The director who choses to stage *Timon of Athens* is apt to be regarded as unwisely brave, if not perverse. He can be forgiven if it is a matter of fondly doting on even this, one of the least of the poet’s plays; or he can be tolerated for supposing that intensity of language will compensate for the lack of dramatic action. Should he actually be interested in Shakespeare’s misanthrope, he may be altogether suspect. *Timon* has been one of the least produced plays in the canon, with probably only *Pericles*, *Titus Andronicus*, and the *Henry VI* plays staged less frequently. Since Edmund Kean acted the relatively restored version of the play in 1816, there have been, according to my checklist, twenty professional productions on the English-speaking stage (twenty-six if university and non-Equity summer festival productions are included). As we shall see, when it has been produced, critics have often expressed a constrained admiration for the attempt but ultimately doubted that the play has proved stageworthy. Still, interest in the play in this century has gradually increased. There have been more productions of *Timon* in the last thirty years than there were in the previous one hundred and thirty. As in the case of the other rarely seen plays, some of the attention *Timon* has had from producers is owing to dutiful completions of the canon at the Old Vic and Stratford-upon-Avon. Some of the recent interest
may be due to the overexposure of the familiar plays in the Shakespeare festival industry. But Timon’s rough text and problem protagonist will not yield to the casual, dutiful, or novel commitment. What is more promising (ironic word) is the increasing receptiveness to the play, 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.

My purpose here is to provide an account of the major productions of Timon from Edmund Kean to the production of Peter Brook in Paris in 1974. This is not a search for an ideal Timon, for, in the theater especially, each age, to a considerable extent, impresses upon Shakespeare its own image. It is hoped that a fuller account of the play’s performance history than has been available may stimulate further interest in it. The account is informed with my own enthusiasm for the play’s dramatic values and theatrical possibilities in our time, including the belief that its dramatic interest must derive in some measure from the very size and intensity of Timon’s pursuit of misanthropy.

The chief case the nineteenth century made for a theatrical revival of Timon was that it offered a good moral, an exemplum all the more valuable for coming from Greek history through Shakespeare—both were touchstones of middle-class Victorian education. 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 occasion of Kean’s revival in 1816, the Theatrical Inquisitor strained to make the case.

[Timon’s] confusion, his sorrows, and his misanthropy abound with didactic lessons, they afford but little amusement, yet convey much instruction; and the failure of the stage can hardly be lamented, in the consumation of [the] moral excellence it so happily sustains.2

On the Victorian stage, the play was realized in idealized and sentimental terms. Those two noble Athenians, 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. Neither the shallowness of the early Timon nor the intensity of his later satire and nihilism was squarely faced. Also, Alcibiades was simplified and made a noble hero, though it is not clear, to say the least, that he is a promising candidate for a just and temperate ruler who will bring better days to Athens.

The version of the play by George Lamb that Kean acted was correctly advertised by Lamb as much less altered than
previous versions. Chiefly, this meant it was without the women characters that Restoration and eighteenth-century adapters had added to provide the play with some romantic or familial interest. Romantic critics were now championing the restoration of Shakespeare's texts, and, by the second quarter of the century, conscientious managers such as William Macready, Elizabeth Vestris, and Samuel Phelps were offering Shakespeare relatively whole. Still, Victorian productions distinctively shaped the plays. Lamb's 1816 version was an attempt, he said, "to restore Shakespeare to the stage with no other omissions than such as the refinement of manners has rendered necessary." Necessary was the omission of Alcibiades' camp-following prostitutes, Phrynia and Timandra. This served not only the purpose of excising a few sexual epithets; it improved upon Alcibiades' stature. It also removed one of the most invidious of Timon's misanthropic attacks—the scene in which he throws gold coins into the outspread skirts of the women and exhorts them to spread the gold like venereal disease. Elsewhere, too, sexual references in Timon's imprecations were omitted, such as in his curse upon the city (4.1).

Lamb still found it necessary to carry over from Richard Cumberland's 1771 adaptation a major adjustment in the play's ending. In Lamb's version, after Athens has yielded its keys to Alcibiades, the victor says, "Yet all's not done: Vengeance must work. Where is that loathsome crew, / Whose black ingratitude corrodes the heart / Of Athens' noblest son?" Penitent Athens then brings the Lords Lucius and Lucullus before Alcibiades, and they are stripped of their riches and banished. Alcibiades declares that final approval of this merciful sentence must come from Timon, whose death is then reported. Thus Lamb brings the play to a morally tidy conclusion with particular villains who are publicly punished; justice and mercy are administered on Timon's behalf and right order restored.

Lamb shortened the second half of the play by curtailing the exchanges between Timon and the visitors to his cave, especially the bitter clash between Timon and Apemantus. The visit of the poet and painter is omitted, "mercifully eliminated," exclaimed George Odell. Yet, their return brings the play full circle. These opportunists, who deal in flattering outward images of their patrons, are the first we meet in Timon's lobbies at the opening of the play. Having heard Timon has gold, they return to ride Fortune's wheel upward again. Audiences laugh in recognition as they enter. Timon overhears them, emerges saying, "I'll meet you at the turn," and satirizes them out of sight (5.1.46 ff.). Always the
ironic illustrators of their own lines, in this last encounter they exemplify the way of the world described in the lines with which they open the play:

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

**Painter:** It wears, sir, as it grows.

**Poet:** Ay, that's well known.

(1.1.2-3)

Not only are they comic reminders of an unregenerate world in the final scenes; they also function to alert Timon—and us—to the similar self-interest of Timon's next visitors—the subtler senators, who come to beg Timon's assistance against Alcibiades with unctuous, verbose ceremony. In both episodes, we see Timon firmly sealed in his commitment to a kind of irregular greatness, to a self-consuming rejection of an insincere world. But the Victorian stage was determined that Timon be simply a noble victim. Leigh Hunt regretted Lamb's omissions, but many contemporaries approved, including two stage historians. John Genest thought Lamb's text "a model of the manner in which Shakespeare's plays should be adapted to the modern stage," and W. C. Oulton agreed that the courtesans "were not calculated to entertain a polished audience."

