

Timon's Villa: Pope's Composite Picture

by James R. Aubrey

ALEXANDER Pope's *Epistle to Burlington* contains a memorable, seventy-line sketch satirizing Timon's Villa, where "Trees cut to Statues, Statues thick as trees," and other absurdities reveal Timon's bad taste.¹ Identifying whose estate might have inspired this sketch has been the preoccupation of critics since the poem appeared in 1731. Pope seems to raise the question "Who was Timon?" by naming actual people and places in the poem, and by asking us to admire the man "Who plants like BATHURST, or who builds like BOYLE" (1.178). After all, if these two close friends of Pope convey the norm, why should not some enemy—some propertied Philistine of eighteenth-century society—likewise convey the deviations from good taste?

The search for Timon's "identity" continues. Aubrey Williams discussed the issue in a 1979 paper for the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. The previous year, in *Alexander Pope and The Arts of Georgian England*, Morris Brownell proposed that we consider the character of Timon to be based on Sir Robert Walpole but Timon's Villa itself to have been modeled on the Duke of Marlborough's estate at Blenheim, which Pope had visited. Brownell offers this view as an improvement on that of Kathleen Mahaffey and Maynard Mack, who made the case for Walpole and his estate in the late 1960s. Their proposal was especially attractive since it filled an interpretive vacuum that had existed ever since George Sherburn in 1935 and F. W. Bate-

¹ F. W. Bateson, ed., *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, 1961), III, ii, 144, 1. 120. All references to Pope's poetry will come from the latest edition of the appropriate volume in *The Twickenham Edition* (hereafter TE), gen. ed. John Butt.

son in the *Twickenham Edition* of the poem set to rest a 200-year tradition that Pope meant Timon to represent James Brydges, Duke of Chandos. With the recent exception of Pat Rogers, who takes care in his discussion of Timon's Villa and Chatsworth not to imply that Pope's poem was a concerted attack on Chatsworth's owner, readers have generally assumed that Pope wrote *To Burlington* with the purpose of exposing some one of his contemporaries.²

I believe Pope had a broader purpose in mind, one reflected in the poem's original half-title: "Of Taste." I do not deny that the details of Timon's Villa emerged from Pope's experiences as well as from his imagination, but I cannot agree that Pope organized those details around an urge to expose one or two contemporaries to ridicule. When he was writing *To Burlington*, Pope probably felt satisfied that he had dispatched his enemies in *The Dunciad*. Until his enemies—and some friends—misapplied his *Epistle to Burlington*, Pope had no special reason to be wary of broad satire or to feel a need to protect the innocent by naming the originals behind his satiric portraits, as he began to do in 1733 with his *Epistle to Bathurst*. In 1731 Pope was still confident that he was writing for an audience of like-minded, true virtuosi who shared his late Renaissance assumptions that good art is moral and hierarchical. He assumed that other men of aristocratic taste would read his poem aright; they would understand the eclectic details and complicated attitudes informing each line in the spirit of the Classical precept that the best artists select beauties from diverse models in order to produce a composite art object that approaches overall perfection. John Dryden treats this principle as a commonplace in his "Observations on *The Art of Painting* of Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy," part of a book Pope once presented to his friend Charles Jervas:

[A]ncient works from their beginning have been the rule of beauty: and in effect, the authors of them have been so careful to give them that perfection, which is still to be observed in them, that they made use not only of one single body, whereby they formed them, but of many, from which they took the most regular parts to compose from them a beautiful whole.³

² M. Brownell, Oxford, App. C; K. Mahaffey, "Timon's Villa: Walpole's Houghton," *TSLL*, IX (1967), 193–222; M. Mack, *The Garden and the City* (Toronto, 1969), App. F; G. Sherburn, "Timon's Villa and Cannons," *HLB*, VIII (1935), 131–52; Bateson, ed., *TE*, vol. III ii, App. B; Rogers, "Timon's Villa Again," *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, II (1979), 63–5.

³ *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. Walter Scott (London, 1808), XVII, 399–400.

For his literary "picture" of Timon's Villa, Pope seems to have adapted this artistic method to his satirical aim. At any rate the evidence points to a poet who "took" the worst features of many estates to "compose" from them a deformed rather than a "beautiful whole." To the extent that Du Fresnoy's theory describes Pope's conscious selection of details for his purpose, Timon becomes a satirical inversion of the typical man of taste, and his villa a synthesis of offensive objects. Pope's *Epistle to Burlington* does not anticipate his later satires, with their identifiable references to Pope's contemporaries, but is instead a poem on tastelessness in general.

Let us first consider Cannons, the Duke of Chandos' sizeable and rather too-splendid estate that popular report established as Pope's model and whose owner Samuel Johnson helped to fix as Pope's assumed target until this century (Fig. 1). All we know about Timon's house is that "his building is a Town" and that it is a "Villa" (1.99, 105). The two ideas are contradictory, of course, since Palladio's villas—like Pope's Twickenham or Burlington's Chiswick—were small. Cannons is certainly large (167 feet across the facade), but it has a rectangular, Georgian-Baroque plan rather than a neo-Palladian main block with portico and wings extending from either side. When Pope wrote his satire in 1731, he must have been aware of the neo-Palladian "greater houses" that had been rising around London for over a decade, artifacts of the Whig building movement stimulated, in part, by Colin Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus*. Wanstead, for example, built by Campbell in Essex between 1716 and 1722, resembled an Italian villa in its design, but Wanstead's monumental size (260 feet across) must have made its would-be Palladian design seem inappropriate to Pope, who may have had that building, for one, in mind when he used the term "villa" wryly to describe Timon's pretentious house (Fig. 2). Whatever Pope's model or models, on architectural grounds many other houses are more like parodies of villas than was Cannons.⁴

The Duke's garden, however, like Timon's, was full of the grandiose and the busy. It was quite large, with four long avenues, and was

⁴ Cf. Samuel Johnson, "Life of Pope," in *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1905), III, 152–3; for the dimensions and design of Cannons, see J. Badeslade and J. Rocque, *Vitruvius Britannicus* (London, 1739), IV, pls. 24–9; for Wanstead see Colin Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus* (London, 1715), I, pls. 24–5; for an overview of building trends see Sir John Summerson, "The Classical Country House in 18th-Century England," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, CVII (July, 1959), 539–53.

