, ALIVE, ALL LIVING MEN DID HATE.*

*PASS BY AND CURSE THEY FILL, BUT PASS AND STAY NOT HERE THY GAIT.*

Alcibiades calls it "rich conceit", and assurance that Timon has isolated himself to such an extent as to expect "vast Neptune" to weep forever on his grave, an eccentric kind of immortality, something like that expected by Hamlet when he makes his final request of Horatio to tell his story to the world — essentially a futile gesture in the face of destructive death. Lear attains a greater tranquillity. In *Timon* the audience are told that Alcibiades will restore the balance so that, in spite of Timon's curses, all will be well in Athens. In *King Lear* the **katharsis** induced is a by-product of the tragic action; peace comes when all passion is spent on the stage and the audience realises that hope exists in spite of the horrors. Timon's Athens is to be restored by political and military action.

**Timon of Athens** has never been a greatly-admired play and unstinting praise has been lacking until recently. However, generations of critics and editors have given it their attention. (7) Much of the discussion had centred on the "structure" or inter-relation of the parts of the play as they draw strength, in words and dramatic action, from the general character of the whole. Other matters investigated have included "meaning", that is to say, the dominant idea expressed by characterization or theme. Concensus of opinion holds that structure is poor, lacking in coherence between scenes, though the play does indeed possess a simple traditional classical unity of action conveying a central idea which shapes the structure itself. As noted previously, the romantics saw **Timon** as a study in idealism and its destruction, but nowadays it is tempting to regard the play as an experimental form designed to communicate a particular theme to an intellectual audience, probably drawn from the Inns-of-Court.

**Timon** was not originally divided into Acts and the 1623 Folio is continuous. Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition of all the plays introduced the familiar five divisions. Following him, a succession of editors argued about the placing of the Acts and scenes until in 1768 Edward Capell settled the matter to the satisfaction of modern scholars. **Timon's** structural peculiarities were noted by most commentators, who suggested that the play was never finished, hence the lack of polish, or even that Shakespeare was mentally disturbed when he composed it. (8) Its date has never been convincingly set and years 1602-10 have been suggested. A later rather than an earlier date is preferred, and the play has affinities with **King Lear** rather than with **Othello** and **Macbeth**, having something of the character of myth, with focus on suffering beyond the domestic — though **Timon** never really succeeds in escaping from the purely personal predicament into which its central character falls.

As to meaning, the romantics read **Timon** as a morality play, one conveying a blatant warning against ostentatious liberality. Hazlitt interpreted Timon's character (which Johnson had thought much weaker than the accompanying moral lesson demanded) as that of a pure soul confronted by harsh materialism, a disappointed man in the romantic vein. Lamb held much the same view, while the poet Swinburne, though dismissing the play as unmanageable, perceived Timon as a Christ-figure, a sacrificial victim to be highly regarded as an example of human conduct at its most admirable. Leigh Hunt, writing in **The Examiner** (9) refuted Johnson's argument, based upon the classical, or neo-classical dictum that **Timon of Athens** was "an imitation of ostentatious liberality designed to instruct". (10) Hunt thought the play's moral was that human nature would allow of no excess so that if a man sets out in this world with animal spirits which lead him to think too highly of it he is likely to be disappointed. If Timon's situation had been the result of ostentation only he would hardly have been so willing to borrow and to think that all his friends were as generous as himself. His misanthropy is really owed to an unexpected and extreme conviction of the hollowness of the human heart.

Johnson had taken the example of Timon's servants to illustrate the virtue in Timon, remarking that nothing but real virtue can be honoured by domestics and only impartial kindness can gain affection from dependents. But only one servant, Flavius, escapes Timon's curses and stands for the possible redemption of Athens. Fluchere, who pointed this out, described Timon as "the most openly declared, most categorical and universal misanthrope in the whole gallery of Shakespeare's malcontents" (11) and sums up the play as "going far beyond **King Lear** in its loud invective and the extraordinary power of its hate-theme". (12) Timon "is kindness personified but only at the beginning of the action, but as Bradley observed, all the drama's famous passages are curses. (13) It is not Timon's "virtue" that stands out but rather the relation between two varieties of excess — prodigality and cynicism, as perceived in one man whose fortune brought him ill-fortune. The theme revolves around Timon as a man stripped down to the condition of "primeval, individual man", as Una Ellis-Fermor pointed out. (14)

