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Antonius, he forsook the city and company of his friends, and built him a house in the sea by the ile \(^{308}\) of Pharos, upon certain forced mounts which he caused to be cast into the sea, and dwelt there as a man that banished himself from all men's company: saying that he would lead Timon's life, because he had the like wrong offered him, that was before offered unto Timon: and that for the unthankfulness of those he had done good unto, and whom he took to be his friends, he was angry with all men and would trust no man.

This Timon was a citizen of Athens, that lived about the war of Peloponnesus, as appeareth by Plato and Aristophanes' comedies: in which they mocked him, calling him a viper and malicious man unto mankind, to shun all other men's companies but the company of young Alcibiades, a bold and insolent youth, whom he would greatly feast and make much of, and kissed him very gladly. Apemantus wondering at it, asked him the cause what \(^{309}\) he meant to make so much of that young man alone, and to hate all others: Timon answered him, "I do it," said he, "because I know that one day he shall do great mischief unto the Athenians." This Timon sometimes would have Apemantus in his company, because he was much like of his nature and conditions, and also followed him in manner of life. On a time when they solemnly celebrated the feast called Choe at Athens (to wit, the feasts of the dead where they make sprinklings and sacrifices for the dead) and that they two then feasted together by themselves, Apemantus said unto the other: "O, here is a trim banquet, Timon!" Timon answered again: "Yea," said he, "so thou wert not here." It is reported of him also, that this Timon on a time (the people being assembled in the market-place about dispatch of some affairs) got up into the pulpit for orations, where the orators commonly use \(^{310}\) to speak unto the people: and silence being made, every man listening to hear what he would say, because it was a wonder to see him in that place, at length he began to speak in this manner: "My lords of Athens, I have a little yard at my house where there groweth a fig-tree, on the which many citizens have hanged themselves: and because I mean to make some building on the place, I thought good to let you all understand it, that, before the figtree be cut down, if any of you be desperate, \(^{311}\) you may there in time go hang yourselves." He died in the city of Hales, and was buried upon the sea-side. Now it chanced so, that the sea getting in, it compassed his tomb round about, that no man could come to it: and upon the same was written this epitaph:

Here dies a wretched corse, of wretched soul bereft: Seek not my name: a plague consume you wicked wretches left! It is reported that Timon himself, when he lived, made this epitaph: for that which is commonly rehearsed was not his, but made by the poet Callimachus: Here lie I, Timon, who alive all living men did hate: Pass by and curse thy fill: but pass, and stay not here thy gate. \(^{112}\) Many other things could we tell you of this Timon, but this Little shall suffice at this present.
And on a day as he came from the council and assembly of the city, where he had made an excellent oration, to the great good liking and acceptation of all the hearers, and by means thereof had obtained the thing he desired, and was accompanied with a great train that followed him to his honour: Timon, surnamed Misanthropos (as who would say, loup-grou, or the manhater), meeting Alcibiades thus accompanied, did not pass by him, nor gave him way (as he was wont to do all other men), but went straight to him, and took him by the hand, and said: "O, thou cost well, my son, I can thee thank, that thou goest on and climest up still: for if ever thou be in authority, wo be unto those that follow thee, for they are utterly undone" When they heard these words, those that stood by fell a-laughing: other reviled Timon; other again marked well his words, and thought of them many a time after: such sundry opinions they had of him for the unconstancy of his life, and waywardness of his nature and conditions....
Different though Shakespeare was from his younger colleague in his approach to tragedy, he appears all the same to have been willing to work with him, and even perhaps to attempt to extend his own range in the process, by accepting him as a coadjutor on *Timon of Athens.* … Conceivably Shakespeare was ill and needed help. Or he may simply have wished to encourage a younger colleague. *Timon of Athens* did not appear in print until 1623; it is exceptionally difficult to know when it was written, but resemblances to *King Lear* suggest that it may date from around the same period as that play, that is, 1605 or 1696 – not far in time from *The Revenger’s Tragedy.* Maybe that play’s success when performed by the King’s Men – quite possibly with Shakespeare in the cast – encouraged him to accept Middleton, sixteen years his junior, as a kind of senior apprentice.

The untypical quality of *Timon of Athens* by comparison with Shakespeare’s other tragedies is self-evident. Although tragic in form, it is bitterly and satirically comic in its presentation of the sycophantic friends who sponge on Timon in his affluence but reject him when he loses his wealth, and even in its presentation of Timon’s later misogyny. The possibility that Shakespeare was not its sole author was mooted as early as the 1830s, but the identification of Middleton as co-author, first made explicit in 1920, gained in strength during the later part of the twentieth century and is now strongly supported.

Like *The Revenger’s Tragedy,* *Timon of Athens* is exceptionally schematic in construction, a parable in which elements of the design lie close to the surface, and in which characters are more important to the play’s pattern of ideas than as individuals. As in the Middleton play, and untypically of Shakespeare, a high proportion of the characters … who figure prominently in the action, have no personal names. Much of the verse, too, is irregular in a manner that is more typical of Middleton than of Shakespeare. The plausibility of the notion that the play is a collaborative work was enhanced by the discovery that the compilers of the First Folio, who excluded *Pericles,* in which Shakespeare collaborated with Wilkins, and two Fletcher collaborations, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and the lost *Cardenio,* appear originally not to have intended to include *Timon of Athens:* study of the way that volume was put together has shown that this play occupies space originally intended for *Troilus and Cressida.* And intensive analysis of the play’s structure and language has revealed many indications that two different authors worked on the text, and that these are very likely to have been Shakespeare and Middleton. Shakespeare seems to have ‘concentrated on the opening, the scenes dealing most fully with Timon himself, and the conclusion.

*Timon of Athens* Dramaturgy Packet, OSF 2016
**Timon of Athens**

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

Timon of Athens  
A Poet  
A Painter  
A Jeweller  
A Merchant  
A Mercer  
Lucilius, one of Timon's servants  
An Old Athenian  
Lords and Senators of Athens  
Ventidius, one of Timon's false friends  
Alcibiades, an Athenian captain  
Apemantus, a churlish philosopher  
One dressed as Cupid in the masque  
Ladies dressed as Amazons in the masque  
Flavius, Timon's steward  
Flaminius, Timon's servant  
Servilius, Timon's servant  
Other Servants of Timon  
A Fool  
A Page  
Caphis, a servant to Timon's creditors  
Isidore's Servant, a servant to Timon's creditors  
Two of Varro's Servants, servants to Timon's creditors  
Lucullus, a flattering lord  
Lucius, a flattering lord  
Sempronius, a flattering lord  
Lucullus's Servant  
Lucius's Servant  
Three Strangers, one called Hostilius  
Titus's Servant, another servant to Timon's creditors  
Hortensius's Servant, another servant to Timon's creditors  
Philotus's Servant, another servant to Timon's creditors  
Phrynia, a whore with Alcibiades  
Timandra, a whore with Alcibiades  
The banditti, Thieves  
Soldier of Alcibiades' army  
Messengers, attendants, soldiers