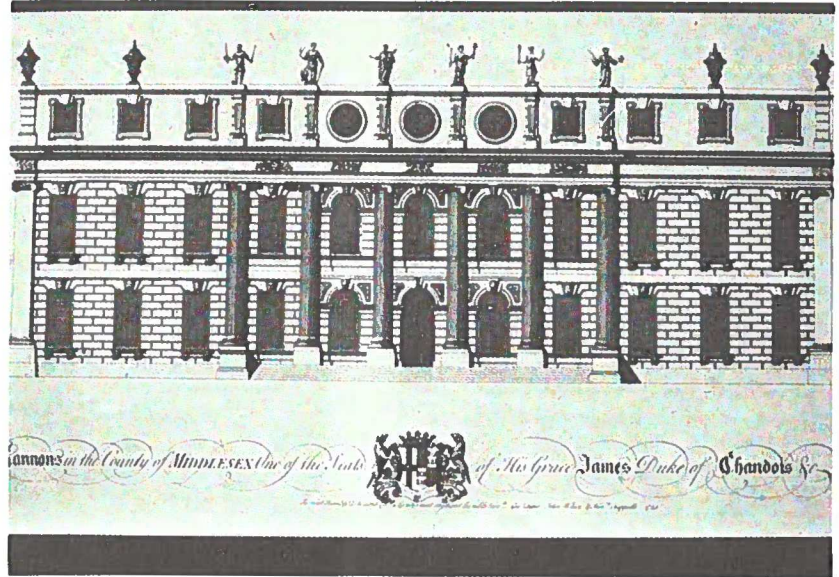


Fig. 1. Chandos' Cannons, Middlesex (south elevation), designed by James Gibbs and others, in J. Badeslade and J. Rocque, vol. IV of *Vitruvius Britannicus* (London, 1739); rpt. New York, 1967), BR, pls. 24–5.

notorious for details such as exotic birds, gilded statues, and vermillion urns (Fig. 3). None of these details appears in *To Burlington*, however. Nor can size alone have been Pope's objection since Lord Bathurst, paragon of gardeners in the poem, himself practiced "forestry" on one of the largest estates in England.⁵ Overall, Cannons may have helped to arouse Pope's suspicions about the growing fashion for pretentious estates, but specific resemblances between the Chandos property and Timon's Villa are elusive. Since Pope had no personal reason to dislike the Duke, I am surprised that no one before George Sherburn ever questioned the identification.

As an alternative to Cannons, Kathleen Mahaffey in 1967 proposed

⁵ The details at Cannons come from Miles Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening*, 2nd ed. (London, 1969), p. 165, and Kerry Downes, *English Baroque Architecture* (London, 1966), p. 88; for a description of Bathurst's estate, see Christopher Hussey, "Cirencester House—II. The Park," *Country Life*, CVII (1950), 1880–4.

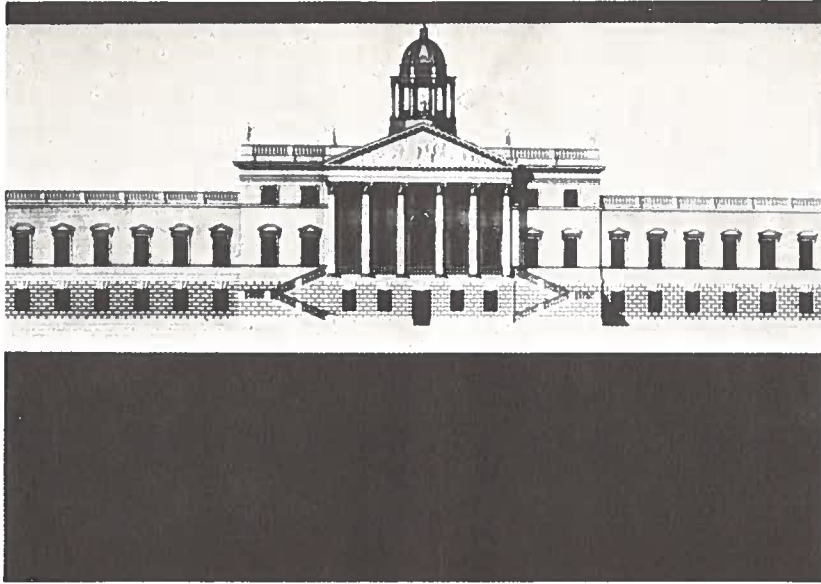


Fig. 2. Wanstead House, Essex, designed by Colin Campbell, in vol. I of *Vitruvius Britannicus* (London, 1715), pls. 24–5, reproduced in Christopher Hussey, *Early Georgian 1715–1760*, 2nd ed., *English Country Houses*, (London, 1965), pl. 2.

that Houghton, Robert Walpole's estate in Norfolk, was Pope's model for the setting of Timon's Villa and, furthermore, that Pope intended Timon to be "clearly recognizable" as Walpole (p. 195). Two years later, in *The Garden and the City*, Maynard Mack went on to suggest that *To Burlington* was an opening "skirmish" in Pope's war with Walpole during the 1730s (p. 126). Politically convenient as this view of the poem is, the evidence that Pope meant Timon to suggest Walpole instead of Chandos will not stand much scrutiny.

Professor Mahaffey proposes, for example, that Pope's line about gladiators who "fight, or die, in flow'rs" (1.124) is a deliberately veiled but still recognizable reference to Walpole's victorious bronze gladiator in the staircase at Houghton (Fig. 4). Pope supposedly heard of this statue from acquaintances, changed its pose from victorious to dying, moved it from the staircase to the garden, and changed the medium from bronze to flowers—all in order to make the satire of Walpole less direct (pp. 207–8). I think this sequence of