Ellis-Fermor, and several contemporary scholars, like Alexander and Honigmann, interpreted **Timon** as an experiment. In general, they argued that his play defined the theme touched on in **King Lear**: Shakespeare contemplated the destruction of all values and the return of chaos, a growth from Jacobean **ennui**, perhaps an extension of the poet's own mind, reaching out to attempt to express the inexpressible horror of utter corruption. As Ellis-Fermor puts it:

*Beyond the dissolution of society, beyond that of nature's laws themselves, there remain deeper reaches of this experience in which the mind itself becomes a negation, emptied alike of properties and of cohesion.*

*The world-order is no longer evil. There is no longer any discernible world-order. All is resolved into disparate, warring elements. He (Timon) has attempted to penetrate and analyse something beyond expression, beyond what can be contained in the mind of man. Chaos is come again. (15)*

The attraction of **Timon** as a transformed morality had persisted in line with present-day condemnation of cold-hearted commercialism, such as Auden sees as denoting the modern world's purposes. Gold, a blatant symbol of the essence of social corruption made manifest, supports its own security by a heartless legality. Timon speaks with contempt of the power of this glittering metal to pervert individuals and professions — soldier, lawyer, even prostitute. Timandra and Phrynia, both whores, are the only female speaking parts and along with Alcibiades show themselves ready and eager to "do anything for gold". Gold here refers to the metal itself rather to its effects as a vehicle of bribery — a much starker image than Piers Plowman's Lady Meed, a general allegory of the power of the purse to subdue institutions and those claiming to uphold them.

Gold is not surprisingly assumed by Marxist critics to be the main idea in the play which for them shows forth the corruption of a civilization through greed and ingratitude so great as to make it unbearable for any one man. Marx himself quoted from **Timon** in his **Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts** (1844) in support of his own argument that money was a universal procurer of human beings and peoples. Shakespeare's Timon abhors it from his cave, exclaiming:

*This yellow slave  
Will knit and break religions, bless the accurs'd,  
Make the hoar leprosy ador'd, place thieves  
And give them title, knee and approbation  
With senators on the bench. This is it  
She, whom the spital-house and ulcerous sores  
Would cast the gorge at, this embalms and spices  
To the April day again.*

(IV, iii, 33-41)

Wolfgang Clemen relates the play's imagery to its dramatic action (16). Shakespeare's method is to invoke new successions of images, especially after Timon is thrown back on his own resources and, like Lear, is illuminated by inner visions as the outer world is cut off, but where Lear stays in the drama's action, Timon is plucked out of it. Clemen points out that Timon's monologue outside the walls of Athens consists of eighteen consecutive exclamations, nearly all containing a fresh image. The bulk of his speeches thereafter is held together by images through which the audience may

understand his obsessions.

Clemen identifies several central themes in the image-chain, notably that of disease. He comments:

*A wealth of maledictions invoking disease, plague-summoning curses and revolting images of sickness are spread over the last two acts (all the later tragedies show this). Shakespeare employed the symbol of disease for all conditions in which the natural, harmonious order of things had given place to unnaturalness, disorder and corruption. (17)*

and he goes on to suggest a connection with the dramatist's own growing pessimism, thus harking back to the romantics' association of the Shakespeare canon with autobiography. Other scholars have picked out (as well as gold and diseases) e.g. Timon as the sun, beasts, organic nature, the earth. (18) One of these, Willard Farnham, traces beast imagery back through earlier sources in Lucan, Plutarch, and Renaissance authors. He concluded that Shakespeare enlarged on it to such an extent as to make human society appear to have "more of beasthood than manhood". (19) This is particularly true of the last two acts of **Timon**, when the glittering material symbols of riches (gold, jewels, goblets, gifts) are exchanged for the outcast's preferred world of nature and open-air life, seashore and cave.

All images in his first monologue (IV, i) are destructive of value. Worth is to be made worthless and positive social virtues are to turn into negative destructive forces. A healthy society is to become a sick one. Neo-classical and romantic critics and several of their present-day descendants sought absolute values in **Timon** but refused to consider the possibility that such values did not exist and that the only proper concept to apply was one of relativity. The existentialist view allies itself with Shakespeare in the common acceptance of life's meaninglessness. (20)

This makes the Self the prime source of futility, anxiety and frustration:

*My long sickness  
Of health and living now begins to mend  
And nothing brings me all things*

(V, i, 185-7)

a purely existential attitude, compelling the view that nothing is more real than nothing — a theme of **Hamlet**, **Lear** and **Macbeth** — a conviction which cannot lead the tragic hero beyond this world and denoting a state afflicting Hamlet with despair, overwhelming Lear and accepted as inevitable by Macbeth. The yawning gulf separating these outstanding individuals from the rest of their fellows is bridged only by



the ancient concept of loyalty, in, respectively, Horatio, Kent and in the case of **Macbeth**, by the concept itself since all other agencies, natural and supernatural have betrayed him. In *Timon* the touchstone is Flavius, as noted previously, rather than the cynic Apemantus, but Timon sends Flavius away, as he knows that even the value of loyalty has no ultimate value.