Edmund Kean had admired the play, and the role of Timon offered, of course, more than a few opportunities for the emotional intensity that was his special power. "To see him act," Coleridge remarked, "is like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning." The slight young actor with blazing black eyes had electrified London within these two years with his Shylock, Hamlet, and Richard III. Audiences who had respectfully worshipped the neoclassical John Philip Kemble were now fascinated by Kean's new naturalistic display of emotion, with "the wonderful truth, energy, and force with which [he] strikes out and presents to the eye this natural working of the passions of the human frame." (See figure two.)

He made a considerable impact in the role of Timon, but contrary to the wishful reports of several modern theater historians, his performance cannot be said to have sustained the play. The production had a modest seven performances over three weeks and was never revived thereafter. Timon did not become one of the roles Kean repeated in his career, nor did his revival bring the play into the standard Shakespearean repertoire. Leigh Hunt gave Kean's genius its due but thought the role itself wanted "sufficient variety and flexibility" for Kean's talents. One of Kean's contemporary biographers found in Kean's Timon the bitter skeptic but not the easy, lordly prince. The lightning flashes of intensity or insight were not the hallmark of a consistent and seamless
Fig. 2. Edmund Kean in the role of Timon. From the Art Collection of the Folger Shakespeare Library. Reprinted with permission.
characterization. In the early scenes, Kean presided with a stately languor rather than "ardent animal spirits," and he lacked in the banquet scene, for example, the affection that could overflow into indulgent tears. Kean's first burst of passion came with Timon's confrontation with his creditors. With his final line in the scene, "Here, tear me, take me, and the gods fall upon you" (3.4.98),

Mr. Kean gazed at the bloodhounds who were preying on his existence, tore open his vest to enforce the offer he had made, and at length broke from the clamour his distractors could not silence, with an imprecation of tremendous horror on the throng that assailed him.

In the mock banquet, Kean unsheathed the caustic edge that had served him in the role of Richard III. It was in his delivery of Timon's curse at the city that George Cruikshank elected to draw Kean, legs defiantly set apart, eyes fierce, fists raised, flinging off his cape on "Nothing I'll bear from thee / But nakedness, thou detestable town!" (4.1.32–33). But too often, said Hunt, Kean offered vehemence rather than intensity, an anger louder than it was deep, though he pleased the galleries. At times, Kean clearly worked for pathetic effects. He "breathed the very soul of melancholy and tenderness" into Timon's reproach of Aemantus, "But myself, / Who had the world as my confectionary" (4.3.259–67). Early in the wilderness scenes, the staging created a visual contrast between the pathetic misanthrope and the proud Alcibiades, which Hunt thought one of the production's best effects.

First you heard a sprightly quick march playing in the distance; Kean started, listened, and leaned in a fixed and angry manner on his spade, with frowning eyes . . . he seemed as if resolved not to be deceived. The audience were silent; the march threw forth its gallant note nearer and nearer; the Athenian standards appear, then the soldiers come treading on the scene with that air of confident progress which is produced by the accompaniment of music; and at last, while the squalid misanthrope still maintains his posture and keeps his back to the strangers, in steps the young and splendid Alcibiades, in the flush of victorious expectation. It is the encounter of hope with despair.

The production offered other spectacle. Timon aimed his curse at a handsome distant view of Athens painted on a backdrop. Whether for the Athens of Timon or A Midsummer Night's Dream, the nineteenth-century pictorial stage illustrated Shakespeare with uplifting historical splendor. The banquet masque was given a Homeric theme. Oscar Byrne, well-known dancing master, choreographed a piece in which he danced as Hercules (the Folio stage directions call for Cupid) amid twenty Amazons who clashed swords and shields (rather than playing lutes as the Folio prescribes). Its intent puzzled Hunt,
as well it might since the masque is intended to honor Timon as patron of the senses. Modern directors usually make this dance climax the feast with a debauch to provide the image of the vain and insincere society that Apemantus here prophesies will betray Timon. But a decadent Athens, broadly drawn, was as out of the question on the Victorian stage as were the two prostitutes for the noble Alcibiades. So, too, the retribution for the two particular Athenian villains at the end of Lamb's version is a far cry from a modern broadly cynical vision.

Hunt appreciated the Drury Lane revival effort but predicted (correctly) that Kean's Timon "will not rank as one of his first performances," and that the play would not run long. His reservations about the play itself are those still to be heard when it is revived: the scenes of dramatic interest were too few, especially after Timon's fall, and the moral was too obvious and too easily anticipated. A reader could, however, "weigh every precious sentence at leisure, and lose none of the text either by the freaks of adapters or the failure of actors' voices."  

John Kemble may have considered producing Timon, and William Macready certainly did. Macready's diaries record his assessments on two separate occasions. He believed it "could not be made interesting on the stage," that it was "not complete enough, not finished . . . with the requisite varieties of passion for a play; it is heavy and monotonous."  

But a mid-century production by Samuel Phelps won the admiration of his followers and achieved a respectable total of forty-one performances in its premiere season of 1851 and in the revival of 1856. Phelps took early advantage of the lifting of the patent restrictions by the Theatre Regulation Act, and at Sadler's Wells, out beyond the circle of the West End's fashionable theaters, produced thirty-one of Shakespeare's plays between 1844 and 1862. His operation was modestly financed and his company not exceptional, but thoughtful attention to intrinsic dramatic values rather than lavish scenery or star performers won him a loyal following. None of this is to say that Phelps's vision of the play was not a nineteenth-century one. Phelps's idealism alone might have led him to stage the neglected Timon, but he was probably influenced in his choice of the nearly all-male Timon by the practical factor of the loss of his talented actress, Isabella Glyn, just before the 1851 season began.  

His text was the most complete yet to have been produced, and there were no added scenes. Phelps's promptbook shows he cut about twenty percent of Shakespeare's lines (463 lines), a percentage not uncommon in the century. This included the omission of the fool scene (2.2.51–127), commonly omitted
in this century and our own, and of the poet-and-painter sequence of the fourth act. Explicit sexual references were, of course, cut from all Timon’s curses. Phrynia and Timandra were present, though their exchanges with Timon were well expurgated.

