

# Early Modern Literary Studies

## Giving and Serving in *Timon of Athens*

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In a recent article Michael Neill reflected on his bleak experiences as a young domestic servant during the 1970s. He and his wife, he explains, were ‘boilerman and char in a damp Victorian mansion whose châtelaine could no longer afford the retinue of servants for which such buildings were designed.’ In this dilapidated household servants were kept in place through donations, such as ‘occasional gifts of discarded food’ which ‘served as delicate reminders of our subordinate status.’ Despite his unwholesome living conditions and ‘tiny allowance’, however, when Neill decided to leave, his employer was surprisingly offended. While he saw his departure as ‘the straightforward termination of a commercial arrangement’, for her it signified ‘the wanton abrogation of an intimate bond, an act of unpardonable disloyalty that brought tears of justified resentment to her eyes’.<sup>1</sup>

Neill’s employer organized her household through complex gift exchanges. She rewarded service – and simultaneously reminded employees that they were merely servants – by strategically distributing ‘gifts’, including one particularly memorable ‘jug of cloudy bitter, still sludgy with hops’.<sup>2</sup> In response, Neill was expected to offer loyalty and enduring service even though he could earn greater financial rewards and a more comfortable living elsewhere. He was, we might say, expected to make a gift of his service.

For the young Neill, the notion that servitude was a type of gift formed an antiquated façade concealing a hierarchical relationship. It was a residual discourse, in Raymond Williams’ terms.<sup>3</sup> This article argues that the roots of this persistently influential

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I would like to thank Adam Hansen and two anonymous reviewers at *EMLS* for their helpful comments.

<sup>1</sup> Michael Neill, ‘Ich Dien’, *London Review of Books*, 22 October 2009, pp. 11-16 (p. 11).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 121.

discourse can be found in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Here, household manuals and religious tracts instructed servants to devote themselves to their masters without thinking of rewards. For example, in 1578 Walter Darell cautioned that no servant should ‘stand so much in his own conceit, as to say, I will do no more than my covenant requireth’ because ‘if thou once become a servant, whatsoever thou do to thy master above thy promise, if it tend to his profit and commodity, is but thy bounden duty’.<sup>4</sup> For Darell, servants should not look to be rewarded for their duties since they were fulfilling naturally subordinate roles. According to this account and others, the ideal servant gave his services like a gratuitous gift.

Yet even in this period such an ideology caused problems. Other texts argued that if servants gave their services freely they would be rewarded spiritually and financially. William Gouge, for example, praised the instrumental, unrewarded servant, but underwrote his praise by insisting that dutiful servants would earn spiritual rewards, stating that: ‘servants that by their faithful service bring honour and glory to God shall again receive honor and glory’.<sup>5</sup> In short, as Scott Cutler Shershow puts it, these early modern writers promised that servants would be rewarded only if they would ‘give without *expectation* of reward’.<sup>6</sup>

These conflicting opinions about whether servants should be rewarded for their work reveal much about the hierarchy of early modern master/servant relationships. Servants were often imagined as cogs in the household machinery – the hands and feet beneath the controlling head of the household, in a microcosmic version of the macrocosmic body politic. But contemporaries were keen to stress that servants were capable of earning an independent living. In this way they could be distinguished from the supposedly parasitical ‘able-bodied poor’. In an era which prized independent productivity, the notion that servants did not strive to earn financial rewards was often applauded but persistently troubling. Such inconsistent commentary on the social and occupational role and duty of the servant raises questions: how can a servant simultaneously earn a living and give his services without thought of reward? And how can he ever ‘merit’ or earn anything in his own right if he is merely an organ in the household body?

In *Timon of Athens* (c.1605), I suggest, Shakespeare and Middleton reflect on this conundrum. Scholars have already forged connections between this play and notions of

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<sup>4</sup> Walter Darell, *A short discourse of the life of Seruingmen*, (London: Ralphe Newberrie, 1578), sig. B4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> William Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, (London: William Bladen, 1622), p. 170.

<sup>6</sup> Scott Cutler Shershow, ‘Shakespeare Beyond Shakespeare’ in *Marxist Shakespeares*, ed. by Jean E. Howard and Scott Cutler Shershow (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 245-64: p. 259.

gift-giving and unrewarded service, describing how Flavius shows ‘intense empathy and personal concern’ for Timon, at the expense of his own financial and social security.<sup>7</sup> Flavius contrasts with the other sycophantic characters of this play because he offers his services even when his household has disbanded. Shakespeare and Middleton, however, do more than paint a portrait of an ideal early modern servant. Instead, they depict servants negotiating the conflicting demands placed on them by wider society and culture. Flavius in particular struggles to understand himself as a uniquely industrious and diligent steward – someone who has earned his position within his household – while giving everything he has to his master and rejecting thought of reciprocation.

I begin this article by asking: how were ideas about domestic service intertwined with those about gift-giving in early modern England? I then trace these ideas through *Timon of Athens*. I pursue Flavius’ interactions with Timon and other servants during the course of this play, examining how Flavius struggles to negotiate antithetical demands as his domestic realm collapses. Moreover I show that these ideas do not exist in isolation but are important to the rest of the play, particularly to Alcibiades’ plea that the senators acknowledge his service to Athens, and his subsequent exile and recruitment of a vagrant army potentially including Timon’s ‘cast off’ (4.2.2) servants.<sup>8</sup>

Scholars have been right to point out that Flavius embodies early modern ideals of servile generosity and subordination. But this article asks: what are we to make of Timon’s other servants who – although sympathetic to Timon’s plight and united in remembering him – nevertheless depart to find new masters and forge new contracts when their household collapses? And what of Alcibiades, who is astonished that the decrepit Roman senators fail to reciprocate his fellow soldiers’ devoted service, and his own? Alongside Flavius (who is nonetheless conflicted in his devotion), the play is populated with others who attest to the exigency of reciprocity. This is not to say that early modern writers did not treasure the notion of the unreciprocated or ‘pure’ gift. But this ideal was undermined by an equal insistence that servants earn a living independently. In these ways *Timon* demonstrates that the bond between Flavius, his master and his household is built on a paradoxical social model and hence, like his master’s generosity, it ‘cannot hold’; indeed, ‘it will not’ (2.3.4).