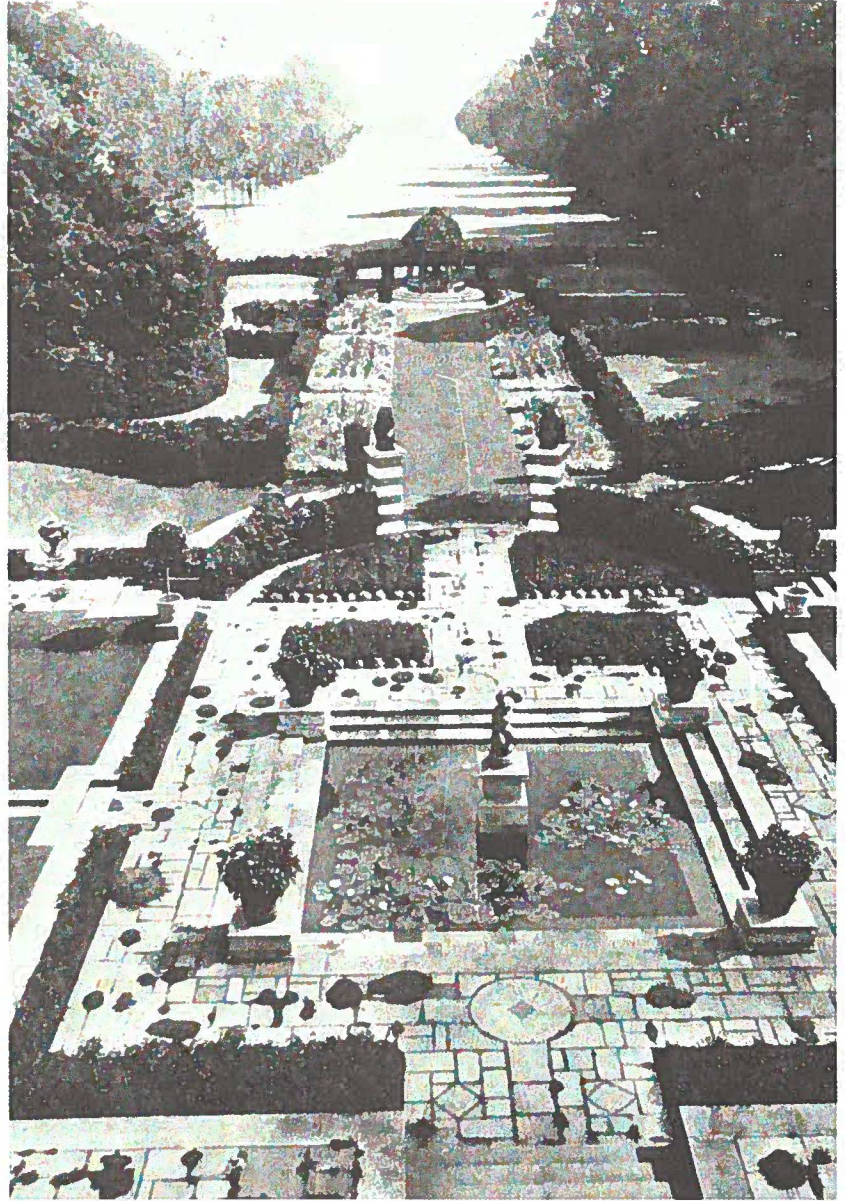


Fig. 3. Cannons Park, designed by Alexander Blackwell, in H. Avray Tipping, *English Gardens* (London, 1925), pl. 119.



Fig. 4. Walpole's Houghton, Norfolk, gladiator by John of Boulogne, in Christopher Hussey, *Early Georgian, 1715–1760*, 2nd ed., *English Country Houses* (London, 1962), pl. 107.

imaginative events is improbable and that the detail is not identifiable as one from Houghton. More likely, some first-hand experience found its way into Pope's poem—perhaps his visit to Rousham in 1728, when he would have seen General Dormer's statue of the *Gladiator Moriens* (Fig. 5).⁶ Of course, Timon's statue probably has less to do with any one place than with the idea of indecorum; like Horace's example in *Ars Poetica* of an unsuccessful painting, whose artist places dolphins in the trees, Timon's gladiator in a flower bed reveals a lack of the artistic judgment that should have harmonized sight and sense.

Other supposed parallels between Timon's Villa and Walpole's Houghton are troublesome in different ways. One is anachronistic. The ostentatious feasts at Houghton for the Duke of Lorraine in November 1731 may have been "almost legendary" when *To Burlington* was published, but they occurred more than six months after the poem had been composed.⁷ Other details simply do not correspond at all. At Timon's Villa, writes Pope, "on ev'ry side you look behold the Wall!" (1.114). Yet two 1731 descriptions by Sir Thomas Robinson of the garden at Houghton praise the use there of a ha-ha, which he calls a "fossé," to sink the brick wall between the garden and the park out of view.⁸ Details which were presented at Houghton and which might have served Pope in making Timon a "clearly recognizable" stand-in for Walpole do not appear in the poem. For Professor Mahaffey the notorious "Norfolk Lanthorn," a copper-gilt lamp in the salon, "symbolizes 'envious show'" at Houghton (p. 200), but Pope's failure to mention such a notorious fixture in *To Burlington* seems to me evidence against, rather than for, seeing Timon's Villa as Walpole's Houghton.

Perhaps the strongest piece of evidence for the connection is Pope's reference to Walpole's architect Thomas Ripley, in the sketch of Sir Visto:

What Brought Sir Visto's ill got wealth to waste?
Some Daemon whisper'd, 'Visto! have a Taste.'
Heav'n visits with a Taste the wealthy fool,
And needs no Rod but Ripley with a Rule.
(15–18)

⁶ Alexander Pope, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn (Oxford, 1956), II, 513. Hereafter *Corr.*

⁷ Mahaffey's phrase, p. 201; Pope enclosed a pre-publication copy of his *Epistle to Burlington* in a 4 April 1731 letter to Burlington, *Corr.*, III, 187.

⁸ *The Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle, Preserved at Castle Howard*, rep. 15, app., pt. 6, HMSC (London, 1897), pp. 85, 87.



Fig. 5. Dormer's Rousham, dying gladiator, by Scheemaker, in Christopher Hussey, *English Gardens and Landscapes 1700–1750* (New York, 1967), pl. 217.

Although Bateson does discuss other possible identifications for Sir Visto and points out that Pope did not believe Sir Robert to be a "fool," Ripley worked for only one wealthy patron, at Houghton from 1722–30.⁹ The lines clearly glance at Walpole; however, I have reservations about their relation to the sketch of Timon. First, Sir Visto is not Timon. The usual way around this problem is to view the sketch of Sir Visto as a set-up that identifies Walpole as the poem's real subject. But if Sir Visto indeed prepares the way for Timon, then other characters like Villario or Sabinus' son seem curiously without a function in the poem. Even more curious, I think, if Pope dared to identify Walpole so openly in an early passage of the poem, then why couldn't he as easily have made Timon's Villa more distinctly identifiable as Houghton?