Phelps’s major alteration occurred at the play’s end and involved scenic effects rather than textual changes. It employed the panorama, a continuous painted canvas unwound across the stage that, as nearly as could be done before the cinema, created a moving picture. After Timon had scorned the pleading senators and they had exited, the panorama began to unroll, and Alcibiades’ army entered marching on Athens, accompanied by music and the moving canvas. Frederick Fenton’s movable painting brought them to the city walls, with “Alcibiades and soldiers discovered on raised platform, backed by his officers and men looking down into the town.” One promptbook records that there were “troops painted on canvas to join those discovered,” a not unusual device. After Alcibiades had settled his accounts with Athens, word of Timon’s death was brought. Alcibiades commanded that he be conducted to Timon’s tomb, and this one promptbook describes.

Troops face about and mark time. Panorama moves on slowly and closes them in: they descend platforms and a woody opening in the panorama shews them on the march. They are again closed in, and the panorama works entirely off—shewing Timon’s tomb—a sunset backing and rolling waters.

Here Alcibiades read Timon’s epitaph, and after muffled drums (“Let our drums strike”), his twenty soldiers, arranged in two ranks perpendicular to the footlights, lowered their pikes in grief, as light rippled on the sea in the stillness.

There was more here than picturesque spectacle for Phelps’s audience, and there are more than quaint scenic conventions for us to understand. These two pictorial sequences clearly add moral and dramatic values to Alcibiades’ victory and Timon’s death. They bind the main plot and subplots together and tend to idealize both figures. Alcibiades’ march on Athens is translated into the coming of a righteous, avenging conqueror. The Athenaeum tells us Henry Marston’s Alcibiades (1851) in bearing and costume “looked truly an historical portrait.” His march to Timon’s tomb provides a final ennobling of the fallen man, a rite of honor that in turn recommends Alcibiades to us as a future leader. The play ends with a visual coda, a meditation upon the death of Timon, which in the text some find unsatisfyingly abrupt. Out of the tragedy of his misanthropy and death, the suggestion seems to be, a new knowledge has
been born. It is understandable how Henry Morley could praise Phelps on the occasion of Timon for making scenery serve his author. "Shakespeare's plays are always poems, as performed at Sadler's Wells." Yet, as Shakespeare's play stands, it is less neat and less idealizing. I am not convinced that either of these conditions should be construed as evidence that the play is structurally defective, or that extensive rehandling of the fifth act is wanted. As this is an issue touching productions from Phelps in 1856 to Michael Benthall in 1956, it will be useful to examine it now.

There is nothing in the final act to indicate that Timon's misanthropy and death have changed matters in Athens. If anything, the opposite is suggested—an imperfect world will wear on. The peace between Athens and Alcibiades is an enforced one; there is little here to inspire our confidence in a bright new future born in the ashes of tragedy. There seem to be contradictions within the prolix pleas of the senators. One says to Alcibiades, "Nor are they living who were the motives that you first went out," and the other invites him to "cull the infected forth, / But kill not all together." In between these appeasements, they offer another—the traditional killing of one in ten: "Take thou the destin'd tenth, / And by the hazard of the spotted die / Let die the spotted" (5.4.26–44). This is the facile rhetoric-for-all-occasions of politicians, not principled men. Alcibiades is well-meaning, but we are given reason to doubt that the captain is a stable man of absolute principles. There is charity and kindness in his treatment of Timon in the wilderness. But it is no simple, hearty field officer who speaks in this exchange at Timon's banquet:

*Timon:* You had rather be at a breakfast of enemies than a dinner of friends.

*Alcibiades:* So they were bleeding new, my lord, there's no meat like 'em; I could wish my best friend at such a feast.

(1.2.75–79)

The senate before whom Alcibiades later pleads for the release of a companion in arms may be complacent and corrupt, but Alcibiades' argument that murder should be winked at because of his friend's military service amounts to a cynical appeal from mutual convenience, not justice. He is no more loyal to Athens than a mercenary. His banishment "is a cause worthy my spleen and fury," and in his vanity he can justify his vengeance with "Soldiers should brook as little wrongs as gods" (3.5.114,118). Add to these considerations the baggage of Timandra and Phyrnia, and it must be said that Shakespeare has made it difficult for us to see in
Alcibiades an ideal hero upon whom the leadership of Athens should devolve.

The future of Athens at the end of the play is, then, not one that permits us to be condescending and comfortable in our pity for the misanthrope when word of his death is brought. If Timon’s misanthropy and death effects Athens’s redemption at the end of the play, as it did in Michael Benthall’s production in 1956, this is not only an ironic twist at Timon’s expense; it diminishes Timon’s despair. So far as self-interest in Athens is made a temporary and local matter subject to such a sentimental remedy, so far will Timon’s misanthropy appear a peculiar perversity and his death a simple object lesson. Shakespeare seems too earnest and intent in his exploration of the misanthrope to let us leave him without some awe for his commitment, fear for the truth in his vision, and pity for his suffering. He has not made Timon wholly sympathetic, but he has given Timon’s commitment to despair a magnificent intensity. Certainly he has made him greater in it than all those about him, made him achieve a kind of irregular heroic greatness. Beside Timon, Alcibiades and Athens appear small indeed.

Of Phelps’s own performance as Timon, it will not surprise us to find Morley saying he “treats the character as an ideal, as the central figure in a mystery.”32 John Oxenford of the Times said, “Mr. Phelps never loses sight of the inherent dignity of the misanthrope,” and he and others found it useful to compare Phelps’s aristocratic, noble misanthrope with the “low-born snarler,” Apemantus, neatly realized as a foil in the performances of both George Bennett (1851) and Henry Marston (1856).33 In Phelps’s performance, the misanthropy of Timon seemed affected, “something alien to his disposition, the expression of which severely tasks his capacity and is but ill accomplished after all,” said the Athenaeum.34 “We cannot but mourn over a naturally noble nature thus upset,” said critic H. G. Tomlin; “his confiding nature, his simple heart, his unwordly mind is [sic] overwhelmed by the discovery, and he cannot recover the shock.”35 This describes a pathetic, suffering misanthrope, and the descriptions are also suggestive of qualities associated with Phelps’s general acting style, such as his deliberate, thoughtful manner and slow delivery. It is difficult to imagine that Phelps achieved any fierce intensity in the bitter scenes; references to this are conspicuously few. Tomlin assured his readers that in Shakespeare there is “nothing morbid,” and noted that “we are never led to feel
that Timon is right in his indiscriminate denunciation of mankind." Thus, the loyal Flavius's encounter with Timon in the woods is "the redeeming part of the drama," and "Flavius, accordingly, was greeted with more plaudits than any other person in the play."36

The Phelps production enjoyed an exceptional thirty-one performances in the 1851 season. In 1856, there were ten, though it was on that occasion (for which there were some scenic improvements) that Phelps received from critics some of the highest praise of his career for his system of management in which the scenery and acting served the play.37 Reading of the hushed and reverent audiences at Sadler's Wells, one cannot doubt that Phelps created an effective interpretation and staging of the play in the terms we have seen. Perhaps no other production of Timon pleased its time as much. Yet it does not seem that the admiration for the Phelps production resulted in a wider admiration for the play. There were only two minor revivals in the next half-century, and London did not see the play again until 1904.