Imagery and theme studies (21) have led to more favourable opinions of **Timon** from which a recent school of critics has extracted a rich variety of meanings. Wilson Knight is one. He writes:

*Shakespeare has transmitted through Timon his most cherished dream of human worth, stating that Promethean theme for which poetic genius, in every age, exists, recording that generous and golden overflow which meets in every eye, or seems to meet, disaster. Timon of Athens measures the disparity between the great soul and his fellows. The human link proves false, snaps, and projects the superman on his way, friended by vast nature and the unknown. (22)*

and claims **Timon** as the most obviously prophetic of Shakespeare's plays. Timon is deeply angered by human ingratitude and stands as a warm-hearted, generous individual, a naked prophet of social discontent and cosmic speculation in the wilds, who possesses gold dug from the earth. Knight, who as an orthodox Christian has to account for Timon's leap into the unknown, falls short of adopting a completely existentialist posture and talks of "vast nature and the unknown" in a teleological sense, thus avoiding any suggestion that anarchy might reign on both sides of the broken chain.

Shakespeare's last plays are fired by a poetic imagination of a kind quite distinct from the inspiration that begot the great tragedies. **Timon** is the first of the last and gains its effect mythopoetically. One critic, elaborating on this argument, compliments Shakespeare on the actual writing which is as powerful as anything in **Hamlet** or **Lear** — he refers to IV, iii and calls it "one of Shakespeare's showpieces" with the rest of the play not greatly inferior:

*The poet's imagination is soaring higher and faster than ever. Not only in the matchless handling of imagery and rhythm, but in the choice of visual symbols, this play bridges the gap between the tragedies and the romances, between the greatness of **Macbeth** and the greatness of **The Tempest**. (23)*

When Timon heaps curses on the Athenians and hopes for chaos, when

*Degrees, observances, customs and laws  
Decline to your confounding contraries  
And let confusion live.*

(IV, i,19-21)

he is not speaking like Wilson Knight's warm-hearted altruist, but rather in the language of a frustrated egomaniac who finds that he is not getting the immediate returns from his neighbours which he believes are his due. His subsequent encounters with humankind are either turned to suit his own self-indulgent misanthropy, as in the case of the two whores and the three thieves, or, if they are not inclined to add to the confusion, his desires for Athens and the world, disregarded. Alcibiades he hopes will sack the city as a simple act of revenge on the senators; Flavius, the one loyal soul, he regards doubtfully, apparently sorry that his servant is proving an exception to the general grounds for condemnation of mankind, then tells him to go, along with a piece of "Timonian" advice:

*Go, live rich and happy,  
But this condition'd: thou shalt build from men;  
Hate all, curse all, show charity to none,  
But let the famish'd flesh slide from the bone  
Ere thou relieve the beggar. Give to dogs  
What thou deniest to men; let prisons swallow 'em,  
Debts wither 'em to nothing. Be men like blasted woods,  
And may disease lick up their false bloods!  
And so, farewell and thrive.*

(IV, iii,533-42)

Alcibiades fights Timon's cause after his death but not with Timon's misanthropic motives. He calls Timon "noble" and it is clear that his own policy is to be conciliatory but firm:

*Bring me into your city,  
And I will use olive with my sword;  
Make war breed peace; make peace stint war make each  
Prescribe to other as each other's leech.*

(V,iv,81-4)

an apparently hopeful, confident conclusion suggesting future harmony, a state invited by Shakespeare's later plays and most lucidly envisioned in **The Tempest**. (24)