There is another line of reasoning that fails to convince me that

⁹ For details of Ripley's career, see H. M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of English Architects, 1660–1840* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 502–4.

Pope is going after Walpole by means of Houghton. Professor Mahaffey argues that Pope's mention of Ripley reminds us how tastelessly he had blundered at Houghton in modifying Colin Campbell's 1721 design (Figs. 6,7). She cites Christopher Hussey's *English Country Houses*:

"As conceived, Campbell's design possessed architectural dignity and restrained cogency. The triangular silhouettes of the pavilions echoed the angle of the eastern steps, and was not so emphatic as to set up an unresolved duality in a design in which the centre was not stressed. The substitution of the domes destroyed this balance, and their proportions, lacking a drum, are clumsy."

(p. 204)

There are several problems with this evidence. First, Ripley was not responsible for the domes, and Pope's contemporaries knew it. Both Horace Walpole and Lord Hervey believed that the idea of changing Campbell's pavilions into domes was Sir Robert's. The subsequent designer of the domes was James Gibbs, Pope's own architectural consultant. A different kind of problem involves citing a twentieth-century view of the domes; Hussey's disapproval apparently does not reflect the general opinion of Pope's time. Henry Fielding, for example, refers to Houghton's domes without any particular disparagement in his 1730 poem *To Sir Robert Walpole*. Pope's friend Edward Harley, Second Earl of Oxford, visited Houghton in 1732, and, although he disliked the house generally, he believed that Gibbs' domes mended what had been a design "blunder" by "that ignorant rascal . . . Colin Campbell."¹⁰

Why, then, does Pope name Ripley? His work at Houghton provides a convenient target, but Pope's deeper irritation with Ripley has its source elsewhere. A note to the "death-bed" edition of the poem emphasizes Ripley's official relations with Walpole:

¹⁰ Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England: With Some Account of the Principal Artists* (London, 1786), III, 237; Lord Hervey and His Friends, ed. Earl of Ilchester (London, 1950), p. 71; on Gibbs, see A. E. Richardson, *An Introduction to Georgian Architecture* (London, 1949), p. 42, and Paul Breman and Denise Addis, *Guide to Vitruvius Britannicus*, vol. IV of *Vitruvius Britannicus, or the British Architect* (New York, 1972), p. 17; Fielding, "To the Right Honorable Sir Robert Walpole, (Now Earl of Orford) Written in the Year 1730," in *Miscellanies by Henry Fielding, Esq; Volume One*, ed. Henry Knight Miller, *The Wesleyan Edition of the Works of Henry Fielding* (Oxford, 1972), p. 57, ll. 21-4; for Oxford's remarks, see *Report on the Manuscripts of his Grace the Duke of Portland*, J. G., *Preserved at Welbeck Abbey*, vol. 15, pt. 24, HMSC (London, 1901), VI, 160.

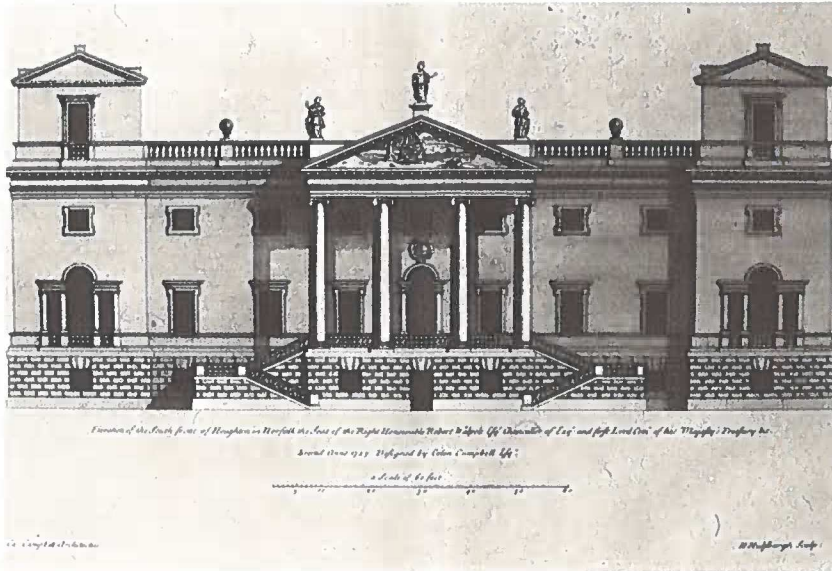


Fig. 6. Walpole's Houghton, planned elevation of garden front, by Colin Campbell, in vol. III of *Vitruvius Britannicus* (London, 1725), pl. 33.

This man was a carpenter, employ'd by a first Minister, who rais'd him to an Architect, without any genius in the art; and after some wretched proofs of his insufficiency in public Buildings, made him Comptroller of the Board of Works.

(1. 18n)

Pope had not seen Houghton, but he undoubtedly had seen Ripley's first "public building," the London Admiralty (Fig. 8). Even Horace Walpole admitted that the Admiralty was "a most ugly edifice." The facade is lost in the depths between the wings, and the portico is so disproportionately large that it seems to cover the whole front. Ripley failed to "be whate'er Vitruvius was before" (1. 194) when he selected the Ionic order, which, according to Vitruvius, conveys "the delicacy, adornment, and proportions characteristic of women." I suspect that Vitruvius would have adorned a naval headquarters with masculine, Doric columns in order to suggest the presence of martial force and austerity. The basic ratios of Ripley's Ionic columns are not even "correct"—more than ten diameters high instead of the eight or nine Vi-