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The Life of Timon of Athens is Shakespeare's remarkable play about philanthropy and misanthropy. Among those many Shakespeare plays that have been discovered, by audiences in every generation, to be in uncanny conversation with their present-day concerns, Timon, with its luxury-loving lords living on credit, influence, loans, and gifts, is possibly the most pertinent to modern and postmodern life. Yet for a variety of reasons this play is comparatively unknown outside of Shakespearean circles. The text is difficult, at times, and made more so by a number of interpretive "cruxes" about which editorial scholars have disagreed, making even the basic language of the play seem inaccessible, prior to the question of meaning: Timon himself, surnamed in history "the Misanthrope," is in the course of the unfolding action initially bland and ultimately aversive. Despite the brief appearance of two literally gold-digging whores accompanying Alcibiades into exile, there is no conventional love plot to divert attention from the prevailing climate of flattery and greed; and the "churlish philosopher" Apemantus, the truth-telling wise fool of the play, is, with his imprecations and cusses, at best an acquired taste. So far as we know, the play was never staged in Shakespeare's lifetime.

Nonetheless, Timon is a superb piece of writing, characterization, and theater, and it deserves more recognition. The play is divided into two parts, the first of which shows Timon to be extraordinarily generous, giving gifts; money, entertainments, and banquets to a variety of noble dependents, described in the First Folio's list of "Actors' Names" as "Flattering Lords." In the second half of the play, once Timon has lost his money—he tries to call upon those to whom he has given gifts and support in the past, and is turned away with an amusingly diverse array of (im)plausible excuses—he flees Athens, takes up residence in a cave, digs in the earth and with bitter irony discovers gold, and flings the gold at visitors unwise enough to call upon him.

Critics interested in history do not have to look far to find models for wealthy patrons, sycophantic flatterers, and mutual disenchancement in the Jacobean (or the Elizabethan) court. One early-twentieth-century scholar suggested an equivalence between Timon and the Earl of Essex, and between Ventidius and Sir Francis Bacon, reading the play as a political allegory of patronage and betrayal. However likely or unlikely any such specific historical identification might be (and this reading has not fared well among subsequent scholars); it seems to me, as always, that the power of the play comes from its transhistorical resonances rather than from any Jacobean references. If Timon is timeless, it is because it is always timely. The brilliance of the play is the way in which its self-serving and hypocritical flatterers resemble those of every economic and social era.

The Timon story was well known in classical times, and also in early modern England, where scholars have found references in the works of many of Shakespeare's contemporaries (including the playwrights John Lyly, Thomas Nashe, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Dekker, and John Marston). Both Greene and Dekker refer to "Timonists," indicating that the equivalence Timon = misanthrope must have been widely accepted; otherwise the term could not have been understood.

In Sir Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's Parallel Lives, the version Shakespeare would have read, Timon is twice called "Timon Misanthropos," the appellation Misanthropos used as an "addition" or surname, just as "Coriolanus" ("the conqueror of Corioles") is used for Caius Martius. Shakespeare's principal source for Timon of Athens would have been Plutarch's "Life of Marcus Antonius," where the Timon story is told with great emphasis on what in the play is the second half of the narrative: Timon's self-banishment, his odd
affinity for Apemantus ("because he was much like of his nature and conditions"), his affection for the "bold and insolent" Alcibiades (whom Timon said he liked because he knew that "one day he would do great mischief unto the Athenians"), Timon's invitation to the Athenian lords to come and hang themselves on his fig tree, and the two epitaphs said to be written on his tomb, one composed by Timon, the other by the poet Callimachus. Shakespeare includes both of these epitaphs, virtually word for word, in his text, although, as many commentators have observed, they contradict each other the first instructing the passerby, "Seek not my name," the second declaring, "Here lie I, Timon."

Indeed, the name Timon was so strongly associated with this devotion into rage and general hatred that he became a type, as is clear in a passage from Montaigne's Essays, where (in the John Florio translation of 1603) we hear of Timon, surnamed the hater of all mankind. For looke what a man hateth, the same thing he takes to hart. Timon wist all evil might light on us: He was passionate in desiring our ruine. He shunneth and loathed our conversation as dangerous and wicked, and of a depraved nature.

Michel de Montaigne, "Of Democritus and Heraclitus"

Montaigne thought Timon was a captive of his own emotions; he closes his assessment of philosophers who "laugh" or "weep" at the spectacle of humanity by expressing the view that "[o]ur owne condition is as ridiculous as risible, as much to be laughed at as able to laugh."

Francis Bacon's essay "Of Goodness, and Goodness in Nature" brings together the key words "philanthropy" and "misanthropy" by defining goodness as what the Grecians call philanthropia, calling it "of all virtues and dignities of mind... the greatest" and expressing his conviction that "without it man is a busy, mischievous, wretched thing." But even philanthropia, this "habit so excellent," is prone to error, and Bacon's list of the possible errors of the philanthrope, the benevolent lover of mankind, reads like a primer of good advice for Timon: "Seek the good of other men, but be not in bondage to their faces or fancies; for that is but facility or softness: which taketh an honest mind prisoner. Neither give thy Aeoeus's cock a gem, who would be better pleased and happier if he had had a barley-corn." In Aesop's fable "The Cock and the Pearl" a rooster unearthed a pearl in the farmyard, but would prefer something to eat, however humble: "You may be a treasure," quoth Master Cock, "to men that prize you, but for me I would rather have a single barley-corn than a peck of pearls." In the same way Shakespeare's Timon will come to prefer a root dug from the earth to unwanted and corrupting gold, once he has seen through the "faces or fancies" of his flatterers. (There is probably a trace memory here, too, of the Sermon on the Mount--"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine" [Matthew 7:6].)

For Bacon the disposition to goodness in some men is matched, in others, by a "natural malignity," whether through crossness, difficulty, envy, or "mere mischief." This sounds like a good description of Shakespeare's Iago (we might compare "natural malignity" with Coleridge's famous phrase "motiveless malignity"), but the canonical example Bacon gives, the personage who personifies misanthropy, is... once again, Timon of Athens. Thus Bacon writes of misanthropy that makes it their practice to bring men to the bough, and yet never a tree for the purpose of their gardens, as Timon had. The reference is to the well-known incident in the Timon story told by Plutarch, in which Timon invites Athenians, "if any of you be desperate," to hang themselves on the fig tree in his garden. Shakespeare dramatizes this event in act 5, scene 1, of his play.