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<sup>7</sup> Maurice Hunt, ‘Qualifying the Good Steward of Shakespeare’s *Timon of Athens*’, *English Studies* 82 (2001), 507 - 20 (p. 510).

<sup>8</sup> All references are to *Timon of Athens*. Ed. Anthony B. Dawson and Gretchen E. Minton London: Arden Shakespeare, 2008. Scholars continue to debate the relative input of the two authors and the play’s date. For an overview of these arguments see Dawson and Minton, pp. 12 - 18 and 1- 9.

## I

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a gift is '[s]omething, the possession of which is transferred to another *without the expectation or receipt of an equivalent*', a usage dating from 1250.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, an object of contractual exchange is given only with the explicit agreement that it will be reciprocated with an equivalent.<sup>10</sup> Early modern writers and thinkers tried to maintain this distinction, insisting that gifts must be given gratuitously and without thought of return. To do so they consulted and translated Classical works like Seneca's *De Beneficiis*. In Arthur Golding's 1578 version of this text, Seneca states: 'No man keeps a register of his benefits: neither doth the covetous usurer call daily and hourly upon his debtor. A good man never thinketh upon the good turns he has done ... For otherwise they pass into the nature of debts'.<sup>11</sup>

Given the supposedly gratuitous nature of gifts, critics have begun to note that serving and giving were imagined in similar ways in early modern England. David Evett argues that early moderns encouraged 'conscious and voluntary subordination of one's own immediate interests to those of another, not only in the hope of future bliss but also the experience of present satisfaction'.<sup>12</sup> Christ, Evett explains, 'lived a life of service, and in every moment of that life, he saw and responded to the needs of others, at whatever cost to himself'.<sup>13</sup> People, in short, were taught to imitate this 'life of service', and to live a life of *giving*. Here, Evett reminds us that domestic service was governed and transformed by the Christian command to give gratuitously and counters a tendency to think about gifts as objects by showing that Christ's gift was his self-sacrifice and his servitude. Of course, Reformed theology in this period strengthened the notion that everybody, as fallen creatures, must give their services to God freely and since secular master / servant relationships were meant to follow the heavenly paradigm, servants

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<sup>9</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. s. v. 'gift'.

<sup>10</sup> Scholars, chief amongst them Marcel Mauss, Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu and Emmanuel Levinas have intensely debated the nature of gift exchange and its distinction from contractual exchange. This paper discusses only the ways in which early moderns distinguished between the two. For more on early modern gift exchange see: Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Sean Lawrence, *Forgiving the Gift: The Philosophy of Generosity in Shakespeare and Marlowe* (Pittsburgh, PA.: Duquesne University Press, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *The woorke of the excellent philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca concerning benefyting*, translated by Arthur Golding (London: John Day, 1578), sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> David Evett, *Discourses of Service in Shakespeare's England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 21.

were encouraged to work hard without ever expecting anything from their masters. In Calvin's words: 'although they whom we serve be so forward, as we cannot tell how to content them, and we have not any hope that ever we shall get the value of a button at their hands' we must nevertheless thanklessly 'perform our duties' because ultimately we are serving God.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless Evett also states that people ultimately gave in order to receive, 'in hope of' securing 'future bliss' in heaven or even 'present satisfaction' or earthly compensation. At the heart of Evett's succinct argument, then, is a question which plagued early modern thought on gift-giving: can, or should, givers pursue compensation for their gifts? For although the freely given gift was lauded in discourses of hospitality, love, family, religion, education and countless others, the concept was problematic. In Thomas Lodge's translation of Seneca, for instance, gift-giving quickly transmutes into contractual exchange. After extolling the virtues of giving without reciprocation Seneca goes on to preach the evils of ungratefulness, thereby seeking to ensure that all donors will eventually enjoy reciprocation through recognition of their gifts: 'Ungrateful is he who denieth that he hath received a good turn ... Ungrateful is he that dissembleth ... Ungrateful is he that maketh not restitution'.<sup>15</sup> Golding flattens any remaining complexity in Seneca's argument in the preface to his version. Seneca, he explains, shows 'what benefit is to be looked for [in giving] and what fruit it yields again'.<sup>16</sup>

Early modern definitions of service, as Mark Thornton Burnett explains, were 'conflicting and diffuse,' potentially encompassing people from a vast range of social statuses and occupations; ways of understanding service were just as wide-ranging.<sup>17</sup> This article suggests, however, that conflicting notions about the nature of gift-giving had particular implications for domestic servants, especially those employed – like Flavius – in noble and gentry households. As nominal members of their employers' families, these domestic servants were expected to motivate themselves with love for their masters, not by dwelling on potential contractual gain. Dod and Cleaver for example command servants to love their masters and be 'affectioned towards them, as a

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<sup>14</sup> John Calvin, *The sermons of M. Iohn Caluin, upon the Epistle of S. Paule to the Ephesians*, translated by Arthur Golding (London: Thomas Dawson, 1577), sig. S4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *The Works of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Both morall and naturall*, translated by Thomas Lodge (London: William Stansby, 1614), pp. 41-2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. \*2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Thornton Burnett, *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience*. (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), p. 2.

dutiful child is towards his father'.<sup>18</sup> But servitude was simultaneously understood as an occupation and servants were pressured to contribute to society and to provide for themselves. When commentators judged that they had failed to meet these requirements they condemned servants as wasteful parasites who drained their masters' wealth rather than engaging in productive work. On the subject of lords retaining large bands of servants, Gilbert Cousin storms:

what a band shall that be of trifling truants, both doltish, drunken and also piking ... therefore as a wise man buyeth household stuff, rather to serve himself, then to feed others eyes, so a great deal sooner ought an unnecessary meigne to be put away, who are nothing else but consumers of vitals.<sup>19</sup>

Cousin describes servants as wasteful and superfluous since they consume rather than increase their masters' wealth.