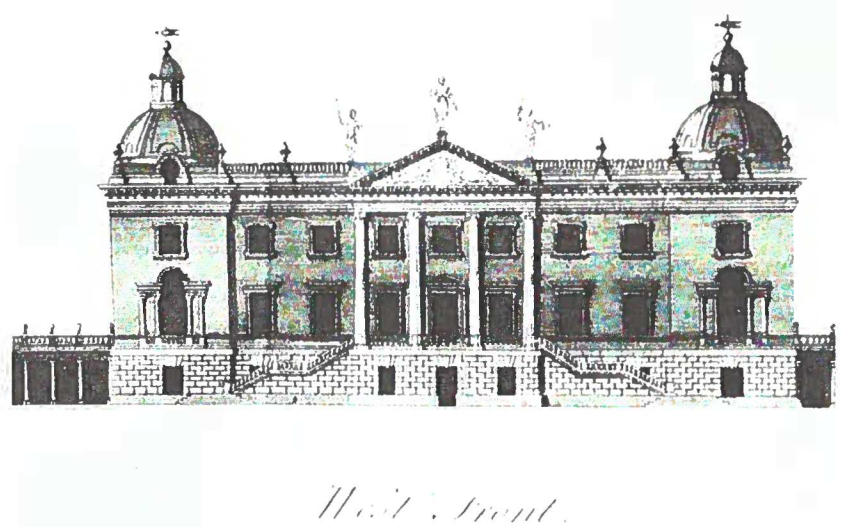


Fig. 7. Walpole's Houghton, as modified and executed by Ripley and Gibbs, in Horace Walpole, "A Description of Houghton-Hall," *The Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford* (London, 1798), II, opp. p. 237.

truvius prescribes. The resulting proportions make the portico appear top-heavy, a situation made worse by the way its pediment projects above the roof. A screen across the front, erected in 1760 by Robert Adam, serves to hide the worst of the architecture from passers-by, but the oversize chimneys—a feature always played down by Palladians—cannot be disguised.¹¹ Despite Ripley's appearance as a builder of private houses in the sketch of *Sir Visto*, Pope's main worry seems to have been that Walpole had elevated Ripley to a public position, where he could do real harm to the nation. In one important sense, *To Burlington*, is a poem about public architecture: private monuments such as Timon's Villa consume England's architectural energies, which Pope calls on Burlington at the end of the poem to redirect into the building of "Imperial Works, and worthy Kings" (l. 204).

¹¹ Walpole, III, p. 49; Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hickey Morgan (Cambridge, 1914; rpt. New York, 1960), p. 104; on chimneys, see Christopher Hussey, *Early Georgian 1715–1760*, 2nd ed., *English Country Houses* (London, 1965), p. 16.



Fig. 8. Ripley's Admiralty, with screen by Robert Adam, in Reginald Blomfield, *A History of Renaissance Architecture in England 1500–1800* (London, 1897), II, facing p. 222.

Morris Brownell senses some problems with seeing Timon's Villa as Walpole's Houghton, but his solution does not go far enough beyond the single-model theory. In a factual appendix to *Pope and the Arts of Georgian England*, he observes that Marlborough's "Blenheim conforms far more closely than Houghton" to Timon's Villa (p. 309, Fig. 9). True, and there is documentary evidence for this view. In a letter after his 1717 visit, Pope refers to Blenheim as "the highest and most extravagant heap of towers in the universe" (*Corr*, I, 482). In another letter he comments, "I never saw so great a thing with so much littleness in it" (*Corr*, I, 432). Fourteen years later, in his *Epistle to Burlington*, Pope combines the words "heap" and "littleness" to form a witty and uniquely personal paradox that conveys the small value of Timon's large undertaking, in this couplet:

Lo, what huge heaps of littleness around!
The whole, a labour'd Quarry above ground.
(109–10)



Fig. 9. Marlborough's Blenheim, by Vanbrugh, in David Greene, *Blenheim Palace* (London, 1951), fig. 108.

Later in the second letter, Pope endorses the Duke of Shrewsbury's remark that Blenheim is "a great *Quarry of Stones above ground*" (*Corr*, I, 432). Although this phrase was at the time a well-known observation about the extravagant waste at Blenheim, Pope's combination of that quarry image with the preceding paradox of heaped littleness is proof that, in this couplet at any rate, Pope is thinking of Blenheim.¹² Professor Brownell notes the last two instances of parallel wording (p. 310), but he does not point out that the phrasing, unique to Pope and exclusive to Blenheim, is the kind of evidence of Pope's conscious use of a particular model that advocates of the Walpole interpretation never provide for Houghton. After contrasting Walpole's spendthrift instincts with Marlborough's parsimony, Brownell proposes this synthesis:

Pope's question remains: 'Why, in God's Name, must a *Portrait*, apparently collected from twenty different Men, be applied to one only?' (iii.256). The

¹² On Blenheim's waste of stone, see David Green, *Blenheim Palace* (London, 1951), p. 187.

answer appears to be that [Pope] had two men primarily in mind. . . . Conflation of the character of [Walpole] and the house of [Marlborough] resulted in one of the most powerful portraits in his satire.

(p. 317)

I believe that Pope would have asked a follow-up question: "Why only two?" We limit the poem's meaning if we fail to ask about *all* the men whom Pope may have had in mind for any of his couplets. His knowledge of Blenheim and of Walpole may have helped him create his poetic landscape, but Pope's method was more eclectic and his implied stance in *To Burlington* more broadly moral than these arguments have allowed.

Pope's lines about Timon's chapel, for example, have nothing to do with Walpole or Marlborough but do seem to involve moral judgments on the Dukes of Devonshire, as well as the more obvious disapproval of Baroque fashions in sacred architecture. The Devonshires' seat is Chatsworth, built in Derbyshire in the 1680s. Sir John Summerson has called Chatsworth "the first flaunting symbol in architecture of territorial Whiggery," and the chapel there, whose altar painting is by Antonio Verrio and whose wall and ceiling paintings are by Louis Laguerre, is the only one in England decorated by the two painters Pope immortalizes in his lines about Timon's chapel:

On painted Cielings you devoutly stare,
Where sprawl the Saints of Verrio or Laguerre.¹³
(145-6)

The Chatsworth chapel certainly has the kind of opulent decor that Pope is mocking in *To Burlington*, and there is some collateral evidence that Chatsworth helped to shape Pope's vision of Timon's chapel (Figs. 10, 11).