In Manchester, actor-manager Charles Calvert produced the play in 1871 at the Prince's Theatre, where, from 1864 to 1874, he mounted a series of Shakespearean productions after the elaborate manner of Charles Kean in London. The sources suggest there were major omissions and rearrangements of the text, but the Manchester Guardian approved: "Mr. Calvert has cut out everything which is certainly not Shakespeare's, a great deal of what is doubtful and all the coarseness."38 This would mean at least the absence of Phrynia and Timandra. We learn from the Guardian also that Calvert had Timon die in the arms of his servants, and that at some point "his unhinged mind recover[ed] its balance under the warmth of their affection." One must assume that Timon's final defiances, if given at all, were superceded by this sentimental effect.

Calvert arranged the text in three acts and employed eight tableaux. On the rising of the curtain in each scene the characters remained grouped in tableau for a few seconds before the action began, a device obviously intended to frame the play as a moral allegory. The staging and scenery received no other special notice except for the ballet that replaced the masque and the rather too-spirited melee that ended the mock banquet. Calvert's Timon was most effective in the quieter scenes, as in his incredulous response to Flavius when faced with the reality of his indebtedness: "To Lacedaemon did my land extend." The Manchester
production had twenty-four performances, but Calvert did not, as one critic supposed, rescue the play once and for all from "the limbo of the unacted drama."

It was next produced in a reduced three-act version by Sir Frank Benson at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1892. In the one-century history of the spring and summer festival, Timon has been produced at Stratford only three times. It was first chosen as the birthday presentation—which meant three performances—and its production fell to Benson, who was often responsible for the festival productions in over two decades. The earnest, athletic young actor’s approach must have been simple and vigorous. He himself remembered that

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. . . . I love the play and the part.  

Benson was credited for his acting, but the production did not make a persuasive case for what a critic described as a "one-man play, without lovers and love scenes, without plot or counterplot." Two endings were tried; the one nearest the original was reportedly the more effective. But Benson found no way to sustain the "long and dragging scene in the woods where visitor after visitor arrives and departs." Lady Benson remembered the production being received with scant enthusiasm.  

J. H. Leigh produced a three-act, reduced version, reportedly based on Benson’s text, at London’s Court Theatre in 1904, and Frederick Warde took a free adaptation of the play on tour in the United States in 1910. Neither seems to have overcome the reputation of the play as a thorny curiosity. Leigh was said to have had "neither the experience nor any qualifications for the role of Timon," though his company performed zealously and had the strengths of Hermann Vezin’s Apemantus and Frank Cooper’s Alcibiades. The Times noted the roles of Timandra and Phyrnia were “reduced to dumb show,” and found compensation in the banquet scene, which offered, instead of a masque, “a lovely ballet and a Cupid who might have strayed out of Offenbach’s Belle Hélène.”  

Frederick Warde was a respectable American tragedian whose acting style was of an older school by 1910. He had frequently toured and had achieved some stature in cities in the South, Midwest, and West. As a young man, Warde had played Flaminius in Charles Calvert’s production, which he remembered being received with interest, "though I
cannot assert that it was a popular success." Still, Warde, at fifty-nine, determined to try the play on a regional tour, and he opened his production at the Fulton Opera House in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in the fall of 1910.

Warde said he followed Calvert's example in the handling of the text. His promptbook shows an extensive reworking of the play by a painstakingly conscientious, if uninspired hand. The nature of the changes is familiar. Timon and Alcibiades are idealized; the misanthrope scenes are greatly reduced. At the end of the play, the "senators, citizens, women and children of Athens" have come out to Timon's cave to beg his assistance against Alcibiades when Alcibiades and his army enter. The captain demands that the Athenians kneel and promise to restore Timon to honor and wealth. A soldier seeking Timon finds him dead in his cave, and his body is then borne off with a long procession of Athenians behind. Warde freely rearranged scenes or rewrote them, interpolating lines from other plays of Shakespeare. In one case, he provides some background on the Timon-Alcibiades relationship by making it clear that Timon had "furnished forth the sinews" of Alcibiades' latest battle. There is the usual laundering of sexual references and the omission of the more bitter of Timon's curses. Over thirty percent of the text is omitted and most of this from the last two acts. Warde's promptbook instructions make clear his portrayal of Timon as a pathetic misanthrope. For the scene with Flavius and the senators, Timon is to enter from his cave "weak and ill," and from this entrance to the end of his final speech there is to be "Music theme for Timon pathetic, to continue until 'Timon hath done his reign' and exit." Warde and his company, which included his son, Ernest, as Apemantus, won critical respect for the attempt, especially for careful elocution. But Warde wrote in his biography that the play, being unfamiliar to the public, did not attract audiences. After about a dozen performances over several weeks, he withdrew it "at a great financial loss," and offered the more familiar Julius Caesar, which could be mounted with little change in costumes and scenery. Warde's was not the first American Timon. In 1839, one N. H. Bannister produced it at New York's Franklin Theatre, a small theater to which the press paid less attention than its rivals, the larger and more fashionable Park and Bowery theaters. That production had only two performances.

Between 1910 and World War II, the continuity of the play's performance history improves. Robert Atkins produced Timon at the Old Vic in 1922 as part of Lilian Baylis's
five-year project of staging all the plays in the First Folio to mark the tercentenary of its publication. W. Bridges-Adams staged the play in 1928 in the Stratford-upon-Avon's temporary festival home in the Picture House (the original theater burned in 1926). Both Atkins and Adams were disciples of William Poel, whose religion it was that Shakespeare's texts should be played uncut upon an open platform no more scenically adorned than the Elizabethan stage. In these years, there were attempts to leave behind the pictorial and declamatory traditions of nineteenth-century Shakespearean production; following the example of Poel, Harley Granville-Barker and others emphasized the poetry and swift continuity of the plays, a development that entailed less-cumbersome scenery and that turned to more impressionistic stage décor or Elizabethan economy.