## NOTES

1. All quotations and textual references to **Timon of Athens** relate to the Arden edition, ed. H.J. Oliver (London 1969)
2. Yet Shakespeare lavished his resources on this play, as several contemporary critics have pointed out: (e.g. Henri Fluchere, Wolfgang Clemen, John Wain)
3. Though **The Tempest** is in the end a completely optimistic play, its form is that of a synoptic myth, involving disharmony which is ideally absorbed.
4. The concept is Aristotelian. In the **Nicomachean Ethics** Aristotle defined the Magnificent man as being "like a man of skill because he can see what is fitting, and can spend largely (i.e. liberally) in good taste". Magnificence means fitting expense on a huge scale, a virtue having wealth for its object. Chaucer refers to it in **The Parson's Tale**. Skelton's character starts as an embodiment of this virtue, which in Aristotle's terms had its origin in reason, so that subsequent unreasonable conduct brought punishment. Timon by the same definition is overdoing it and will inevitably finish in disaster. In neither Skelton's play nor in **Timon** is there any Greek sense of tragedy but whereas Skelton's protagonist is a wooden symbol, Shakespeare invests Timon with a certain sympathy.
5. Timon's banquet speech does not address itself directly to the audience. Apemantus at the lower end of the table disassociates himself from the feasters and by the use of proverb and wordplay Shakespeare draws the audience into the action. As one critic observes, "Tragic heroes like Timon stand high in the list of Shakespeare's most punning characters! a list headed, as one might expect, by Hamlet." (M.M. Mahood, **Shakespeare's Wordplay**, (London 1968,) 166), though it must be said that Timon is not a "tragic hero" in the Hamlet category.
6. Although Timon was a stock exponent of misanthropy in Shakespeare's time, the dramatist did not draw on many obvious sources. He knew North's (Plutarch's) sketch of the historical Timon in his **Life of Antony**, possibly of Painter's **Life of Alcibiades**, the only two accounts in English, and one or two stage comedies involving Timon. But Timon was very well known to the Elizabethans (Lyly, Mulcaster, Greene, Spenser, Nash, Lodge, Dekker and anonymous writers all refer to him). Shakespeare mentions Timon in **Love's Labour's Lost**, (IV,iii,170)
7. See Francelsa Butler, **The Strange Critical Fortunes of Shakespeare's Timon of Athens** (Iowa 1966) for a detailed historical account of opinions on the play from the 18th century onwards.
8. A useful reference is Ernest Hunter Wright, **The Authorship of Timon of Athens** (New York 1910). In 1937 Una Ellis-Fermor advanced the theory of unfinished authorship in "Some Recent Research in Shakespeare's Imagery" (**Shakespeare Association Papers** (London 1937), 27

9. Lawrence Houston Houtchens & Caroline Washburn ed., *Leigh Hunt's Dramatic Criticism 1808-1831* (New York 1949), 134
10. In his edition of *Works of William Shakespeare* (1755), VI, 231
11. Henri Fluchere, *Shakespeare*, trans. Guy Hamilton (London 1967), 249
12. *ibid*, 252
13. Henry Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London 1932), 246
14. In *The Jacobean Drama, and Interpretation*, (London 1965), 265.
15. *ibid.*, 265-6
16. In *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (London, 1953), 168-76
17. *ibid.*, 172-3
18. E.g. John Holloway, *The Story of the Night* (London 1961), 131-3; Irving Ribner, *Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy*, (New York 1960), 140-156; Willard Farnham, *Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier: the World of the Final Tragedies*, (Berkeley & Los Angeles 1950), 39-77; William Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words*, (London 1951), viii.
19. Farnham, *op.cit*, 77
20. See Walter Kaufman, *From Shakespeare to Existentialism* (New York 1960)
21. The ancestor of image-study is Robert Gould's *The Play-House* (1685) in which he speaks of "vast images of they unbounded mind" in *Timon of Athens*, *King Lear* and *The Tempest*. William Warburton (1747) showed interest in the consistency of Shakespeare's images and related it to the Elizabethan liking for plays on words. Caroline Spurgeon commented on recurrent association to *Timon* in *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it Tells Us*, (Cambridge 1935) 198-9.
22. *Shakespeare and Religion* (London 1967), 211-21 Like Jonson's *Volpone* and *Alchemist*, *Timon* is about money. Gold symbolizes both love and hate, a facing-both-ways allegory.
23. John Wain, *The Living World of Shakespeare's Plays* (London 1980), 193
24. It should be noted that the positive admiration expressed during the first quarter of the 18th century was shallow and short-lived since the apparent advantages of those cities could not be realised in the modern world, certainly not in the worlds of Shakespeare and subsequently of Blake, where squalor and degradation outpaced any attempts to re-model cities on classical lines (Edinburgh and Bath proved to be the only successful examples of neo-classicism in architectural practice). Shakespeare's hopes had even less of a foundation than those of the Augustans. His use of Athens had in it a strong element of irony, like the concept of Prospero's magic island. (cf.n.3. *supra*.)