The general effect of this story is thus to turn Timon, as we have seen from the word "Timonist," into a kind of allegory of misanthropy. A striking comparison from a narrative poem of the period is the incident, described by Edmund Spenser in the third book of The Faerie Queene, of the transformation of a tormented character called Malbecco into an emblem of jealousy:

Yet can he never dye; but dying lives,
And doth himself with sorrow new sustaine,
That death and life arrocente vnto him giues,
And painefull pleasure turnes to pleasing paine.
There dwells he euer, miserable swaine,
Hatefull both to him selfe, and euery wight;
Where he through priuie griefe, and horror vaine,
Is woven so deformed, that he haue quight.
Forgan he was a man, and Gealousie is hight.

Spenser, The Faerie Queene, book 3, canto 40, stanza 60

This is a version of the general pattern of metamorphosis that, following Ovid (and indeed Homer's Circe), details the upward or downward conversion of a human being into a flower, jewel, beast, or constellation. It is also the same kind of transformation into archetype that took place with Pandarus in Troilus and Cressida. Timon's story, like that of Pandarus, would have been familiar to Shakespeare's audiences, whose interest would presumably therefore lie in how, rather than whether, the expected change would take place.

The transformation is explicitly performed in act 4 of Shakespeare's play, when the self-exiled Timon encounters the self-exiled Alcibiades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alcibiades</th>
<th>What art thou there? Speak.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timon</td>
<td>A beast, as thou art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcibiades</td>
<td>What is thy name? Is it so hateful to thee?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>That art thyself a man?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timon</td>
<td>I am Misanthropos, and hate mankind.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Timon 4.3.48-53
In the course of historical transmission the name Timon becomes the equivalent of "Misanthrope"—a living contradiction; as Alcibiades observes.

It is a measure of the acuteness and acerbity of Timon of Athens that it begins with one of those familiar Shakespearean scenes of exposition—via secondary character, but instead of lords, servants, or soldiers the commenting onlookers are artists and artisans: a poet, a painter, a jeweler, and a merchant. Each, of course, regards Timon as a patron. The Painter and the Poet are particularly vain and empty, the Poet full of false modesty ("A thing slipped idly from me" is how he describes his current piece of verse, dedicated, as the Painter observes, "To the great lord" [I.1.19–20]), while the Painter displays his work to the vapid approbation of his colleague: "What a mental power! This eye shoots forth! How big imagination! Moves in this lip! To th' dunceness of the gesture! One might interpret" (31–34). The Painter is as archly modest as his friend, pressing him for more ("is't good?") and, receives the blessing of a further banality: "Artificial strife! Lives in these touches livelier than life" (36, 37–38). But as self-absorbed as these creative personages are made to seem, they are accurate enough when it comes to assessing favor and fickleness in Timon's followers. Although all follow him now, "his lobbies fill with tendance, / Rain sacrificial whisperings in his ear, / Make sacred even his stirrup" (81–83), the minute his luck changes they will desert him.

On the heels of this dire prophecy Timon enters and, as the stage direction says, "address[es] himself courteously to every suitor." He is the personification of assured elegance and modest attentiveness, a generous patron whose flaw, if he can be seen to have one, is that he seems invested in his own persona as a source of endless bounty. The first to need his assistance is a messenger from Ventidius, whose debts have landed him in prison. Not only will Timon "pay the debt and free him," he also sends for Ventidius to give him further aid: "Tis not enough to help the feeble up, / But to support him after" (I.1.105, 109–110). The next man Timon helps is Lucilius, who wants to marry but is not wealthy enough to satisfy his lady's father. Again Timon is ready to help, offering to double the dowry. Needless to say, these will be among the first to deny him when he comes to them for succor.

From the first it is clear that Timon is not only generous but liberal. When Ventidius tries to repay him, he insists that the money was a gift, not a loan. The first scene ends with the sight of guests en route to "Lord Timon's feast," and the feast itself, including a masque of Cupid and another of Amazon ladies, features the influential men of Athens displaying "much adoring of Timon" (stage direction, act 1, scene 2) as they give and receive yet more gifts. Cautionary notes punctuate this event: first, the invective of Apemantus, who scorns the feast, warns the host, and reflects to himself, "[W]hat a number of men eats Timon, and he sees 'em not!" (1.2.38–39), and second, the dismay of Flavius, Timon's loyal steward, a figure often compared to Kent in King Lear, who sees his master's folly and is powerless to stop him:

When the steward finally succeeds in convincing Timon that all his money has run out—act 2, scene 2, begins with a particularly vivid portrait of a man of business tearing his hair out at the profligacy of his noble client: "No care, no stop; so senseless of expense! / That he will neither know how to maintain it in / Nor cease his flow of riot" (2.2.1–3)—Timon is serene enough. "I am wealthy in my friends," he asserts (179). All he will need to do is ask them for their assistance. As was the case in Lear; however, the answer to his appeals is "no"—however cleverly disguised the reply. First he sends to the Senators for help. "They answer in a joint and corporate voice," the steward reports,

That now they are at fall, want treasure, cannot
Do the things they would, are sorry; you are honourable,
But yet they could have wished—they know not—
Something hath been amiss—a noble naturé
May catch a wrench—would all were well—'tis pity....

In short, with fine and empty words, "They froze me into silence" (2.2.199–207). But Timon is unfazed: "These old fellows / Have their ingratitude in them hereditary" (208–209). Flavius and the servants will have better luck if they try younger men, specifically those who have received beneficent and timely gifts from him, like Ventidius, whom he rescued from debtors' prison, and whose father has just died and left him a great estate. The second act ends, finely, on this happy expectation; which everything in the audience's dramatic sense, even without knowledge of the historical Timon, will lead them to expect to fail.

And fail it does, spectacularly. The "busyness" of these rich men and their oblivious self-absorption have something of the spirit of Ben Jonson's comedies; just as the whole story of a good rich man surrounded by pretentious climbers has something in common with Jonson's great country-house poem, "To Penshurst." The first three scenes of the third act present three men, all recently—and in our sight onstage—given lavish gifts by Timon, each turning away Timon's embassy with excuses that are simultaneously comic and
painful. Lucullus, hearing that one of Timon's men is at the door, expects yet another gift—"I dreamt of a silver basin and ever tonight" (3.1.6-7)—and addresses the messenger in flattering terms: "And what hast thou there under thy cloak, pretty Flaminius?" (12-13); Told it is "nothing but an empty box," which Timon hopes he'll fill with money, Lucullus instantly turns prig and scold: "Many a time and often I ha'dinied with him and told him on't, and come again to sup to him of purpose to have him spend less" (21-23). Business is business: [T]his is no time to lend money; especially upon bare friendship without security (37-38). Lucullus tries to offer Flaminius a tip, or a bribe, to go away: "Here's three solidares. . . . [W]ink at me, and say thou saw'st me not" (39-40).