At the Old Vic, a forestage, proscenium doors, curtains, and some changeable stock scenic units sufficed. One might expect that, in the absence of noble views of the Acropolis and with more of the original text, Timon's misanthropy might have been less subordinated to idealizing and sentimentalizing effects. But among the "blemishes" that friendly critic Herbert Farjeon found in Atkins's production was "the intermittent tableau tendency, which led to the introduction of an additional scene at the finish, undreamt of by Shakespeare or his collaborator, with soldiers and senators saluting Timon's grave." In Atkins's performance as Timon, there was "something too ponderous," said Farjeon; "one looked for the flash of lightning in that 'Methinks I could deal kingdoms to my friends,' and one heard only a distant rumble of thunder." Mention is made of the Fool—not seen before and seldom since—and Hay Petrie made the Poet a notable character. In these years there was little coverage of Stratford's country festival. One would like to know more of the performances under Bridges-Adams of Wilfred Walter as Timon (he had provided an acid Apemantus to Atkins's Timon), George Hays's Apemantus, Roy Byford's Lucullus, and the Sempronius of Francis L. Sullivan.

Nugent Monck's 1935 production at London's Westminster Theatre left critic James Agate tied in a double knot of frustration over the inadequacies of both the play and the production. He was at some pains to demonstrate the play was not King Lear. Timon was not as sympathetic a figure; the play was not as rich in incident, character, and language; and it was structurally defective, with all interest ending at the end of the mock banquet. The rest was "interminable talk." For one who found so little to admire in the play, Agate was wonderfully indignant about Ernest Mil-
ton’s Timon. “Timon must be drawn to heroic size,” said Agate who found the mannered Milton too meticulous and too lightweight physically and vocally. “It is a part for a great actor, as great acting was understood before lesser actors began to drag brains into it.”

He invokes Phelps’s name where other modern critics often invoke Kean’s. It is a commonplace in modern theater criticism that the play requires the services of an extraordinary actor not only to meet the role’s vocal demands but also somehow to compensate for the play’s ostensible inadequacies. This may be intended as fond faith in actors, but it leaves the problems and possibilities of Timon’s character unexplored in a way no actor can afford. Actors reveal character by the choices and the pursuits of courses of action, both particular and general. The principle is not only Aristotelian; the pursuit of clear objectives is also essential to the actor’s imaginative engagement in the play.

Herbert Farjeon was sad the seldom-seen play had not been done justice in the Monck production. He and other critics found Milton’s delivery fast, erratic, and indistinct at the emotional crests. J. C. Trewin remembered “the rustle in the Harcourt Williams’s voice softened the misanthropy of Apemantus.” Among Monck’s directorial ploys were a ballet for the masque, which Farjeon thought much protracted, and a court-martial arrangement of the scene of Alcibiades before the senate, which Agate thought had “a fine, warlike frenzy.” Benjamin Britten, then twenty-one, provided music that Agate found too literal an underscoring of the scenes. Monck did cut the text and, one suspects, not always judiciously. In a program note, he praised Shakespeare’s stagecraft, calling the play “better than those who have only read it are able to realize.” But he cut “certain comic scenes that are obviously not by Shakespeare,” (the Fool scene and more?) and condensed “other repetitive scenes.” Among the regretted losses was Timon’s curse upon Athens (4.1).

The first Timon after World War II was the “modern dress” production of 1947 by Sir Barry Jackson’s Birmingham Repertory Theatre, directed by Willard Stoker. Timon was dunned by modern Athenian businessmen, and Alcibiades and his men were costumed as modern Athenian soldiers. Apemantus was portrayed (with some excess of relish by the actor) as “an out-at-elbows Bohemian of the Aldous Huxley period—a discharged reporter, insolvent artist or ham actor” who worked crossword puzzles. The latter half of the play took place beside a bomb crater overlooked by a huge howitzer. When the company performed in makeshift, scenery-less conditions in the Stratford Conference Hall for a Shakespeare conference, reviewers found the play “gained enormously”
from performance, “and particularly performance in modern
dress.” John Phillips played Timon with authority, speed and
ease, and in the tirades “revealed a power of acceleration, of
changing gear, of taking a hairpin bend worthy of a champion
motor-cyclist in a cross-country trial.” This did not, ap-
parently, help sustain the latter half of the play which these
reviewers described as “closet drama,” and “a rhetorical
indictment of man as a social animal” in which “pity is shouted
down by wrath.”

The experiment with Timon as a social satire continued with
the Old Vic production of 1952, directed by Tyrone Guthrie.
Characteristically, Guthrie’s resourcefulness meant some
broadly theatrical effects; given this particular play, critics
were more than usually tolerant of them, even enthusiastic.
He approached the play not as a tragedy but as a satire
against materialism. His senators were “a covey of harried
grotesques”; the jeweler was sinister, and the poet (John
Blatchley) was effectively rendered as an eager, pretentious,
amateur art critic. Around the open-handed Timon of the
play’s first half, there was a “golden turbulence of movement
... gold on the pillars of Timon’s house ... gold in Timon’s
hair and in Timon’s clothes, and Mr. André Morell gives his
hero a golden smile.” The set and lighting design of Tanya
Moiseiwitsch clearly was intended to speak to the imagination
in subjective and suggestive ways. Timon moved in a bright
world of wealth surrounded by darkness, “an enveloping
gloom,” out of which the sycophants and friends emerged.
“Timon lives on a minute island of teeming magnificence in
a world of blackness, which suddenly swallows him.” The
Times described Morell’s Timon as assured, radiant, and never
breaking stride, but others found no stature in him. Roy
Walker described him as a “devout peasant who had won a
chariot-pool and set up as a one-man Athenian arts council,
a fool and his money soon parted.” It is clear that neither
Morell’s performance nor Guthrie’s satirical animus sustained
the play in acts four and five. The Times said, “The latter
part of the play may be said to lapse into one tremendous
grouse.” When Leo McKern’s Apemantus accused Timon
of affecting his misanthropy, it seems to have removed any
sympathy there was for Timon and any reason for further
interest. Basic to Guthrie’s development of the play as a
satire was his conviction that “Timon is not a hero in whose
sufferings we are supposed to share with pity and terror. He
is the spoiled Darling of Fortune whom Fortune suddenly
spurns.” Guthrie’s view of Timon is an understandable one
and a welcome, sharp rejection of the idealized Timon, but
it can account theatrically for only the first half of the play.
Guthrie shows little interest in the play at precisely the point where Shakespeare seems most in earnest, where Timon reaches for the most intense and imaginative expressions of rage and despair. The view precludes deeper exploration of acts four and five, which comprise forty-three percent of the play (971 of the play’s 2,254 lines), the forty-three percent that, as this history shows, requires the most resourceful attention to sustain in production.