Although to our knowledge, his "rambles" to various estates in England never included Chatsworth, Pope apparently knew of the estate, for he refers to a pair of statues there when he describes Colley Cibber in "Ricardus Aristarchus of the Hero of the Poem," preliminary to *The Dunciad in Four Books*. Referring to Colley's grandfather, Caius Gabriel Cibber, Pope writes of Colley, "As to his *Birth*, it is true he pretendeth no relation either to Heathen God or Goddess; but

¹³ Summerson, p. 542; Verrio and Laguerre also worked together at Burghley House and at Hampton Court, according to E. Croft-Murray, *Decorative Painting in England, 1537-1837* (London, 1962), I, 62-3 and passim.

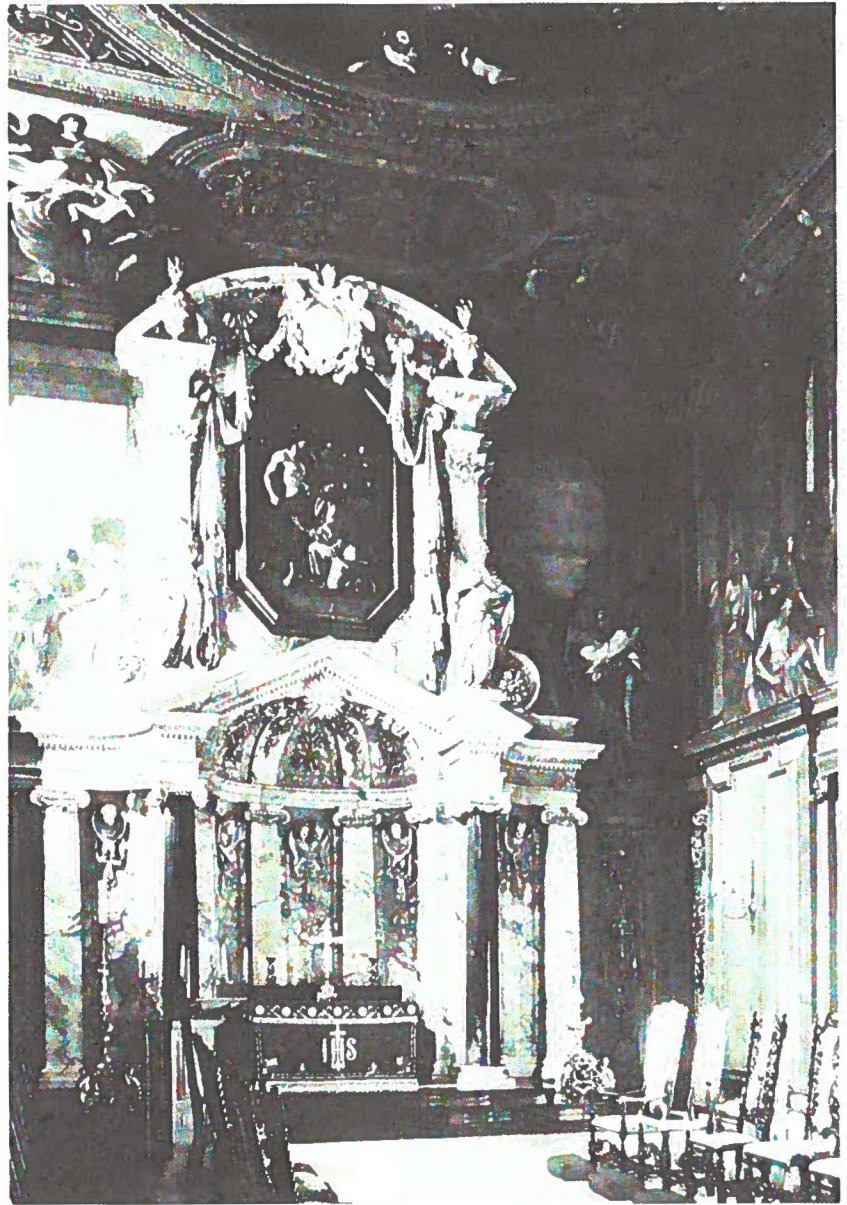


Fig. 10. Devonshire's Chatsworth, chapel interior, by Antonio Verrio, Louis Laguerre, Caius Gabriel Cibber, and Grinling Gibbons; in Olive Cook, *The English Country House* (London, 1974), pl. 14.



Fig. 11. Chatsworth, chapel ceiling, by Laguerre, in Kerry Downes, *English Baroque Architecture* (London, 1966), pl. 107.

what is as good, he was descended from a *Maker* of both" (TE, V, 263). Pope's note to this statement says, "A Statuary," which John Butt further identifies as "a Pallas and an Apollo for the first Duke of Devonshire," apparently the Lucrece and Apollo by Caius Gabriel Cibber which Francis Thompson locates in the great staircase. So Pope's remark indicates some familiarity with some details at Chatsworth. Pat Rogers points out that Pope could have read about Chatsworth in a 1724 description by William Stukely. Pope may also have heard Chatsworth described by William Kent, who visited there and sketched several projects for the garden. Even more likely, Pope learned about Chatsworth from Lord and Lady Burlington. Although Lord Burlington's ancestral lands were in Yorkshire, his wife owned the former Halifax estate in adjacent Derbyshire, which property included the parish of Eyam, only five miles from Chatsworth. Burlington very likely inspected her property at some time after their marriage in 1721, perhaps during one of his frequent trips to nearby Yorkshire, where he was Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding from 1715 to 1733. I cannot imagine that Burlington, with his architectural interests, could be within a few miles of Chatsworth and not visit it, the great house of a fellow minister during the early years of George I. In 1738, when Pope jokingly suggested that Lady Burlington appoint Kent to "The Presentation of Eyam," an ecclesiastical appointment which had just become vacant, he revealed a knowledge of the Burlington holdings there that must have come from private conversation. Nearby Chatsworth had probably been talked about as well.¹⁴