The next encounter, with Lucius, is brilliantly conceived to show the quick-wittedness that accompanies a complete lack of moral fiber. First Lucius expresses incredulity at the gossip about Timon ("He cannot want for money" [3.2.7]), then surprise at the news that Lucullus denied to help him ("Denied that honourable man!... I should ne'er have denied his occasion" [15, 19-20]). Then, when approached himself, he expresses disingenuous regret about "[h]ow unluckily it happened" that he has managed not to have the funds on hand to help his friend: "[T]ell him this from me: I count it one of my greatest affictions, say, that I cannot please such an honourable gentleman" (42, 49-51). What makes the scene both more amusing and more pointed is the fact that Lucius, like Lucullus before him, has misperceived Timon's emissary as someone who is bringing gifts; not seeking them:

Servilius May it please your honour, my lord hath sent—

Lucius Ha! What has he sent? I am so much endeared to that lord, he's ever sending. How shall I thank him, think'st thou? And what has he sent now?

Servilius He's only sent his present occasion now, my lord, requesting your lordship to supply his instant use with so many talents.

As for the third ungrateful friend, Sempronius, his response is equally devastating and equally funny. This part of the play is Shakespeare at his social-satirical best. Why bother me? Sempronius begins by asking of Timon's servant. Others have benefited from Timon's lavishness, like Lucius, Lucullus, and Ventidius. "All these / Owe their estates unto him" (3.2.2-5). Told that Timon has asked them, and that all three have "denied him" (the echo of Christ and Peter cannot be completely accidental), Sempronius immediately mounts his high horse and demands to know why he is being approached only now: "Must I be his last refuge?" (11). If Timon had just asked him first, he says, he would happily have sent him three times what he is requesting. "And does he think so backwardly of me now / That I'll require it last? No" (18-19). "No" is of course the point here. These lords are experts at getting to no, by whatever route necessary. The rest of the act turns sharply colder as the creditors gather, presenting their bills to the steward and Timon, who have no money to pay them. Like Lear, Timon is ill-used by those to whom he has been generous. He has also, it seems clear, been unwise, not only in his choice of "friends" but in his management of money. His generosity—like that of many patrons and philanthropists, of whatever era—has become not only a way of life but a self-definition and a self-justification. It is not entirely surprising that Timon, bereft of money and grateful hangers-on, should dwindle into a tailing caricature, and then into a pair of epitaphs.

The four major characters of the play—Timon, Apemantus, Alcibiades, and the steward, Flavius—are compared and contrasted with one another in various ways. Like Timon, whom he counts as a friend, Alcibiades finds himself at odds with Athens; though political and pragmatic rather than ethical reasons. In act 3 he pleads with the Senators for clemency for an unnamed friend, in an oration that has been compared to Porcia's and Isabella's eloquent pleas for mercy. The Senators, as befits their structural role as well as their nature, insist repeatedly—"We are for law; he dies" (3.6.83). In the upshot, when Alcibiades persists in his suit, they banish him from the city, incurring his wrath in return: "Banish me! Banish your dotage, banish usury; / That makes the senate ugly" (96-98). This intemperate rejoinder has something of Coriolanus in it ("I banish you" [Coriolanus 3.3.127]), and indeed the "Life of Alcibiades" was partnered in Plutarch's Parallel Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans with the "Life of Coriolanus." Each man, being banished, led an army against his own city. But Alcibiades is far more politic and judicious than Coriolanus; and less a suffering "tragic hero." He occupies the position in this play that is held in other tragedies by the political man who closes out the action: Octavius Caesar in Antony and Cleopatra, Aufidius in Coriolanus, Fortinbras in Hamlet, Richmond in Richard III, even Malcolm and Edgar in the final scenes of Macbeth and King Lear, respectively. Such a man, that is to say, is always ultimately a rationalist, even a compromiser, when it suits his circumstances. Like Octavius and Aufidius, Alcibiades is not a tragic-character—he will avoid suffering, rather than endure it, if he can. He not only survives the play, but speaks its last, conventional lines of mourning and recovery:

.Is noble Timon, of whose memory
Hereafter more. Bring me into your city,
And I will use the olive with my sword,
Make war breed peace, make peace stilt war, make each
Prescribe to other as each other's speech.
Let our drums strike.

[5.84-90]
Flavius, the steward, tries repeatedly to warn Timon against his fair-weather friends, who, like the elder-daughters of King Lear, flatter him to his face and take his gifts, but turn against him, full of self-righteousness and self-justification, the minute he requires something of them. Once Timon has turned misanthrope and taken refuge in his cave, the steward will join him, declaring his fidelity to his master in a way that again recalls Kent's fidelity to Lear:

Flavius: 'I'll follow and enquire him out. I'll ever serve his mind, with my best will. Whilst I have gold I'll be his steward still.'

Timon, unlike Lear, remains resolute in his distaste for mankind, despite a variety of overtures (Alcibiades wants him to fight against Athens; the Senators want him to defend it). Ultimately he writes his own epitaph, which is declaimed, with suitable solemnity, by Alcibiades to the Athenian Senators as they make their peace at the end of the play.

As for Apemantus, he, too, is a familiar Shakespearean type, closely akin to "philosophical" or skeptical commentators like Thersites in Troilus and Cressida, Jaques in As You Like It, and even Mercutio in Romeo and Juliet. Identified as a "churlish philosopher," Apemantus is often called a "dog" in the text; thus he is linked with the philosophical school of the Cynics (literally "doglike, cur- rish," although the name came from that of the Athenian gymnasia, Cyno- sarges, where this philosophy was taught). The omnipresence of dog imagery and dog language in this play (Painter to Apemantus: "You're a dog" [1.1.203]; Apemantus: "Thy mother's of my generation" [1.1.204]; Page to Apemantus: "Thou wast shaped a dog, and thou shalt famish a dog's death" [2.2.81-82]; Timon to Apemantus: "I had rather be a beggar's dog than Apemantus" [4.3.349]), plus the frequent use of words like "bite," "fang," etc. (the examples are too numerous to mention), is not only thematic, indicating a general tone of carnivorous destruction, nor merely an allusion to the Cynics, but also allegorical in the same veiled though ultimately discernible way that the name of Timon is allegorical. As the play's tragic hero is a "man-hater," so the fool is a "dog." In fact, the many canine references applied to Apemantus the Cynic, starting as they do so early in the play, function as a kind of model or "control" for the emergence of Timon, within the dramatic action, as a one-dimensional symbol of the qualities historians had already attached to him.

The design of the play is marked by telling repetitions: two banquets, two encounters with the Poet and the Painter, two sets of occasions on which Timon deals with his flattering friends. In each case the second event undoes any hope or optimism engendered by the first.

The first banquet is a sumptuous feast, its splendor resisted only by Ape-
Pluck the lined cruch from thy old limping sire;
With it beat out his brains!