One further impression made by the Guthrie production deserves note. Harold Hobson writes that, at the end of the play, “one emerges from the theatre hardly recovered from the unexpected speed of Timon’s demise.” The impression that Timon’s death is not marked clearly is one a performance may leave more strongly than a reading of the play wherein one can dwell upon the implications of Timon’s last speeches. The actor and director must use means that leave little doubt that Timon shakes his fist at the sun and dies.

The Old Vic’s production of 1956 was an ambitious but conspicuous failure. Although it remains in memory today as a major reference point in the play’s performance history, it had only thirty-seven performances. Where Guthrie had banked upon a broad concept and the swirl of staging effects, director Michael Benthall built upon the personality and reputation of a major actor, Sir Ralph Richardson, then fifty-four. Of even greater consequence, Benthall also reworked the text to an extent that his was probably the most altered version seen in the century since the 1910 Frederick Warde production (based on Calvert’s text).

With approximately five hundred lines cut and a resulting playing time of two hours (including one fifteen-minute interval), the omissions were considerable. Of most interest was Benthall’s handling of the end of the play. Timon chiseled his epitaph on a huge stone slab set atop a rock by the sea like a huge grave marker as he ended his interview with the senators, “Come not to me again . . .” (5.1.213). The senators’ report back to Athens was cut, and only the first few lines of the soldier’s discovery of Timon’s tomb were given. At that point, Alcibiades and his army entered before Timon’s tomb and were confronted there by the frightened, pleading senators and citizens of Athens, who entered from the opposite side of the stage. Roy Walker described the new sequence (which he praised):

Alcibiades rejected the Athenian pleas for mercy and ordered the assault; but at this moment the Soldier, who had climbed up to read the inscription, called urgently to him and Alcibiades halted to read the epitaph himself. It was this reminder of human mortality that melted the banished general to pity, a bold re-
handling of the end of the play which at least tied the main and sub-plots together in a theatrically effective way.\textsuperscript{68}

In spirit, this idealizing ending seems not unlike those of the nineteenth century. The misanthrope was reduced to being chiefly a motive for the rather sentimental conversion of Alcibiades. Like others before him, Benthall was determined to make something out of nothing. Not only was there the particular irony that Timon’s death was the cause of the salvation of Athens, but the ending also quite generally advanced the premise that men can be redeemed, and so, with some dispatch, it canceled out Timon’s misanthropic vision—shades of Nahum Tate’s \textit{Lear}. In Benthall’s ending, Timon was mourned as a formerly noble man gone mad; his despair discounted, he was to be pitied as one might pity the death from rabies of a pedigreed dog.

It follows that in the cutting Timon’s curses lost the fiercest of their lines. In the curse flung at the city wall, eighteen lines were omitted, from “Matrons, turn incontinent!” to “And yet confusion live!” (4.1.3–21). In his charge to Timandra and Phyrinia, the lines from “Crack the lawyer’s voice” to “quell the source of all erection” were cut (4.3.155–66). Timon’s soliloquy after Alcibiades’ exit, in which he digs for a root to eat, was omitted (4.3.178–98), as was his disquisition on gold, “O thou sweet king killer” (4.3.384–99), and his caustic attack on the senators, “Thou sun, that comforts, burn!” (5.1.130–33). The exchange between the two misanthropes was trimmed, and throughout the play many of Apemantus’s lines were omitted, including his running commentary during the banquet. There was little sympathy for Timon in this production, and Roy Walker attributed this (perhaps too much) to the omission of most of the poet and painter’s opening discussion of Timon and the shift and change of Fortune’s moods. One may doubt that the presence of the tall statue of the goddess in Timon’s house was a recognizable replacement for a modern audience. A further alteration should be noted: the roles of Timon’s three major servants were condensed into one—Flavius.

Richardson gave Timon his own easy, genial manner in the first part of the play. He was, in the creditors scene, able to “let fly with tremendous force,” but, said Muriel St. Clare Byrne,

he simply cannot bring himself to believe in the last two acts. On his own view of life, generosity, tolerance, a sweet reasonableness, and a natural philanthropy will keep breaking in, judging from knowledge of this well-loved player in his many parts, which as the \textit{Times} critic remarked, turned the last scenes into a meditation, not a curse, and presented us with a Timon “as gently intoxicated as Richard II.”\textsuperscript{69}
Kenneth Tynan characterized the production as not so much a "study of benevolence warped by ingratitude" as "the story of a scoutmaster betrayed by his troop." The critics were unanimous in their displeasure with Richardson's delivery. He made an ingenious attempt to replace fury with irony ("His invective was silky and detached," said the Times), but his delivery was badly marred by personal eccentricities. There was the hammered emphasis on each syllable, as in lines such as "This it is that makes the wappen'd widow wed again." Or, to use Tynan's example, there was Richardson's thanks to the Amazons for enlivening the banquet: "You have added," he said distinctly, "worth, and toot, and lusture" ["worth unto't and lustre"]. The Times was impressed with Richardson's originality in the role, but Byrne strenuously objected to Benthall's free handling of the text and contrasted Richardson's "easy, genial manner" with the "giant misanthropy" of the play, its "fearful, unmistakable violence and bitterness." Tyman, who had recently praised the visiting Berliner Ensemble under Bertolt Brecht, soon to influence English staging of Shakespeare, found that by comparison English acting and directing such as that in Timon was "sickeningly laden with curlicues and excess baggage." Leslie Hurry's setting for Timon's house was dominated by a large door upstage center, which remained in that position for scenes outside as well as inside the house. Heavy draperies and lush colors of gold and magenta, yellows and greens suggested a wealthy and decadent community. The banquet ended in a general debauch from which the lecherous senators departed with one or two young women each. Tynan objected to the company's "epicene intensity. In the masque, Sir Ralph descended from his dais at the entrance of Cupid and "graciously allowed a bevy of girls to pepper him with tiny arrows, standing in their midst with the smile of a foolish emperor." These women served him at other times in the play. Flavius entreated Timon's friends for help in the public place outside Timon's house. Lucullus was called from a drinking bout to speak with him, and a pudgy, bejeweled Sempronius was carried on in a palanquin with a giggling mistress. In the act one scene of the Old Athenian and Timon's servant, an actress provided the young daughter (for whom there are no lines). In the scene of Alcibiades before the Senate, Benthall clarified the question of whom Alcibiades is defending by bringing on a soldier in chains. Timon served steam at the mock banquet, overturned tables in the path of the bewildered guests trying to escape, and knocked over the tall standards in which the lights were burning. He next appeared on the fore-stage for his curse outside Athens's walls which were depicted on a semi-transparent drop. Behind it, the ruins of the banquet
were seen in the light of flickering flames. The wilderness scene was a tangle of green around Timon’s cave, but in his last scene, in which he carved his epitaph, he was found atop a rock with a Charles Kean seascape behind him.74