These conflicting demands – that servants must give endlessly to their masters without depending wholly on them – meant that servants were particularly vulnerable to the contradictions inherent in notions of the gift. We can see this reflected again and again in household manuals. For instance, as mentioned in the introduction to this article, Walter Darell warns:

Let no man stand so much in his own conceit, as to say, I will do no more than my covenant requireth ... if thou once become a servant, whatsoever thou do to thy master above thy promise, if it tend to his profit and commodity, is but thy bounden duty. Again, if such a one who doth his duty far beyond his covenant, if for his labour he be not considered, in good faith he serves a simple master. But be he assured, although he find no reward on earth, his master in heaven shall largely yield him double recompense.<sup>20</sup>

This passage can be interpreted in two ways which illuminate the paradox briefly sketched above. On the one hand, Darell argues that a servant should be entirely selfless and giving when working for his master. He should not try to calculate rewards according to any pre-formed contract, since serving is his 'bounden duty'. In this way

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<sup>18</sup> John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A godly forme of household government* (London: Thomas Man, 1621), sig. Aa5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Gilbert Cousin, *Of the Office of servaunts* (London: Thomas Berthe, 1543), sig. C1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Darell, sig. B4<sup>v</sup>.

the servant is positioned as an endlessly generous donor. There are no supererogatory acts – no acts which go beyond what duty requires. On the other hand, Darell insists that a servant can and should earn rewards from his master if he has fulfilled these duties. He admonishes masters who do not reward their servants, stating – similarly to Gouge, above – that if the servant’s work is not rewarded on Earth it will be all the more plentifully rewarded in heaven. Here it appears that the servant is in fact not in a continual state of debt to his master because his work should, and will, be rewarded in due time. Other tracts during this period similarly stress that ‘[a]ppropriate wages should be paid to servants promptly at the agreed times and in full, and accommodation, food, and other benefits should be provided’.<sup>21</sup> Put simply, the paradoxical message of this tract and others is that servants should work freely for their masters since they are in a constant state of debt to them but that compensation should always follow dutiful work. Because such tracts were – and may well have been recognized as – idealistic and simplified treatments of the relationship between master and servant, some critics are hesitant to value to them as a source of information.<sup>22</sup> However, the tracts often give remarkably inconsistent advice to masters and servants. In this way they perhaps reproduce, to a degree not always appreciated, the very complexities they attempted to iron out.

Gervase Markham is likewise concerned with service carried out beyond the contractual agreement and produces a comparably paradoxical argument. Markham emphasises that servants earn their keep, and so cannot be compared to members of the so-called ‘able-bodied’ poor.<sup>23</sup> In his *A health to the gentlemanly profession of Seruingmen* (1598) he argues that ‘servingmen’s only maintenance consists upon liberality’ but then goes on to note that this generosity or ‘liberality’ was not ‘bestowed upon them in mere commiseration, pity and charity, as them of ability do upon impotent beggars: but the servant, by his duty and diligence, did merit and deserve it’.<sup>24</sup> Here Markham argues that the generosity, or ‘liberality’ shown to servants is entirely distinct from that shown to beggars, since the former have worked for, and thus *earned* such generosity. Even though servants have earned these rewards, however, Markham refuses to align them

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<sup>21</sup> R. C. Richardson, ‘Social Engineering in Early Modern England: Masters, Servants, and the Godly Discipline.’ *CLIO: A Journal of Literature, History and the Philosophy of History* 33 (2004), 163-87 (p. 177).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>23</sup> On the division between the ‘deserving’ and ‘able-bodied’ poor see Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness and English Renaissance Literature*. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2001), pp. 267 - 284.

<sup>24</sup> Gervase Markham, *A health to the gentlemanly profession of seruingmen* (London: W. White, 1598), sig. D2<sup>v</sup>.

completely with *contractual* rewards insisting that they are ‘over and above’ the servant’s ‘covenant and bargain’. In this way, Markham avoids eliding servants with the demonized ‘able-bodied’ poor who supposedly refused to earn a living. Servants might give their services freely and receive generous gifts in return, but they did – Markham insists – earn these rewards. He counters those such as Gilbert Cousin who imagines servants as parasitically draining their masters’ wealth.

To summarize, accounts such as Markham’s and Darell’s impel servants to give freely to their masters while continually asserting that they are obliged to *work* for and *earn* the *gifts* they receive. As intimated in the introduction to this article, the paradox inherent in this ideology is reflected in other discourses, beginning in the latter half of the sixteenth century, which domesticated the concept of the body politic, establishing ‘a model of the family composed of a head and its compliant, inferior members’.<sup>25</sup> These ‘inferior members’ included wives, children and servants. Alex Niccholes’ *Discourse, of marriage and wiving* (1615), for example, states that:

every married man, for the most part, hath three Common-wealths under him: he is a Husband of a Wife, a Father of Children, and a Master of Servants, and therefore had need of government in himself that must govern all these, and to that purpose cannot take unto himself a better practice or precedent, then from this uniformity of the body, where the head stands aloft like a king in his Thro[n]e, giving direction and command to all his Subjects, biddeth the foot go, and it goeth, the hand fight and it fighteth.<sup>26</sup>

Puritans such as William Perkins took up this model and described vagrants and beggars as ‘rotten arms and legs that fall from the body’ – useless members that fail to contribute to, and consequently destroy, the commonwealth.<sup>27</sup> Accounts such as these, then, objectified servants by comparing them to body parts who obey automatically.

For this reason Dod and Cleaver make the following distinction in their *A godly forme of household government* (1621):

good and faithful servants, liking and affecting their masters, understand them at a beck, and obey them at a wink of the eye, or bent of the brow,

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<sup>25</sup> Ariane M. Balizet “‘Enamoured of thy Parts’: Dismemberment and Domesticity in *Romeo and Juliet*.” *Early Modern Literary Studies*, Special Issue 19 (2009),

< <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/si-19/balirome.html> > [accessed 22 November 2011] (para. 1 of 31).

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Niccholes, *A discourse, of Marriage and wiving* (London: Leonard Becket, 1615), pp. 44-5.