¹⁴ TE, V, 263n; Thompson, *Chatsworth* (London, 1951), pp. xvi, 28, 124; Rogers, pp. 63–4; for assurance of Kent's presence at Chatsworth, I am grateful to T. S. Wragg, librarian and keeper of the Devonshire Collections at Chatsworth, letter of 28 September 1978; for Burlington's ancestral home of Londesborough Hall and his visits, see James Lees-Milne, "Lord Burlington in Yorkshire," *Architectural Review*, CXCVIII (1945), 11–15, 19; for a description of Eyam as "a small parish on [Halifax's] Derbyshire estate," see H. C. Foxcroft, *A Character of the Trimmer: Being a Short Life of the First Marquis of Halifax* (Cambridge, 1946), p. 18; for Lady Burlington, née Dorothy Savile, as co-heiress of William Savile, 2nd Marquis of Halifax (d. 1700), see G. E. Cokayne et al., ed., *The Complete Peerage of England Scotland Ireland Great Britain and the United Kingdom* (London, 1910–59), VI, s.v. "Halifax" and DNB, s.v. "Boyle"; for evidence that she inherited this particular property (and that Pope knew of it) see *Corr*, IV, 140 and 196, which refer to her authority to grant the "Benefice of Eyam"; for Burlington's Lieutenantship and the date of his marriage see Lees-Milne, *Earls of Creation* (London, 1962), pp. 105, 130; for the political contiguity see Lees-Milne, *Earls of Creation*, pp. 104–5, where Burlington is described in 1714 as having been prematurely appointed (but not sworn) a Privy Councillor and in 1715 as having been Lord Treasurer of Ireland, Vice Admiral of the County of York, and Lord Lieutenant of the East and West Ridings (two-thirds of Yorkshire),

There is an additional reason to think that Pope had Chatsworth's chapel and the Devonshires in mind, and the failure of this evidence to fit any of the previous theories of Timon's identity probably accounts for its having been overlooked. Attempts to locate Timon's Villa have ordinarily included speculation about the identity of his chaplain:

To rest, the Cushion and soft Dean invite,
Who never mentions Hell to ears polite.
(149-50)

Professor Mahaffey nominates Walpole's friend and clergyman William Bland for his last name (p. 211), but more than "blandness" seems to be at issue when a clergyman pampers his listeners because they are "polite." Professor Brownell suggests that Marlborough's Dean Barzillai Jones had "rubicund and portly" features (p. 383), but a physiognomic identification would rob "soft" of all its moral force. Bateson's note to the *Twickenham Edition* identifies Timon's Dean as Knightly Chetwood, Dean of Gloucester and chaplain to James II. Bateson's explanation is reasonable but not wholly satisfactory, for it requires him to dismiss as erroneous Pope's own note describing the Dean to be "of Peterborough," which Chetwood was not. I suspect Pope also was thinking about White Kennett, appointed Dean of Peterborough in 1708 by the Second Duke of Devonshire, owner of Chatsworth. Indeed, we limit the meaning of the couplet if we do not recognize that Timon's "soft Dean," like Timon himself, is a composite figure.

White Kennett achieved notoriety with his sermon of 5 September 1707, upon the death of William Cavendish, First Duke of Devonshire. Kennett's funeral sermon ignored the obvious sins of the Duke, and seemed to imply that deathbed repentances by men of quality were apt to be more effectual than those of the lesser born. Kennett closed with a eulogy of the new Duke—who appointed him to the Deanery of Peterborough less than six months later.¹⁵

and Basil Williams and George Clark, *The Whig Supremacy 1714-1760*, 2nd ed., vol. XI of *The Oxford History of England* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 168, 470, where William Cavendish (d. 1729), Second Duke of Devonshire and owner of Chatsworth, is described as Lord President of the Council from July 1716 to April 1717.

¹⁵ DNB, s.v. "Kennett, White"; White Kennett, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Right Noble William Duke of Devonshire, in the church of All-Hallows in Derby, on Friday, September 5th, MDCCVII, with some Memoirs of the Family of Cavendish* (London, 1708); on

Pope knew the story well and alluded to it often. As early as 1711, in *An Essay on Criticism*, Pope wrote lines which his contemporary John Jortin identified as a reference to Kennett:

Then Unbelieving Priests reform'd the Nation,
And taught more *Pleasant* Methods of Salvation;
Where Heav'ns Free Subjects might their *Rights* dispute,
Lest God himself shou'd seem too *Absolute*.
Pulpits their *Sacred Satire* learn'd to spare,
And Vice *admir'd* to find a *Flatt'rer* there!¹⁶
(546–51)

Pope's 1737 lines "On a Picture of Queen Caroline, drawn by Lady Burlington," also seems to refer to Kennett, who was promoted from Dean to Bishop in 1718:

Alas! what room for Flattery, or for Pride!
She's dead—but thus she look'd the hour she dy'd,
Peace, blubbring Bishop! peace thou flattering Dean!
This single Crayon, Madam, saints the Queen.
(TE, VI, 390)

In the *Second Epistle of the Second Book of Horace*, Pope directs his scorn less at the clergyman than at his patron:

When servile Chaplains cry, that Birth and Place
Indue a Peer with Honour, Truth, and Grace,
Look in that Breast, most dirty Duke! be fair,
Say, can you find out one such Lodger there?
Yet still, not heeding what your Heart can teach,
You go to Church to hear these Flatt'ers preach.
(220–5)

Thirty years after the Kennett incident, Pope seems to be combining the sinful traits of the First Duke of Devonshire with the susceptibility to flattery demonstrated by the Second, in order to make a poetic composite, a "most dirty Duke."

What surprises me is that no one, including Bateson, seems aware of Kennett's resemblance to Timon's "soft Dean." Originally, Pope's

the popular interpretation see E. Audra and Aubrey Williams, eds., *An Essay on Criticism*, TE, I, 302, 547n.

¹⁶ Jortin's *Tracts, Philological, Critical, and Miscellaneous*, 1790, II, 523 is cited in TE, I, 301–3, ll. 546n, 547n, and 550–1n.

couplet about the Dean had no footnote. When the poem began to be misread as an attack on the Duke of Chandos, Pope sent a letter in January 1731/2 to *The Daily Journal*, where he asked several questions meant to show differences between the Chandos estate and Timon's villa. One question was, "Did ever Dean Chetwood preach his Courtly Sermons there?" (*Corr*, III, 257). The answer, of course, was "no", but Pope implies that he had in mind Knightly Chetwood, Anglican chaplain to James II. Pope reinforced his interpretation but simultaneously introduced a complication in 1735 when he subtended the following footnote to the third edition of his collected *Works*:

This is a fact; a reverend Dean of Peterborough preaching at Court, threatened the sinner with punishment in "a place which he thought it not decent to name in so polite an assembly."