The play was again dressed fit to kill as a modern satire in the Stratford, Ontario, Festival Theatre production of 1963, conceived and staged by Peter Coe and Michael Langham. Timon was played by John Colicos, an interesting and intense if sometimes too theatrically efficient leading actor of the company. Howard Taubman of the New York Times described the “modern dress” production as “so preoccupied with effects of contemporaneity that it seems to call attention to its cleverness rather than to Shakespeare.” In the first half of the play, Taubman wrote,

there is so much concern with apt correspondence between the Elizabethan text and our epoch that each time a fresh modern conceit is invoked it becomes the core of interest, and produces a burst of applause.75

Timon hosted his banquet in a dinner jacket of red brocade, and his fashionably dressed guests were entertained by a combo playing suave jazz that Duke Ellington composed for the production. A trumpeter moved among the guests, serenading them. Apemantus (Douglas Rain) was a detached, cynical newspaperman with a cigarette on his lips and a photographer in tow. His asides from a balcony during the banquet provoked Alcibiades (William Hutt) to whip out a revolver and fire a shot at him. There was later business with ticker tape, Jewish bill collectors, and Timon’s servant seeking out Lucius in a steam bath, attended by a masseur and a podiatrist. None of these flash-bulb effects seems to have illuminated the play, but they did create a certain notoriety for the production. It was taken to the Chichester Festival Theatre in the spring of 1964, the quadcentenary year. The London Evening News critic reported:

While the first part strikes home—the banqueting scene with tired businessmen twisting with hostesses is magnificent—the second part, with Timon in the wilderness, comes properly to life only after his death.76

The focus, it is clear, was on the life of the great Gatsby rather than the misanthropy of Timon. The Daily Worker called the production a triumph and cited Marx’s comments on the play, and a critic for the Times believed that its disillusion and cynicism were themes to which modern audiences were responsive.77

The 1960s brought the new Royal Shakespeare Company, headed by Peter Hall, Peter Brook, and Michel St. Denis, whose avowed and controversial intent it was to see Shake-
spear's plays afresh and to inform them with the spirit of contemporary culture. In essays on the modern director and Shakespeare, directors Hall and Brook argued for the freedom to depart from conventional theatre-of-illusion practices and standard interpretations, which they suggested were often more Victorian than Elizabethan. Although, on the whole it seems not to have been a radical departure, the RSC's 1965 production of Timon with Paul Scofield reflected the new directions. It enjoyed considerable interest that season, in part perhaps because of an increasing public interest in the play, to judge from the newspaper reviews, but mostly because of Scofield. He came to the role of Timon at forty-three after his portrayal of Lear in the renowned and controversial production directed by Peter Brook in 1962, which conceived of the play as a tragedy of modern despair in a meaningless universe. It bore the marks of Brecht's non-illusionistic staging techniques and Jan Kott's existential reading.

Director John Schlesinger created a hard-edged, realistic portrait of Athenian society and Scofield, a central performance of some magnitude. There seem to have been some disparities between the two. John Russell Brown thought Schlesinger had attended chiefly to pictures of the dolce vita in ancient Athens and left Scofield to render a sometimes psychologically subtle interpretation of Timon, with a resulting lack of structural strength. Scofield created throughout, however, an impression of power and authority. His early Timon was a noble innocent rather than a foolish prodigal. For both the host and the misanthrope, he drew upon his considerable technical vocal powers. The Times said:

But if Mr. Scofield's delivery—the inconsolable broken phrasing, the unresolved cadences, the sweetness of his top register—sometimes seem externally applied to the lines, much marvelous speaking remains. His way of handling verse often suggests a man struggling to lift a heavy weight, or being carried along by its momentum; and this part gives stupendous exercise to his technique.

Robert Speaight and others saw in Scofield's Timon the passion and power that had not been in his Lear. Many of the responses suggest an increasing receptiveness to the play. Speaight reports, for example, that in Scofield's playing of the later scenes, "the excess of his misanthropy was the measure of his growth."

In Ralph Koltai's setting, red-tiled walls slid apart to reveal the interior of Timon's house; two leprous beggars were propped against them during the banquet scene. Servilius found Lucius at the Athenian barber's, attended by a masseur and a manicurist, "writhing in his chair in mixed agonies of physical and moral discomfort." For the wilderness scenes,
Timon's cave was set in a barren waste with a single gnarled tree, reminiscent for audiences of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. A new *Timon* was scheduled for the RSC's 1971 season but was canceled.83

The 1971 production of *Timon* in Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival in Central Park was a disappointing trial of this play so rarely seen in America. Walter Kerr characteristically complained of the play's structural weaknesses and blamed director Gerald Freedman for failing to make a firm attack on it. "A play with its own built-in fatigue cannot really afford any fatigue in the mounting," said Kerr.84 Timon was played by Sheppard Strudwick, a familiar actor in contemporary stage and television plays, here unequal to the verse and the role. Clive Barnes observed: "He was unable really to suggest the folly of misplaced idealism or the rancor of misanthropy, and concentrated on a rather stiff brand of nobility."85 Michael Dunn created a fierce, spitting, dwarfed Ape­mantus inordinately proud of his plain-dealing. But, on the whole, the American company was below the mark of giving all the verse intelligibly. Ming Cho Lee's metal scaffold-and-stairways setting for the outdoor Delacorte Theatre featured a trio of cloth kite buzzards flopping quietly in the winds above the towers.