<sup>27</sup> Cited in Hill, 223.

not as a water-spaniel, but as the hand is stirred to obey the mind, so prompt and ready is the dutiful servant to obey his loving and kind master ... For as the hand is said to be the instrument of instruments, being it (indeed) that serves to feed, apparel and keep clean the rest of the limbs and parts of the body, which are also called instruments: so is the servant said to live ... [But] where they are things without a soul, he is divinely enriched with a soul: and herein he differs from the hand, for that hand is fastened and united to the body, but he is separate and disjoined from his master.<sup>28</sup>

Dod and Cleaver adhere to the somatic model of domestic harmony, describing the servant as an instrumental hand which automatically obeys the mind, or master. But these writers are nevertheless keen to distinguish the servant from a mindless automaton, conceding that a servant possesses an individual soul and is ‘separate and disjoined from his master.’ In a different way, then, Dod and Cleaver try to combat the same problem as Markham who insisted that servants are not members of the supposedly parasitical poor but can think and earn for themselves. In this renovated domestic body, servants are somehow both intrinsic to and separate from their masters and their households.

## II

How were the discourses I have traced through household manuals reflected in fictional texts? This article reads these manuals alongside *Timon of Athens* which is, in every sense, a play about gift-giving. Critics have focused on Timon’s ruinous practices of gift-giving, seeing him alternately as a satirical portrait of the prodigal James I<sup>29</sup> or as a man motivated by a spiritual desire to move ‘outside the circular economy of exchange’.<sup>30</sup> In comparison, Timon’s servants have garnered relatively little interest. But they often give far more generous gifts than Timon, particularly Flavius who attempts to give all he has to his misanthropic and malevolent former master. I will come to this scene in time – for now, I want to show how ideas about gift-giving and contractual exchange structure master/servant interactions from the start of this play.

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<sup>28</sup> Dod and Cleaver, sig. Aa3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Coppélia Kahn, “‘Magic of Bounty’: *Timon of Athens*, Jacobean Patronage and Maternal Power.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38 (1987), 34-57 (pp. 42-7).

<sup>30</sup> Ken Jackson, “‘One Wish’ or the Possibility of the Impossible: Derrida, the Gift and God in *Timon of Athens*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52 (2001), 34-66 (p. 47).

Flavius' first appearance on stage, I suggest, responds to the clash of imperatives outlined in this article. At times in this scene Flavius develops critical distance between himself and his master by emphasizing his own, externally verified excellence in his work; he proves, in other words, that he has worked for and *earned* his position in the household and that he is qualified to independently judge its fate. Such attempts to convince Timon that he has fulfilled his duty are framed by '[a] prevalent anxiety about the trustworthiness of senior servants'.<sup>31</sup> In many early modern plays servants distinguish between themselves and other supposedly wasteful, drunken or promiscuous servants to prove their trustworthiness and productivity.<sup>32</sup> For example, when insisting that he has followed his contractual obligations to the letter, Flavius tells Timon: 'If you suspect my husbandry of falsehood, / Call me before th'exactest auditors / And set me on the proof' (2.2.155-157). Rather than evoking the affective bond between himself and Timon, Flavius appeals to external parties to verify his behaviour. Flavius chafes at Timon's prior distrust of him, recalling that he 'did endure / Not seldom nor no slight checks' (2.2.139-140) when trying to convince Timon of the extent of his debts. Flavius' strained understatement ('not seldom', 'nor no slight') shows that he is angry at being doubted and reprimanded, even as he tries to remain deferential to his master.

To protect his household, Flavius must become an external critic of it, rather than an internal implement. The threat of disobedience which haunts his assertions prompts Timon to snap: 'Come, sermon me no further' (2.2.172). This use of 'sermon' as a verb is very suggestive. Shakespeare does not use it in any other play and it is used only rarely elsewhere in early modern literature.<sup>33</sup> It reveals that Timon is not just tired of Flavius pointing out his shortcomings, but is concerned about the authority Flavius has assumed as he 'sermons' his own master. Scholars such as Schalkwyk argue that Flavius would have been applauded for reprimanding his master since '[t]he most dedicated kinds of service in Shakespeare take the form of critical resistance to unreasonable or wayward masters, who are never so truly served as when they are opposed'.<sup>34</sup> But if Flavius shows his true devotion to Timon by criticizing him, his behaviour is still problematic according to wider discourses of service since 'critical resistance' entails critical distance. By resisting Timon, Flavius reveals the limits of the popular image of the organically unified domestic realm even as he simultaneously tries to promote this image. Flavius necessarily risks causing further damage to the domestic

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<sup>31</sup> Schalkwyk, p. 150.

<sup>32</sup> Thornton Burnett, 1997, pp. 161-71 and Mark Thornton Burnett, 'Ophelia's "False Steward" Contextualized', *The Review of English Studies* 46 (1995), 48-56 (p. 50).

<sup>33</sup> See the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. s. v. 'sermon'. Here *Timon* is listed as one of the only early modern examples.

<sup>34</sup> Schalkwyk, p. 33.

body by trying to repair it, demonstrating the precariousness of early modern ideologies of service and subordination. In Thornton Burnett's words, Flavius is an example of a steward who 'simultaneously subscribes to and exceeds the responsibilities imposed on him by his overlords'.<sup>35</sup>

Although in these examples Flavius casts himself as an autonomous member of the household, he also tries to promote the image of an all-encompassing domestic body and to reabsorb himself within this system, however difficult this task proves. In a passage charged with somatic, temporal and emotional transgressions, for instance, he recalls occasions when:

all our offices have been oppressed  
With riotous feeders, when our vaults have wept  
With drunken splith of wine, when every room  
Hath blazed with lights and brayed with minstrelsy,  
I have retired me to a wasteful cock  
And set mine eyes at flow (2.2.153-158).

Using the plural 'our', Flavius evokes a sense of household unity tying together master, servant and household. The vaults of the house 'weep' with spilt wine just as Flavius weeps next to a leaking tap. As guests sweep through the house they pull the physical household to pieces, emptying vaults and spilling wine – acts of literal and figurative dismemberment which upset inhabitants like Flavius who depend on domestic cohesion for their sense of identity and security.<sup>36</sup>

Further examples of bodily excess and waste ensue as Flavius attributes household decay to Timon's guests, outsiders who have failed to respect his home. When Timon orders his remaining lands to be sold, Flavius retorts that the land has already gone:

And what remains will hardly stop the mouth

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<sup>35</sup> Thornton Burnett, 1997, p. 155.