4.1.3–6. 13–15

As the speech continues, the personal-turns general, and the spirit of Lear railing against the storm is joined with the tone of Ulysses' speech on "degree" (in Troilus and Cressida):

Piety and fear,
Religion to the gods, peace, justice, truth,
Domestic awe, night's rest, and neighbourhood,
Instruction, manners, mysteries, and trades,
Degrees, observances, customs, and laws,
Decline to your confounding contraries,
And let confusion live!

Timon 4.1.15–21

Timon's two chief encounters with Apemantus mark both the difference between these two characters and their points of intersection. At the feast in act 1 Apemantus, sitting apart, offers a grace that ends, prophetically, "Rich men sin, and I eat root" (1.2.70). As we will see, the opposition between "root" and "rich," or, more specifically, between "root" and "gold," will provide a chief imagistic narrative within the play.

Both gold and roots are products of the earth uncovered by digging. "Gold" in its various senses is omnipresent in Shakespeare, although the use perhaps the most closely analogous to that in Timon of Athens comes in Romeo and Juliet, which begins with the mention of a woman who will not "ope her lap / To saint-seducing gold," moves on to an apothecary shop where gold and poison are equated, and ends with the extravagant and empty gesture of two gold statues raised in memory of the dead lovers. In folktales and fairy tales, and as, for example, in Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale," those who seek gold—especially buried or hidden gold—often find death instead. (It is perhaps worth noting that the other well-known "digging scene" in Shakespeare takes place in a graveyard, in Hamlet.) The cautionary tale of King Midas, who asks for the gift of turning everything he touched to gold and therefore almost starved to death, was told vividly in Ovid's Metamorphoses. Once he has left the city, Timon, digging for roots for sustenance, in a deeply ironic moment discovers gold, the last thing he wants:

What is there?
Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold?
No, gods, I am no idle votarist:
Roots, you clear heavens...

This yellow slave
Will knit and break religions, bless th' accursed,
Make the hoar leprosy adored, place thieves,
And give them title, knee, and approbation...

4.3.25–28. 31–37

It is here that he sounds his most Lear-like, railing twice against "ingrateful man" (4.3.188, 194), invoking "tigers, dragons, wolves, and bears" and "new monsters" (189, 190).

To his cave will come, in steady succession, whores, bandits, and the Poet and the Painter, all hungry for the gold that cannot nourish them: ("Believe't that we'll do anything for gold," say Alciabides' mistresses [4.3.149].) Timon will keep digging until he finds the "one poor root" he seeks for food. The word "root" is surprisingly omnipresent in the play, from the scene of the first feast, where Apemantus mentions it twice, to the digging scene (4.3), where Timon digs passionately in the earth, longing aloud (five times) for roots to eat: Unlike "gold," this is not a Shakespearean commonplace; "root" appears more times in Timon than in any other play, and other uses tend to refer more metaphorically to history or to family trees. In the digging scene the two terms come emphatically together, as Timon, eating a root, is asked by Apemantus what news he would like borne back to Athens:

Timon Tell them there I have gold. Look, so I have.
Apemantus Here is no use for gold.
Timon The best and truest,
For here it sleeps and does no hinder harm.

4.3.290–292

It may be that this "root" symbolism is related in some way not only to the common theme of digging (and the opposition of humble and exalted, nature and artifice) but also to the hanging tree of the Timon story. In any case, it is Timon himself who will wind up "entomb'd" at the end of the play:

When Timon, digging for sustenance, finds gold instead, he offers a rueful panegyric:

O, thou sweet king-killer, and dear divorce,
Twixt natural son and sire; thou bright defiler
Of Hymen's purest bed; thou valiant Mars,
Thou ever young, fresh, loved, and delicate wooer,
Whose blush doth thaw the consecrated-snow
That lies on Dion's lap; thou visible god,
That sold'rest close impossibilities
Apemantus's pledge, "I'll say thou'st gold. / Thou wilt be throned to shortly" (4.3.386–387), immediately comes true, as a group of outlaws, or "banditti," comes to try to steal it. "Where should he have this gold?" asks one (4.3.392). "It is noise he hath a mass of treasure," another replies (396). These are lower-class versions of the Senators and suitors who swarmed around Timon in the beginning of the play, but they are more direct and, oddly, more honorable: "We are not thieves, but men that much do want" (408). Timon tries to persuade them that nature possesses sufficient bounty: "Behold, the earth hath roots. / Within this mile break forth a hundred springs" (410–411). When they protest, "We cannot live on grass, on berries, water, / As beasts and birds and fishes" (415–416), he faces them down with the same charge of cannibalism that Apemantus had leveled at the lordly flatterers in the court. "[W]hat a number of men eat Timon, and he sees 'em not!" Apemantus had said, scorning the meat at the feast, and now Timon echoes him to the bandits, noting that they are not content to eat even the birds, beasts, and fishes, much less the roots and berries: "You must eat men" (418).

Timon sees clearly, as should audience, that the bandits are less venal and less self-deceiving than the rich men: "Yet thanks I must you con / That you are thieves professed, that you work not / In holier shapes" (4.3.418–420). And when he gives them gold, together with a ringing lecture about how "[e]ach thing's a thief," from the laws to the sun, moon, and earth, concluding, "Steal no less for this I give you, / And gold confound you howsoever." Amen (441–442), they contemplate the same kind of conversion as the one effected by the eloquent virgin Marina among the brothel-goers in Pericles. "He's almost charmed me from my profession," says one, and another says, "I'll believe him as an enemy, and give over my trade" (443, 447–448). Although at least one editor prefers to regard these declarations as ironic ("Shakespeare can hardly have wanted at this stage of the play to give a repentant thief the last word"), it seems to me that the contrast between the dishonest, self-blinded noble thieves of the first half of the play and the self-aware and threadbare bandits of the fourth act makes a key point.

No sooner do they exit than the loyal steward, Flavius, enters, seeking his master as Kent sought Lear in the storm:

Flavius O you gods!  
Is yon despised and ruinous man my lord,

Timon's recognition of the steward as "[o]ne honest man," and his ironic recognition that the one honest man in the world is a steward, who manages the money and estates of another, moves naturally—once he has sent Flavius away, rejecting his company and comfort—into the second essay of the Poet and the Painter, again come in search of "gold" from their former patron ("[o]ur late noble master"), and ironically addressed by Timon as "honest men" over and over again, eight times in thirty lines. Again the satire against patronage is savage. This time, instead of actual works of art, these works men come bearing nothing but promises. They have learned that "intent" always looks better than the product itself.