(1.150n)

A similar description by Richard Steel had appeared in *The Guardian* for 31 March 1713:

I remember about thirty years ago an eminent divine, who was almost exactly well bred, told his congregation at Whitehall, that if they did not vouchsafe to give their lives a new turn, they must certainly go to a place which he did not think fit to name in that courtly audience.

The clergyman was Chetwood, and the description tallies so well with Pope's note and letter that Bateson at first might seem unduly cautious to have written that Timon's "soft dean" is "presumably identical with the 'eminent divine' mentioned by Steele." But Chetwood was not a Dean "of Peterborough." Bateson's doubts seem to originate there, for he mentions that Chetwood was Dean of Gloucester, not Peterborough, as Pope seems at one time to have imagined (1. 150n). How Pope might have "imagined" what he did is worth considering.

Although Pope dropped the problematical phrase from editions after 1735, perhaps when someone pointed out the factual inconsistency, he may not have been merely confused. I can offer another explanation, one that allows Pope to have been aware that the Kennett and the Chetwood stories were separate but capable of being manipulated in ways that affect the moral charge of his lines on Timon's chaplain. When Pope composed the poem in 1731, he was interested in both Kennett and Chetwood as manifestations of ecclesiastical flabbiness in a poem whose satiric intent, I believe, was

broad. When Pope wrote to *The Daily Journal* shortly after the poem had appeared, however, he emphasized Chetwood's too-accommodating sermons, perhaps in order to focus attention on Timon's Dean rather than on Timon, his patron. The Kennett story glanced at the Duke of Devonshire, after all, and Pope was trying at that time to remove the sting of his satire from the Duke of Chandos. By mid-decade, however, Pope's attitude had changed. Misreading of his 1731 poem had taught him the risks of broad satire, so that he was now more willing to implicate a specific duke. His 1735 footnote referring to the "Dean of Peterborough," like the "dirty Duke" lines in 1737, identifies Timon's Dean as Kennett instead of Chetwood and thereby focuses attention not only on the chaplain but also on his patron, the second Duke of Devonshire, who had awarded the benefice to Kennett for his sacred praise of the undeserving First Duke. By 1735, too, Pope had new reasons to associate the name Devonshire with social ills. In 1733 the Third Duke of Devonshire had replaced Chesterfield as Lord Steward of the Household during the political crisis which had led Pope's friends, Burlington and Cobham, to resign from the Walpole administration. In this indirect way, then, Pope may have redirected the satire in his versatile lines on Timon's Dean by adding the phrase "of Peterborough" to his 1735 footnote in order to glance at Walpole by reviving an unsavory story about the ancestry of one of his appointees.¹⁷ White Kennett provides a perfect vehicle for such a satiric glance, too, for as a historian as well as a clergyman, he was something of a spokesman for Whig culture. Kennett's vehement condemnation of Charles II and James II in his volume of the 1703 *Complete History of England* made Kennett known in Pope's lifetime as a Whig apologist, and the poetic details about Timon's Dean "of Peterborough" helped to associate Timon with the version of politics and culture that Pope was increasingly disillusioned with in the 1730s.

When Pope wrote *To Burlington*, however, he was not yet preoccupied with politics. Like the couplet about Timon's chaplain—which seems to originate in an Addison essay, a story about White Kennett and a Baroque chapel—other lines in the poem grow out of concerns

¹⁷ For Devonshire, see *TE*, IV, Biog. App., s.v. "Cavendish"; for Burlington, see James Lees-Milne, *Earls of Creation*, p. 105; for the possibility that this political motive also lay behind Pope's later (1737) lines on the "Dirty Duke," see Pattison's edition of *The Second Epistle of the Second Book of Horace*, cited by John Butt, ed., *TE*, IV, l. 220n.

quite remote from Walpole and Marlborough. Near the beginning of the lines on Timon's Villa, Pope writes:

Greatness, with Timon, dwells in such a draught
As brings all Brobdignag before your thought.
(103-4)

The comparison of Timon, dwarfed by his landscape, to Gulliver in Brobdignag, almost certainly has its basis in Pope's experiences, not at some "enemy's" estate but at Cirencester Park and Oakley Wood, the five-mile long estate of Lord Bathurst, Pope's good friend and upholder of the gardening norm in *To Burlington* (Fig. 12). In a 1730 letter to Pope, Bathurst describes how the scale of Oakley Wood could reduce Pope's villa to the relative size of a child's playhouse (*Corr*, III, 134). After the poem had appeared, Pope and Bathurst apparently joked about the similarity between Cirencester Park and Timon's Villa, for Bathurst alludes to Pope's poem in a 1732 letter, where he describes his park as "a pretty little plain work in the Brobdignag style" (*Corr*, III, 300). In contrast to these good-humored references, however, reads this intriguing opening of a 1735 letter from Swift to Bathurst:

What have I to do with a letter from Cirencester where Mr. Pope, poor John Gay, and I were forced to lodge at one of your farms & walk two miles to dinner with your 2500 acres of garden and not a codling to eat.¹⁸

The incident must have occurred in 1726 or 1727, during one of Swift's visits, and the incident undoubtedly lodged itself firmly in the memory of Pope, with his frail physique. In 1731, when Pope was composing his description of an exhausting walk through Timon's garden, where you "thro' the length of yon hot Terrace sweat" and "up ten steep slopes you've dragg'd your thighs," he surely was thinking of his own hike across Bathurst's estate several years before.

The more I look into Pope's possible sources for Timon's Villa, the more conscious I become that probably every couplet originates in several of Pope's experiences. The diversity of these experiences suggests that Pope was not restricting his imagination to details of some one person or estate in order to produce a picture his readers would be able to recognize as his satiric target. Unlike some of his later, more specific satires, Pope wrote *To Burlington* as a broad attack

¹⁸ *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford, 1965), IV, 409.



Fig. 12. Lord Bathurst's Cirencester Park House, Oakley Wood, and the "Broad Ride," in James Lees-Milne, *Earls of Creation* (London, 1962), opp. p. 33.

on bad taste; evidently, he composed in the manner of Swift's bee, ranging from garden to garden gathering images for the composite picture he would call "Timon's Villa." In order to appreciate the full meaning of that picture, we should resist the scholar's temptation to be too exclusive or too systematic, and read the poem with awareness that each couplet may require a synoptic vision of diverse images and attitudes.

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