<sup>36</sup> As well as the image of a siege or riot, there is possibly a link to the imagery of disease which pervades *Timon*. Darryl Chalk finds *Timon* to be 'suffused with disease imagery' and 'filled with dozens of references to and metaphorical applications of the language of illness and medicine', noting that in early modern England '[t]he transmission of plague, whereby breath and touch were believed to carry infection forced familial hierarchies to be subverted' (see Chalk, "'A nature but infected": Plague and Embodied Transformation in *Timon of Athens*', *Early Modern Literary Studies* Special Issue 19 (2009), <<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/si-19/chalplag.html>> [accessed 22 November 2011] para. 6-7 of 28). In the passage quoted above, similarly, unwelcome and dangerous forces corrupt the (domestic) body and subvert its order.

Of present dues; the future comes apace.  
What shall defend the interim ... ? (2.2.147-149)

Flavius here compares unstoppable ruin with a mouth which cannot be silenced. He follows this with further oral imagery, noting that ‘the world is but a word; / Were it all yours to give it in a breath, / How quickly were it gone’ (2.2.152-154) and soon after he recalls wondering at ‘How many prodigal bits have slaves and peasants / This night englutted’ (2.2.165-166).

Although Flavius imagines the household decaying as a result of other’s actions, he emulates this behaviour. He remembers weeping as guests swept through the house, and when he tried to encourage Timon to be more abstemious in his spending (‘I have shook my head and wept’ (2.2.137)). Timon’s later question – ‘Why dost thou weep?’ (2.2.175) – further suggests that Flavius has wept throughout this scene. These examples of bodily excess could be explained as simply the result of his ‘affective investment’ in Schalkwyk’s terms.<sup>37</sup> But, as in the speech quoted above, Flavius aligns excess with the inevitable decay of his household. Here, as throughout the play, he risks ruining the delicate balancing act required by Puritan and other early modern discourses of servitude. In becoming too attached to his household, he risks being unable to act as an objective counsellor. Although Timon was earlier uncomfortable with Flavius’ subversion of hierarchy as he preached at his master, he is equally unsure about Flavius’ ‘affective investment’ in the household, commanding him to ‘secure’ his ‘heart’ against such emotional outbursts (2.2.176).

Maurice Hunt has argued that ‘Flavius’ service, contrary to established critical opinion, fails to represent a relatively ideal Shakespeare composite’.<sup>38</sup> In Hunt’s view, Flavius is too ‘timorous’ in condemning his master’s debts and so he does not rank amongst the most admirable of Shakespearean servants who demonstrate ‘[s]trong, courageous reproof’ of their master’s wrongdoings.<sup>39</sup> He concludes ‘Shakespeare in *Timon of Athens* uncomfortably qualifies his portrayal of the good servant Flavius. In every sense, the qualifications add to playgoer’s doubts that this compassionate, good-hearted servant could achieve the moral absolutism and capacity for rough reproof seen in Kent, Paulina and possibly Helicanus’.<sup>40</sup> I agree with Hunt that Shakespeare – and Middleton’s – picture of Flavius is compromised. But he does not offer any reasons *why* Shakespeare and Middleton created such an ambiguous character, or which wider

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<sup>37</sup> Schalkwyk, p. 150.

<sup>38</sup> Hunt, 507.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 508.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 513.

discourses inform his characterization. In response, I suggest that Flavius' struggle to remain admirable would have been recognizable to many in the audience as the struggle to balance the demands of subordination with the demands that one earn one's place in society.

### III

If Flavius struggles to juggle the demands placed on him, then Alcibiades, I argue, shows what can happen if the contradictions inherent in ideologies of service are pushed to a conclusion. In Act three Alcibiades is introduced trying to save a fellow soldier from death as punishment for a street brawl. In doing so, he depends on a contractual model of servitude. He states for example that because the soldier confessed his crime, he did not 'soil the fact with cowardice – / an honour in him which *buys out his fault*' (3.5.16-17, my emphasis). He repeats this idea several times: 'His service done / At Lacedaemon and Byzantium, / Were a sufficient briber for his life' (3.5.59-61). The senators appear incredulous towards Alcibiades' ideas of justice, asking, 'What's that?' (3.5.62), before he continues:

My lords, if not for any parts in him,  
Though his right arm might purchase his own time  
And be in debt to none, yet more to move you,  
Take my deserts to his and join 'em both.  
And for I know your reverend ages love  
Security, I'll pawn my victories, all  
My honour, to you upon his good returns (3.5.76-82).

The senators, however, reject Alcibiades' view that services rendered should induce clemency insisting that '[y]ou undergo too strict a paradox / Striving to make an ugly deed look fair' (3.5.24-25). Alcibiades' requests are denied and he is banished. To this he responds:

I have kept back their foes  
While they have told their money and let out  
Their coin upon large interest – I myself  
Rich only in large hurts. All those, for this?  
Is this the balsam that the usuring senate  
Pours into captains' wounds? (3.5.105-110)

He concludes: 'I'll cheer up / My discontented troops and lay for hearts' (3.5.113-114).

Scholars have connected Alcibiades' plans to raise an army with early fears and anxieties about vagrant soldiers. For instance Andrew Hadfield argues that Alcibiades' threat 'makes a definite allusion to a central fear of Elizabethan and Jacobean societies that had terrifying experiences of demobbed, unpaid armies wandering the countryside in search of basic means of existence'.<sup>41</sup> More than this, Alcibiades' banishment ties in with the play's and the period's pervasive fear of the dismembered social body manifested in vagrancy. In a recent article Adam Hansen has argued that Alcibiades and his 'army of whores and thieves' represent 'what was disturbing in the opportunities and costs of [London's] new circumstances'.<sup>42</sup> That is: 'Athens survives and prospers because people are prepared or coerced to do its dirty work. To execute or exile is to negate the components that make the city possible ... Alcibiades' revenge reinstates these negated relationships, and demolishes the hypocrisy that ignores them'.<sup>43</sup> I would like to add to this argument by noting that Alcibiades' war efforts are disregarded in part because they are seen as his *duty* as his soldier – and since they are his duty, he does not need to be compensated or even particularly valued for his work.