Ultimately Timon is a play not only about philanthropy and misanthropy, but also about the use and abuse of patronage. The word "patron" derives ultimately from the same word as "father" (Lat. pater), and originally denoted someone who stood to others in a relationship analogous to that of a father—that is, as a protector and defender. (Our word "pattern," for an exemplar or model, is related to this; thus Lear says he will be the "pattern of all patience.") The classical use of patronus, "patron," in Roman antiquity influenced the sense, common in the early seventeenth century, of a patron as one who accepted the dedication of a book, and led to our modern concept of a "patron of the arts." One contrast between King Lear and Timon of Athens is that the paternal-patron Lear and the arts-patron Timon, although they are addressed in very similar "ingrateful" terms by those who benefit from their generosity, are seen from a modern perspective to be owed something different by daughters and by protégés. Thus sentiments that sound both heartless and tragic when spoken by Goneril and Regan in King Lear take on, in Timon, a discomfiting air of satirical comedy in the mouths of the flattering lords Lucius, Lucullus, and Sempronius.

The epistle dedicatory to the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays, addressed by Shakespeare's friends and colleagues John Heminge and Henry Condell to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, observes with customary praise, "There is a great difference, whether any book choose his patrons, or find them: This hath done both." Their purpose, Heminge and Condell say, is "only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend, and fellow, alive, as was our Shakespeare, by humble offer of his plays, to your most noble patronage." Heminge and Condell invoke as well the older sense of the patron as paternal protector, referring to the plays, significantly, as "orphans" left behind by the death of their author-father: "We have but collected them, and done an office to the dead, to procure his orphans, guardians, without ambition either of self-profit, or fame." It is a matter of some small interest, perhaps, that at this moment in the history of the English language the word "patron" was, in the spirit of nascent capitalism,
being extended to what we would today call “customers” or “clients,” so that Ben Jonson’s Volpone, disguised as a mountebank, or charlatan, addresses a crowd of potential purchasers as “most noble gentlemen, and my worthy patrons!” (Volpone 2.1.32). By the time of Timon, the word was thus in use to describe both a noble benefactor and a mercantile consumer. The First Folio, with its separate invocation to “the great variety of readers” to “buy it first,...whatever you do, buy,” is poised at the moment of this dichotomy, with two prefatory letters, one addressed to noble patrons, the other to potential purchasers (“the fate of all books depends upon your capacities, and nor of your heads alone, but of your purses”). Something of the same tension, and the same anxiety, can be found in Timon.

Timon’s epitaph, significantly, cannot be read by the simple soldier who first discovers it, presumably because the inscription is in another language (either Latin, the language of many early modern tomb inscriptions, or Greek). The Soldier therefore determines to take the “character,” or writing, in a wax impression, and bring it to Alcibiades. “[A]n aged interpreter, though young in days” (5.4.6). Thus the stage is set for the play’s final moments, in which the Senators ask clemency from Alcibiades and his troops; he answers in tones of mild and equitable justice—“Those enemies of Timon’s and mine own / Whom you yourselves shall set out for reproof / Fall, and no more” (5.5.6–58)—and he reads aloud, to the audience of Senators on the city walls and patrons in the theater, Timon’s angry two-part epitaph: “Seek not my name” (5.6.73); “Here lie I, Timon” (75). It is Alcibiades, the “[n]oble and young” captain (5.6.13), who has the final words; Alcibiades who has custody of Timon’s story and his reputation, “of whose memory / Hereafter more.” He is, at the last, both pattern and patron; replacing—as we see so often at the ends of Shakespeare’s tragedies—something like greatness with something like efficiency.

**King Lear**

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

Lear, King of Britain
Goneril, Lear’s eldest daughter
Duke of Albany, her husband
Regan, Lear’s second daughter
Duke of Cornwall, her husband
Cordelia, Lear’s youngest daughter
King of France, suitor of Cordelia
Duke of Burgundy, suitor of Cordelia
Earl of Kent, later disguised as Caius
Earl of Gloucester
Edgar, elder son of Gloucester, later disguised as Tom o’Bedlam
Edmund, bastard son of Gloucester
Gloucester
Old Man, Gloucester’s tenant
Guran, Gloucester’s retainer
Lear’s Fool
Oswald, Goneril’s steward
A Servant of Cornwall
A Knight
A Herald
A Captain
Gentlemen, servants, soldiers,
attendants, messengers

**King Lear** has often, and rightly, been regarded as a sublime account of the human condition. Words like “timeless” and “universal,” so often used as virtual synonyms for “Shakespeare,” here find a fitting place. In the twentieth century in particular the celebrity of the play soared. After the emergence of existentialism in philosophy, Lear’s ruminations on “being” and “nothing” seemed uncannily apt. The plays of Samuel Beckett—especially Endgame and Waiting for Godot—seemed to rewrite King Lear in a new idiom, and critical books like Maynard Mack’s “King Lear” in Our Time and Jan Kott’s Shakespeare Our Contemporary stressed the way the play voiced the despair and hope of a modern era. Yet this extraordinary play, in part a poignant and disaffected family drama, in part the political story of Britain’s union and disunion, bears as well explicit markers of the time in which it was written, and the time in which it was set. As we have seen with other Shakespeare plays that engage chronicle history, these three crucial time periods—the time the play depicts, the time of its composition, and the time in which it is performed or read—will always intersect.

That a play depicting the dismemberment of ancient Britain by the willful act of the old King Lear should have relevance to the stage of King James’s time is far from surprising. Shakespeare’s play was written around 1605, and in the period 1604–1607 James VI and I, King of Scotland and of England, was attempting to persuade Parliament to approve the union of Scotland and
Timon Production History

*Timon* has been one of the least produced plays in the canon…. Since Edmund Kean acted the relatively restored version of the play in 1816,¹ there have been … twenty professional productions on the English-speaking stage [as of 1979]. … Still, interest in the play in this century [20th] has gradually increased. …which suggests to me that our age may be seeing in Timon a recognizable man, one without spiritual resources in a mean-spirited world, who makes his fiercest commitment of all to despair. … The chief case the nineteenth century made for a theatrical revival of *Timon* was that it offered a good moral …. This moral case could be earnestly advanced as compensating for the play’s defects, so long as the necessary considerations of propriety were met and the second half of the play curtailed. … On the Victorian stage, the play was realized in idealized and sentimental terms. …Timon and Alcibiades, were seen as the victims of greed, corruption, and ingratitude. Timon was a good and generous man, driven to hate and madness by the inhumanity of unworthy friends, but avenged in the end by the stalwart Alcibiades.