The production of *Timon* to create the most interest in this decade to date is that directed by Peter Brook in Paris in 1974 as one of the experiments of his International Center for Theatre Research. The production was created in the shell of an abandoned Victorian theater, the Théâtre des Bouffes-du-Nord, north of the Gare du Nord in an area Brook's supportive critics liked to call a working-class section of Paris. A key element in the production was a translation of the text into modern French, prepared for Brook by Jean-Claude Carrière, French film scenarist best known for his work with director Luis Bunuel. Brook's previous efforts to make Shakespeare accessible to modern audiences had included the commissioning of a modern English version of *King Lear* by poet Ted Hughes, which Brook decided not to use for fear it would call attention to itself. He chose *Timon* for the French experiment because, he said, "dans Timon, en anglais, les valeur musicales sont très peu importantes." Brook argued that the play's "langage archaïque ne fait plus sur le public une impression directe comme à l'époque élizabethaine."86 One sample of Carrière's text may suffice here, Timon's final speech, which he rendered in somewhat regularized verse:

Ne venez plus me voir. Dites à la cité
Que Timon a bâti sa demeure éternelle
Sur le bord d'une plage auprès de l'eau salée.
Chaque jour une houle nouvelle
The difficulties of translation granted, one still misses here the intensity of Timon's rage, the extravagance and power of the diction. As to the play's structure, there was, interestingly, no significant alteration with the exception of the omission of the Fool sequence. Brook made use of the Théâtre des Bouffes-du-Nord as it stood after a fire a quarter of century ago—the cavernous shell of a once red-and-gilt Victorian theater, pocked and fire-scorched, with a gaping, curtainless proscenium that exposed a deep cavity where the stage had been. Most of the action took place in a semicircular area in the orchestra in close proximity to the audience, which sat around it on backless bleachers. The actors also used a pipe-railed walkway running high across the bare, scarred backstage wall, and emerged from steps out of the cavity that was once the stage. Said one reviewer of this setting for Timon: “Every spectator at once knows that he is sitting inside a symbol of the decline of the West.”

Brook spoke of Timon as like a modern man whose illusion of well-being has collapsed, as an affluent man suffering the deflation of his world, even as an emblem of the West rudely awakened from the dream of the consumer's society by the oil crisis. In an interview, Brook commented:

Pour chaque spectateur, devant l'univers entièrement saccagé de Timon et devant le monde naissant d'Alcibiade, une question vitale se pose: qu'est-ce qui est à détruire? Qu'est-ce qui a sauver? Cela aussi fait partie de l'actualité. Shakespeare ne fournit pas le réponse.

Elsewhere, Brook described Timon as a failed liberal, a disillusioned altruist who withdraws from the world and dies in confusion without reaching any transcendent understanding.

The informal staging did not stress modern relevancies heavily, although it was in “modern dress.” The prevailing tone of the young company's performance was that of a group of friends assembled to perform a play for a friendly audience in an open town square. Any semblance of illusion or conventional theatrical effect was eschewed; the play was a jeu
to which actor and audience contributed imaginative engagement. This was not a theater of genteel illusion-making. Floodlights illuminated actors and audience equally; actors came and went visibly on the perimeter of the unlocalized playing area. In the playing area, scenes were acted with taut concentration. At the opening of the play, a smiling young Timon in a white suit moved across the playing area and through the spectators, amidst a fluttering covey of young admirers. "Lords" wore nondescript white capes over shirts and slacks. The banquet scenes were done in Roman style on a round golden cloth spread on the floor, circled with brocaded cushions. Timon and his guests lounged in extravagant flowing capes in glittering pastels. The entertainment included a dancer who weaved Timon's circle of fair-weather friends together with a large ball of colored twine—perhaps a vestige of folklore from the company's recent experiments in the Near East. Later, the bill collectors appeared in coats, ties, and black fedoras, each carrying an attaché case. They knocked on the old proscenium doors to serve their due bills. Alcibiades (Bruce Myers) was the model of a modern Mediterranean general in a severe black military tunic, edged in red. Apemantus, played by a young black man (Malick Bagayogo), appeared in an Army surplus overcoat and boots, resembling an Algerian street beggar familiar to French audiences. The senators of Athens visited Timon in morning coats and top hats, and were shielded from the sun by black umbrellas held by aides. Timon's wilderness was a Beckettian desert defined by sprays of sand over the playing floor. Timon sprawled in the ragged remnants of his white suit and a filthy trenchcoat. The staging of the final scene made it pictorially clear that Alcibiades' triumph was one achieved by force and intimidation. The Athenians sprawled in prone supplication at the proscenium edge, seeking mercy from Alcibiades, who stood high on the rear stage wall catwalk, across the gulf of the stage cavity, looking down on them, his red cape casually over one shoulder.

The production was received enthusiastically by the French press, who were especially impressed by the staging methods. Audiences filled the small-capacity theater during the runs of the play in the fall of 1974 and the spring of 1975. My over-all impression was of a rather leveled, simplistic rendering of the play in which one was engaged by the young company's anti-traditional methods and collective sincerity. There was an unevenness of talent, and some of the international company had learned their French merely phonetically. If the theme of the fall of Timon the disillusioned materialist was effectively set amidst the ruins of the Bouffes-du-Nord and underscored by the altruistic denial of conven-
tional, elaborate, expensive production methods, there was also an elaborately contrived naiveté. A youthful Timon, such as was that of François Marthouret, can project an image of the vulnerable, credulous, and impetuous host. But youthfulness alone will not sustain any size of misanthropy, and it did not in this production.

Brook’s unflinching view of the play’s ending has much to recommend it. Yet his concept of a confused Timon contained curiously little compassion for, or interest in, the intensity and dramatic size of Timon’s commitment to despair. Like the previous treatments of the play as a satire on materialism, this production seemed to leave the tragic misanthrope essentially unexplored, the man of whom Alcibiades says at the close of the play, “Yet rich conceit / Taught thee to make vast Neptune weep for aye / On thy low grave, on faults forgiven” (5.4.77–79).