At around the same time he contributed to *Timon of Athens*, Middleton critiqued unrewarded military service in his pamphlet *The Nightingale and the Ant* (later printed as *Father Hubbard's Tales*). In this tale, a lowly but industrious ant transforms himself into a ploughman, a soldier and finally a scholar. As a soldier the Ant loses an arm and a leg in battle and, thus unable to fight, asks to 'have pay and be gone' (178).<sup>44</sup> His commanders refuse however, stating that although the Ant has done 'valiant service' they have spent all their money on war; it is 'thumped out in powder'. The Ant is told that he can 'purchase no more than one month's pay for a ten month's pain and peril', and the commanders provide him with 'a passport to beg in all countries,' the result, Middleton quips, of their 'bountiful' natures. Yet this passport does not ensure charity – the Ant finds himself whipped from town to town, 'unpitied, succorless and rejected'.

The circumstances in which Alcibiades and the Ant plead for reciprocal justice are clearly not identical, but they share significant similarities. These are borne out by

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<sup>41</sup> Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), p. 212.

<sup>42</sup> Adam Hansen, 'London and its "Others" in *Timon of Athens*' *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 147 (2011), 53- 67 (p. 55).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63.

<sup>44</sup> All references are to 'The Nightingale and the Ant', ed. by Adrian Weiss in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 164-182.

linguistic parallels: where Alcibiades calls his banishment ‘the basalm that the usuring senate / Pours into captains’ wounds’ (3.5.109-10), the Ant says that his diminished pay and begging passport is ‘no pleasing salve to a green sore’ (178). Alcibiades’ request is by no means straightforwardly moral, and the Ant is generally depicted as a swaggering upstart who enlists as a soldier to seek fame and glory. But Middleton’s pamphlet nonetheless touches on the desperate fate of those who find their loyal services unrewarded: a future of vagrancy and beggary. Alcibiades’ troops – and soon Timon’s servants – roam menacingly around the outskirts of Athens, victims of the logic of unrewarded service.

By this point in the play we have already seen Timon’s household begin to dissolve; soon we will see his servants leave for uncertain futures and potential vagrancy. Alcibiades embodies the pervasive fear of vagrancy onstage and off and represents another facet of the play’s interrogation of a culture linking gifts and service. Although Alcibiades and Flavius have very different attitudes towards servitude, both have a similar fate. The vagrant and the giving servant live on two sides of the same coin. If, like Flavius, servants are willing to follow their masters in everything, if they intervene too late in their masters’ ruinous actions or with too little force, and if they insist on making gifts of their own selfhoods, then they will not ensure that their gifts are returned and they may well end up at the mercy of the state. Merely hoping that reward will follow gift is a dangerous strategy in a society which rejects its ‘masterless’ subjects. Alcibiades presents a different, but related case: here is a soldier who is only too aware of what he has earned through his work. But instead of recognizing their own debt to him, the Senators choose to see his service as a gift, and so feel justified in refusing to reciprocate, as Athens refused to reciprocate Timon’s gifts earlier in the play. In all cases, gifts of servitude (whether these services were intended as gifts or not) lead to destitution.

#### IV

In Flavius’ next major scene Timon’s household finally disintegrates entirely and he and his fellow servants come to terms with their master’s forced exit from his home. His servants are unable to continue in their positions both because the ‘head’ of their household has been severed, and because they will no longer be paid and must find new sources of income. The ‘First Servant’ begins this scene by asking: ‘Are we undone, cast off, nothing remaining?’ (4.2.2). He registers two complementary but different ways of understanding his and his fellow’s state; firstly, he asks ‘[a]re *we* undone?’ echoing Flavius’ earlier use of the first person plural. Like Flavius, then, this servant

evokes a sense of household unity even during the death of the domestic body. Secondly, and somewhat differently, he imagines his fellows as ‘cast off’. This servant and his company are coming to terms with the sense that the household is not an integrated, organic entity but is instead an association of otherwise autonomous, alienated individuals who may at any time be ‘cast off’ like so much household stuff.

These words recall contemporary fears and complaints about elderly servants who had been left to fend for themselves, again reinforcing the concept that service should be fairly rewarded. John Dod and Robert Cleaver for example, lamented that masters:

toil their servants while they can labour, and consume their strength and spend them out: and when age cometh and the bones are full of ache and pain, they turn them out of doors, poor and helpless into the wide world to shift for themselves as they can ... and thus it cometh to pass that many become thieves and vagrant beggars through their master’s niggardliness that would not do his duty in bestowing some proportionable and competent relief upon them.<sup>45</sup>

Dod and Cleaver’s account is relatively sympathetic to the plight of such servants, but more generally early modern England often registered terror at the thought of such ‘masterless men’, leading to attempts to distinguish between the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor. As able-bodied men, Timon’s servants risk future categorization as the latter; that is, those who were capable of earning their own keep within society – but were supposedly unwilling to do so. Tying in with such fears, Flavius enters and describes his company as ‘[a]ll broken implements of a ruined house’ (4.2.18). Shakespeare uses the word ‘implements’ rarely – one example is in *Hamlet* when Marcellus refers to the trade in ‘implements of war’ (1.1.83) where it straightforwardly refers to objects. The use in *Timon* speaks of, or to, the imagery of service used in the period’s discourses: imagining himself as a ‘broken’ tool of the household, rather than as an organ within it, Flavius once again faces the concept that he is (and always has been) external, rather than intrinsic, to the household. Using this term situates Timon’s servants in a liminal space, which is reflected by the shipwreck imagery throughout this scene. The servants are neither wholly extrinsic, nor wholly intrinsic to the household.