Major Productions (culled from Williams’ article)

- 1816: Edmund Kean
  - First “restored” version of the play (only 7 performances over 3 weeks)
- 1851: Samuel Phelps, Sadler’s Wells (revived 1856)
  - Emphasized spectacle. Moving panoramas.
- 1871: Charles Calvert, Prince’s Theatre
  - “…most effective in the quieter scene” (171) (only 24 performances)
- 1892: Frank Benson
  - “the points we laid stress on were: Banquets, dancing girls, flutes, wine, color, and form. Then comes the contrast of the sour misery, the embittered wisdom, the impotent rage against false gods, and the end of the man who yearned for truth and wisdom and love” (Benson, qtd 172)
- 1904: J. H. Leigh, London Court Theatre
  - Three-act, reduced version
- 1952: Tyrone Guthrie, Old Vic
  - “*Timon* as a social satire … some broadly theatrical effects” (176); “an ambitious but conspicuous failure,” “probably the most altered version seen in the century…”(177)
- 1974: Peter Brook, International Center for Theatre Research, Paris
  - “Brook spoke of Timon as like a modern man whose illusion of well-being has collapsed … a failed liberl, a disillusioned altruist [who dies] without reaching any transcendent understanding.” (183)

¹ Mostly Kean (in a text adapted by George Lamb) removed the added female characters “that Restoration and eighteenth century adapters had added to provide the play with some romantic or familial interest” (163).
The Power of Money

If man’s feelings, passions, etc., are not merely anthropological phenomena in the (narrower) sense, but truly ontological affirmations of being (of nature), and if they are only really affirmed because their object exists for them as a sensual object, then it is clear that:

1. They have by no means merely one mode of affirmation, but rather that the distinct character of their existence, of their life, is constituted by the distinct mode of their affirmation. In what manner the object exists for them, is the characteristic mode of their gratification.

2. Wherever the sensuous affirmation is the direct annulment of the object in its independent form (as in eating, drinking, working up of the object, etc.), this is the affirmation of the object.

3. Insofar as man, and hence also his feeling, etc., is human, the affirmation of the object by another is likewise his own gratification.

4. Only through developed industry – i.e., through the medium of private property – does the ontological essence of human passion come into being, in its totality as well as in its humanity; the science of man is therefore itself a product of man’s own practical activity.

5. The meaning of private property – apart from its estrangement – is the existence of essential objects for man, both as objects of enjoyment and as objects of activity.

By possessing the property of buying everything, by possessing the property of appropriating all objects, money is thus the object of eminent possession. The universality of its property is the omnipotence of its being. It is therefore regarded as an omnipotent being. Money is the procurer between man’s need and the object, between his life and his means of life. But that which mediates my life for me, also mediates the existence of other people for me. For me it is the other person.

“What, man! confound it, hands and feet
And head and backside, all are yours!
And what we take while life is sweet,
Is that to be declared not ours??

“Six stallions, say, I can afford,
Is not their strength my property?
I tear along, a sporting lord,
As if their legs belonged to me.” (Goethe: Faust (Mephistopheles))
Shakespeare in *Timon of Athens*:

“Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold?  
No, Gods, I am no idle votarist! ...  
Thus much of this will make black white, foul fair,  
Wrong right, base noble, old young, coward valiant.  
... Why, this  
Will lug your priests and servants from your sides,  
Pluck stout men’s pillows from below their heads:  
This yellow slave  
Will knit and break religions, bless the accursed;  
Make the hoar leprosy adored, place thieves  
And give them title, knee and approbation  
With senators on the bench: This is it  
That makes the wappen’d widow wed again;  
She, whom the spital-house and ulcerous sores  
Would cast the gorge at, this embalms and spices  
To the April day again. Come, damned earth,  
Thou common whore of mankind, that put’st odds  
Among the rout of nations.”

And also later:

“O thou sweet king-killer, and dear divorce  
‘Twixt natural son and sire! thou bright defiler  
Of Hymen’s purest bed! thou valiant Mars!  
Thou ever young, fresh, loved and delicate wooer  
Whose blush doth thaw the consecrated snow  
That lies on Dian’s lap! Thou visible God!  
That solders’t close impossibilities,  
And makest them kiss! That speak’st with every tongue,  
To every purpose! O thou touch of hearts!  
Think, thy slave man rebels, and by thy virtue  
Set them into confounding odds, that beasts  
May have the world in empire!”

Shakespeare excellently depicts the real nature of money. To understand him, let us begin, first of all, by expounding the passage from Goethe.

That which is for me through the medium of money – that for which I can pay (i.e., which money can buy) – that am I myself, the possessor of the money. The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money’s properties are my – the possessor’s – properties and essential
powers. Thus, what I am and am capable of is by no means determined by my individuality. I am ugly, but I can buy for myself the most beautiful of women. Therefore I am not ugly, for the effect of ugliness – its deterrent power – is nullified by money. I, according to my individual characteristics, am lame, but money furnishes me with twenty-four feet. Therefore I am not lame. I am bad, dishonest, unscrupulous, stupid; but money is honoured, and hence its possessor. Money is the supreme good, therefore its possessor is good. Money, besides, saves me the trouble of being dishonest: I am therefore presumed honest. I am brainless, but money is the real brain of all things and how then should its possessor be brainless? Besides, he can buy clever people for himself, and is he who has power over the clever not more clever than the clever? Do not I, who thanks to money am capable of all that the human heart longs for, possess all human capacities? Does not my money, therefore, transform all my incapacities into their contrary?

If money is the bond binding me to human life, binding society to me, connecting me with nature and man, is not money the bond of all bonds? Can it not dissolve and bind all ties? Is it not, therefore, also the universal agent of separation? It is the coin that really separates as well as the real binding agent – the chemical power of society.

Shakespeare stresses especially two properties of money:

1. It is the visible divinity – the transformation of all human and natural properties into their contraries, the universal confounding and distorting of things: impossibilities are soldered together by it.

2. It is the common whore, the common procurer of people and nations.

The distorting and confounding of all human and natural qualities, the fraternisation of impossibilities – the divine power of money – lies in its character as men’s estranged, alienating and self-disposing species-nature. Money is the alienated ability of mankind.

That which I am unable to do as a man, and of which therefore all my individual essential powers are incapable, I am able to do by means of money. Money thus turns each of these powers into something which in itself it is not – turns it, that is, into its contrary.

If I long for a particular dish or want to take the mail-coach because I am not strong enough to go by foot, money fetches me the dish and the mail-coach: that is, it converts my wishes from something in the realm of imagination, translates them from their meditated, imagined or desired existence into their sensuous, actual existence – from imagination to life, from imagined being into real being. In effecting this mediation, [money] is the truly creative power.

No doubt the demand also exists for him who has no money, but his demand is a mere thing of the imagination without effect or existence for me, for a third party, for the [others], and which therefore remains even for me unreal and objectless. The difference between effective demand
based on money and ineffective demand based on my need, my passion, my wish, etc., is the difference between being and thinking, between that which exists within me merely as an idea and the idea which exists as a real object outside of me.

If I have no money for travel, I have no need – that is, no real and realisable need – to travel. If I have the vocation for study but no money for it, I have no vocation for study – that is, no effective, no true vocation. On the other hand, if I have really no vocation for study but have the will and the money for it, I have an effective vocation for it. Money as the external, universal medium and faculty (not springing from man as man or from human society as society) for turning an image into reality and reality into a mere image, transforms the real essential powers of man and nature into what are merely abstract notions and therefore imperfections and tormenting chimeras, just as it transforms real imperfections and chimeras – essential powers which are really impotent, which exist only in the imagination of the individual – into real powers and faculties. In the light of this characteristic alone, money is thus the general distorting of individualities which turns them into their opposite and confers contradictory attributes upon their attributes.