At the end of this scene Timon’s servants part ways but Flavius vows to find Timon, promising: ‘I’ll ever serve his mind with my best will / Whilst I have gold, I’ll be his

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<sup>45</sup> Cited in Chris Fitter, ‘Reading Orlando Historically: Vagrancy, Forest and Vestry Values in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*.’ *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 23 (2010), 114-41 (p. 126).

steward still' (4.2.50-51). This fulfils the injunctions imposed by the like of Thomas Fosset, who declared that even if masters 'deal hardly and evilly' with their servants, they 'must not shake off the yoke, set themselves as liberty, and depart when they list ... because they have not power over their own selves'.<sup>46</sup> David Schalkwyk argues that in this scene Flavius 'is matched by Timon's other servants, who are fully alive to the ethics of reciprocity but do not necessarily expect it for themselves'.<sup>47</sup> If all of Timon's servants are equally amenable to the prospect of non-contractual and unreciprocated service, however, then why do none of them follow Flavius in his quest? In fact, they too turn away '[f]rom our companion thrown into his grave' (4.2.9). These servants decline to seek out Timon because they must weigh up a fatal ideology of non-reciprocity as outlined by Fossett with an ideology which demands that they earn their position in society. Leaving Timon's service may mean they fall to beggary and are forced to rely on charity, but it also means that they could potentially find other employment contracts and provide for themselves. Reinforcing the links noted earlier, Flavius' embrace of servitude is a potential embrace of continued vagrancy since he would be living with Timon in the forest, unpaid.

Yet, in this respect, Flavius' final words in this scene are ambiguous. Does he mean that he will be Timon's steward as long as he can subsist without pay? Or does he mean that since he still owns money from his employment contract with Timon, he is still theoretically contracted to serve him? If we favour the former interpretation, then Flavius is tacitly accepting that his service to Timon may come to an end, since he too will succumb to the ideological and pragmatic pressure to earn a living. If the latter, then Flavius once again evokes the service contract as a means of organizing his relationship with Timon, even as he seemingly gives the most generous gift of the entire play.

## V

Just as he promised, Flavius proves his devotion to Timon by tracking him down in the forest. When Flavius first catches sight of Timon he explains: 'I will present / My honest grief unto him and as my lord / Still serve him with my life' (4.3.464-466). When Flavius claims that he will serve Timon until death, '*as my lord*' (my italics) he suggests that he will be maintaining a natural or organic hierarchy; he will serve Timon until his death *because* Timon is his lord. Even though Flavius' household (in the sense

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<sup>46</sup> Thomas Fosset, *The servant's dutie* (London: G. Eld., 1613), p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Schalkwyk, p. 145.

of its members) has dissolved, he still clings to the notion of a unified domestic body.

But to Flavius' surprise Timon appears to have forgotten him. Echoing Alcibiades' encounter with the Senators, Timon declares: 'Away! What art thou?' (4.3.467). In his new, unsocial life, he claims 'I have forgot all men. Then, if thou grant'st thou'rt a man, I have forgot thee' (4.3.469). Flavius resists Timon's demotion of him to the status of 'all men', however, and continues to plead that he is '[a]n honest poor servant of yours' (4.3.470), going on to claim: 'The gods are witness, / Ne'er did a poor steward wear a truer grief / For his undone lord than mine eyes for you' (4.3.474-476). Commenting on Flavius, Schalkwyk argues that he:

[s]eeks the recognition of a master who has placed himself beyond acknowledgement, but *who could himself be rescued* through the recognition of his servant. This scene therefore enacts not merely the possible affirmation of identity – a ubiquitous preoccupation in criticism and theory – but the recognition of *humanity*.<sup>48</sup>

In short, this scene demonstrates the centrality of loving reciprocity to early modern thought, a quality which Timon fatefully rejects.

Indeed, throughout this play Flavius has spoken of his servitude as merely automatic, organic and natural and in this scene his goal is apparently to re-establish the composite domestic body. Yet we might interrogate – or notice that the play interrogates – the grounds on which Flavius builds his case for this cohesive body. After all, as noted above, although Timon's servants earlier banded together in sympathy for their prodigal master, the playwrights do not take this opportunity to enact a group reconciliation but instead show the *unmatchable* loyalty of one servant. What's more, throughout this scene Flavius continues to demonstrate his ethical superiority to other men and other servants. For example, earlier in the play, in a dialogue with Apemantus, Timon remembers that he once had 'the world as my confectionary. / The mouths, the tongues, the eyes and hearts of men / At duty, more than I could frame employment' (4.3.259-261), suggesting that it was the sheer number of these friends which eventually left him friendless:

as leaves  
Do on the oak, have with one winter's brush  
Fell from their boughs, and left me open, bare,

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 158.

For every storm that blows. (4.3.262-265)

Yet Flavius is not part of this undifferentiated mass of followers or fair-weather friends. He is a singularly loyal servant, as Timon recognizes when he later praises Flavius' unparalleled goodness: 'I do proclaim / One honest man. Mistake me not: but one, / No more I pray, and he's a steward' (4.3.491-493). These moments echo Flavius' earlier insistence on his externally verifiable excellence and his ability to judge independently the fate of his household. Further, Timon declares: 'Methinks thou art more honest now than wise, / For by oppressing and betraying me / Thou mightst have sooner got another service: / For many so arrive at second masters / Upon their first lord's neck.' (4.3.497-501). Timon's words suggest here that the servants we saw earlier, those who decided not to follow Timon but to find service elsewhere, were somehow traitorous. The exception is Flavius.

How do we explain this singular and tenacious loyalty? To answer this question, we might turn to Stephano Guazzo who, in his *Civile Conversation* (1581), argues that higher-ranked servants love and respect their masters more than 'vile and base servants'.<sup>49</sup> Higher-ranked servants like Flavius, we might surmise, have superior 'natures' and motivations than their fellows. However, Guazzo's partner in dialogue Anniball Magnocavalli replies that those with 'noble minds' only love service 'for the honour which is annexed unto it', not because they truly love their masters more.<sup>50</sup> 'That Golden Chain never liked me,' Magnocavalli declares, 'and I have always counted all service insecure and miserable'.<sup>51</sup> As this dialogue suggests, some early moderns did argue that higher-ranked servants were more loyal by nature but not everybody agreed; for Anniball, loyalty is merely a means to ensuring later material reward and 'honour'. Similarly, *Timon of Athens* gives no indication that Flavius has a better nature than his fellow servants who seek work while he remains loyal; his co-workers do not display 'vile and base natures'. Instead, Flavius demonstrates the pressures to stay loyal and reject material motivations for service more than these others because of his uniquely complicated and pivotal position within the household.

Earlier I mentioned that Flavius, not Timon, gives the most generous example of a gift in this play, and the only gift which comes close to early modern ideals of non-reciprocity. He protests that his kindness is not 'kindness subtle, covetous, / A usuring kindness' (4.3.503-504) as Timon suspects. Instead, he insists:

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<sup>49</sup> Guazzo, Stefano. *The Civile Conuersation*, translated by George Pettie (London: Richard Watkins, 1581), p. 46.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

For any benefit that points to me,  
Either in hope or present, I'd exchange  
For this one wish: that you had power and wealth  
To requite me by making rich yourself. (4.3.514-517)

This speech evokes a web of gifts and reciprocations which needs to be untangled. Firstly Flavius promotes a Senecan vision of the gift, vowing that if he were to accrue any 'benefit' from the gift he offers he would exchange it again for a 'wish'. Ultimately this wish would enrich Timon with 'power and wealth' and not Flavius. As critics have noted Flavius' attempts to escape commercial exchange once again fail because he dreams of reciprocation. But what is the nature of this reciprocation? It would not necessarily involve financial reward (indeed Flavius imminently rejects Timon's gold). Perhaps Flavius means nothing more by reciprocation than that seeing Timon reinstated in his previous state would be reward enough. But the reciprocation Flavius wants is ultimately to regain the master / servant relationship, and the stability, he has lost. If Timon once again had 'wealth and power' then Flavius would naturally return to his state of subjection. In the current scenario, however, both master and servant are homeless.

It is important to remember at this point that to be a vagrant was potentially more problematic than being poor in early modern England because vagrancy meant existing outside of the hierarchical structures Elizabethan and Jacobean legislature continued to uphold as natural (although of course poverty often led to vagrancy and vice versa). In this desperate situation, when the physical and collective household no longer exists, Flavius cannot appease all of the various pressures exerted on him. If he gives his services to Timon and re-enters a master / servant bond without expecting financial reciprocation then he will be divorced from any means of earning a living. If he tries to create a financial transaction, however, then he will have to admit that he is not his master's implement but an independent and ultimately expendable agent. Timon underscores this paradox by rewarding Flavius for his gift with gold:

Thou singly honest man,  
Here, take. The gods, out of my misery,  
Has sent thee treasure. Go, live rich and happy. (4.3.518-520)

Perhaps Timon's response is inevitable when we consider that the contradictory demands both to *earn* and to *give* have been placed on Flavius throughout this play. Timon also reflects: 'thou art a woman, and disclaim'st/ Flinty mankind' (4.3.488-489).

This echoes his earlier command to Flavius to ‘secure’ his ‘heart’ (2.2.176). Timon interprets Flavius’ gift as a symbol of femininity, just as contemporary discourses had also begun (very gradually) to link servitude – in the sense of economic dependence upon another man – with femininity and passivity. Katharine Hodgkin has argued that early modern manliness ‘implied economic self-reliance, preferably as one’s own master; and, for a gentleman, if possible, independent means’.<sup>52</sup> When Flavius weeps, he demonstrates a lack of masculinity through his propensity to sympathise emotionally with his master and failure to engage in productive work outside of the household. This reinforces Alcibiades’ earlier remarks, which contend that men act outside the domestic sphere: ‘If there be / Such valour in the bearing, what make we / Abroad? Why then, women are more valiant / That stay at home’ (3.5.45-48).

It is not clear from the scene whether Flavius decides to keep this gold. Critics have suggested that ‘our ultimate assessment of Flavius depends on how we interpret this surprising moment’.<sup>53</sup> Most agree that if Flavius *does* take this money then he ‘loses all claim to being the moral center of the play’.<sup>54</sup> But arguing that this moment is ‘surprising’ overlooks the extent to which the twin ideals of non-reciprocity and profit saturate the play. This moment, then, is not as surprising as it is inevitable. Whether Flavius keeps the gold or not is not particularly important to the moral outlook of the play. What is important is the paradoxical logic of the concatenated discourses that prompted Timon to reward his excessively dutiful servant with monetary compensation.

## VI

Cutler Shershow notes that *Timon* is the only one of Shakespeare’s plays devoted to ‘an explicit consideration of the general or ‘gift’ economy’. That said, the play ‘remains a nearly unperformable curiosity’ because ‘it can approve neither Timon’s extravagant imprudence, nor the dog-eat-dog world of untrammelled self-interest that brings him down’. He concludes: ‘Shakespeare simply cannot imagine any realistic social model beyond these two alternatives, and since the play deplors both it has absolutely nowhere to go’.<sup>55</sup> These comments can be contextualized and developed by considering them in relation to Flavius. Flavius too demonstrates ‘extravagant imprudence’ but his

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<sup>52</sup> Katharine Hodgkin, ‘Thomas Wythorne and the Problems of Mastery’, *History Workshop Journal* 29 (1990), 20 - 41 (p. 24).

<sup>53</sup> Dawson and Minton, p. 69.

<sup>54</sup> Rolf Soellner, *Timon of Athens: Shakespeare’s Pessimistic Tragedy* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979), p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Cutler Shershow, p. 260.

need to earn a living cannot be reduced to ‘untrammelled self-interest’. The play, I suggest, registers the injustice of a world which demands that servants give away everything they have whilst avoiding identification with the State-constructed ‘able-bodied’ poor.

Thinking about vagrancy returns us to Alcibiades and his vagabond army. Could this encompass Timon’s disbanded servants? Even if not formally identified as such, we might presume that the actors playing Timon’s ‘cast off’ (4.2.2) servants would be used to fill these roles. If so, his return to Athens at the end of the play is significant for the paradoxical ideology I have identified in this article. Hansen argues that the return of this army ‘is also a return, if not an acceptance, of the repressed, proving the power of the dependencies the corrupt Athens disavows’.<sup>56</sup> It is also a return, if not an acceptance, of the multitude of nameless servants who – like Flavius – were caught between the demands to earn, or to receive, and to give.

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<sup>56</sup> Hansen, p. 63.