Money, then, appears as this distorting power both against the individual and against the bonds of society, etc., which claim to be entities in themselves. It transforms fidelity into infidelity, love into hate, hate into love, virtue into vice, vice into virtue, servant into master, master into servant, idiocy into intelligence, and intelligence into idiocy.

Since money, as the existing and active concept of value, confounds and confuses all things, it is the general confounding and confusing of all things – the world upside-down – the confounding and confusing of all natural and human qualities.

He who can buy bravery is brave, though he be a coward. As money is not exchanged for any one specific quality, for any one specific thing, or for any particular human essential power, but for the entire objective world of man and nature, from the standpoint of its possessor it therefore serves to exchange every quality for every other, even contradictory, quality and object: it is the fraternisation of impossibilities. It makes contradictions embrace.

Assume man to be man and his relationship to the world to be a human one: then you can exchange love only for love, trust for trust, etc. If you want to enjoy art, you must be an artistically cultivated person; if you want to exercise influence over other people, you must be a person with a stimulating and encouraging effect on other people. Every one of your relations to man and to nature must be a specific expression, corresponding to the object of your will, of your real individual life. If you love without evoking love in return – that is, if your loving as loving does not produce reciprocal love; if through a living expression of yourself as a loving person you do not make yourself a beloved one, then your love is impotent – a misfortune.
George Groz
From: Encyclopædia Britannica Online

George Grosz, (born July 26, 1893, Berlin, Ger.—died July 6, 1959, West Berlin, W.Ger. [now in Berlin]) German artist whose caricatures and paintings provided some of the most vitriolic social criticism of his time.

After studying art in Dresden and Berlin from 1909 to 1912, Grosz sold caricatures to magazines and spent time in Paris during 1913. When World War I broke out, he volunteered for the infantry, but he was invalided in 1915 and moved into a garret studio in Berlin. There he sketched prostitutes, disfigured veterans, and other personifications of the ravages of war. In 1917 he was recalled to the army as a trainer, but shortly thereafter he was placed in a military asylum and was discharged as unfit.

By the war’s end in 1918, Grosz had developed an unmistakable graphic style that combined a highly expressive use of line with ferocious social caricature. Out of his wartime experiences and his observations of chaotic postwar Germany grew a series of drawings savagely attacking militarism, war profiteering, the gulf between rich and poor, social decadence, and Nazism. In drawing collections such as The Face of the Ruling Class (1921) and Ecce Homo (1922), Grosz depicts fat Junkers, greedy capitalists, smug bourgeoisie, drinkers, and lechers—as well as hollow-faced factory labourers, the poor, and the unemployed.

At this time Grosz belonged to the Berlin Dada art movement, having befriended the German Dadaist brothers Wieland Herzfelde and John Heartfield in 1915. Gradually, Grosz became associated with the Neue Sachlichkeit (“New Objectivity”) movement, which embraced realism as a tool of satirical social criticism.

After immigrating to the United States in 1933 to teach at the Art Students League in New York City, Grosz’s work became less misanthropic, as he drew magazine cartoons, nudes, and landscapes. He became a U.S. citizen in 1938. During World War II he showed his old pessimism in sharply coloured, teeming canvases such as The Survivor (1944). So famous and threatening were Grosz’s depictions of war and corruption that the Nazis designated him “Cultural Bolshevist Number One.” A French critic called his work “the most definitive catalog of man’s depravity in all history.” Grosz died in West Berlin about three weeks after returning to his native country for a visit.
George Groz’s Berlin
From: http://richardnagy.com/exhibitions/george-grosz-berlin/

His childhood distrust of authority figures found its outlet after the catastrophic events of the First World War. Later in life he would describe his experiences in the trenches as ‘wholly negative’, and his caricatures of military generals in works such as Vor der Kaserne (In Front of the Barracks), 1918, exude his hatred for the empty bluster of German militarism.

In the years following its humiliating defeat, Germany was cast into political disarray. Grosz established a reputation as a formidable satirist, producing bloodcurdling images such as Nieder mit Liebknecht (Down with Liebknecht), 1918, [Dramaturgy Packet cover image] and encapsulating the cynical humour of Berlin’s Dada movement with his wry illustrations for Die Pleite (Bankrupt). Grosz became particularly fascinated by the decadent side of cosmopolitan Berlin in the 1920s. In his art he fought against the base preoccupations of bourgeois society by uncovering a shadowy world of crime, murder and erotic license. Lustmord (Sex Murder) is a prominent motif in his work, in which the combination of sexuality and violence is presented as a ritualization of the human quest for power, exemplified by political practice.

…

At the root of Grosz’s political message is a moral imperative. As he wrote in 1921, ‘You can’t be indifferent about your position in this activity, about your attitude towards the problem of the masses…Are you on the side of the exploiters or on the side of the masses?’
Berlin Dada

The Dada movement, formed in Zurich 1916, was a reaction to World War I, its anarchic iconoclasm appealing to the artists George Grosz, Kurt Schwitters, Max Ernst and John Heartfield who organized the First International Dada Fair in Berlin in 1920. Also a reaction to the horrors of the war was the Neue Sachlichkeit/New Objectivity movement, which expressed the bitter social criticism of George Grosz, Max Beckmann, and Otto Dix.

The Berlin movement's originality stemmed from its political militantism: it was involved in the social upheavals and the Spartakist revolution which broke out at the end of the war in the German capital. Its plastic works, ferociously subversive, retain for us the cruel image of the twilight of the bourgeoisie. (dadart.com)

The climax of Berlin Dada was the International Dada Fair of 1920, the central symbol of which was an effigy of a German officer with the head of a pig that hung from the ceiling. From left to right: Hausmann, Hanna Höch, Dr Burchard, Baader, W. Hetzfelde, the wife, Dr. Oz, George Grosz, John Heartfield. Reproduction opposite page 128, from the book Dada Almanach; im Auftrag des Zentralamts der Deutschen Dada-Bewegung, by Richard Huelsenbeck (moma.org)

For more on the movement, see Film Deutschland Dada here: http://www.ubu.com/film/herbst.html

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2 The New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit) emerged as a style in Germany in the 1920s as a challenge to Expressionism. As its name suggests, it offered a return to unsentimental reality and a focus on the objective world, as opposed to the more abstract, romantic, or idealistic tendencies of Expressionism. The style is most often associated with portraiture, and its leading practitioners included Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, and George Grosz. Their mercilessly naturalistic depictions, sometimes reminiscent of the meticulous processes of the Old Masters, frequently portrayed Weimar society in a caustically satirical manner. (moma.org)