

Roycean Loyalty In William Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*

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Abstract

The study focuses on the master-servant relationship shared by the Steward and Timon in Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* (1605). The paper begins with a brief overview on the notion of loyalty and moves towards reviewing some master-servant relationships found in Shakespeare's plays. While most studies highlight the comical nature and bearings of the servant class, the study centers its analysis on the serious nature of loyalty displayed by the Steward towards Timon. The social establishment pertaining to the practice of loyalty within the Elizabethan servant class is also presented. Following the literature review on the Steward is an account which explains Josiah Royce's concepts of loyalty forwarded in his work *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (1908). The discussion of the study highlights the Steward's loyalty in truth speaking, minimizing conflicts and idealizing the lost cause which enhances his self-will and forgoes his self-gratification. The paper concludes with an emphasis on the eminent role and nobility of the Steward in serving his master, Timon. Through the instances and extent of loyalty examined, the study aims to instigate new textual interpretations in the area of master-servant relationships within Shakespeare's playtexts.

Keywords: Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*, the Steward, loyalty, Josiah Royce.

Introduction

'Loyalty' signifies a devotion to a voluntarily selected object, cause or person. In modern practice, the authenticity and motives of a person's loyalty are usually questioned. Despite the multiplicity of its meanings, the paper adopts Royce's (1971) definition of loyalty as "the willing and practical and thoroughgoing devotion of a person to a cause" (p.152), involving "some element of free choice" (p.110).

In his book, *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (1908)¹, Royce (1971) stated that loyalty "is the fulfillment of the whole moral law [...] Justice, charity, industry, wisdom, spirituality, are all definable in terms of enlightened loyalty" (p.15-16). Furthermore, genuine loyalty

¹The paper quotes from the book's reprinted 1971 version.

makes a harmonious community which maximizes the collective benefit of its members. Wolfe (1997) maintained that

[L]oyalty is an important virtue because honoring it establishes that there is something in the world more important than our immediate instincts and desires. When we are loyal, we stay put, determined to fight for improvements in the situation we are in rather than leave it for some imagined alternative (p. 46).

In applying Royce's theory to Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, Manley (2011) applauded its "originality in [the] review of the existing scholarship on servants and service in Shakespeare"². The study aims to encourage new textual interpretations of Shakespearean dramas through Royce's philosophy.

Shakespeare's Servants

The first known person who studied Shakespearean characters was Maurice Morgann,

"a political pamphleteer and one-time Under-Secretary of State [in] the first sustained attempt to discover in Shakespeare's writings more than meets the eye, to insist on relating any one verbal statement to the 'impression' of a character in action" (Brown 1990, p.18).

As discussions of his dramatic characters increase, Shakespeare became established as one of the greatest Renaissance playwrights. Weinstock (1971) praised Shakespeare's characters, particularly the "loyal servants [who] embody charity, humanity, humbleness, independence, love of justice, moral courage, self-denial, and wisdom" (p.448).

When interest in Shakespearean servants escalated, Richardson (2007) noted how "domestic servants in the past are rapidly capturing the popular imagination" (p.96). In his essay³, Schalkwyk highlighted the inter-dependency of the master-servant relationship found in *The Taming of the Shrew*, commenting particularly on the "the potentially subversive trading of places which master and servant Lucentio and Tranio engage in and compares it with the way in which the rebellion of the 'upstart' servant Grumio is quickly defused by rendering him little more than a clown" (Richardson 2007, p. 99). For Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Burnett (Richardson, 2007) observed how Cordelia and Kent "quickly fall from grace at the start of the play" (p. 99) while other servants such as Oswald and Cornwall's unnamed servant displayed questionable motives.

Anderson in her book opposed sympathy towards the deaths of Oswald and Iago (*Othello*). She also showed how Juliet's nurse "appears at times to tyrannise her employers" (Anderson 2005, as cited in Richardson 2007, p.101). Nevertheless,

²External examiner, Professor Lawrence Manley's report (February 2011) for the M.A thesis of Florence Toh Haw Ching.

³ Schalkwyk's essay is part of a collection of essays from Volume 5 of *The Shakespearean International Yearbook* (2005) focusing on the bonds of service in Shakespearean dramas.

Anderson goes on to defend the important presence of dramatic servants, suggesting how they “astutely see through their masters and social betters and bluntly expose their failings” (Richardson 2007, p.101). The absence of servants thus cripples the masters’ power-play; “[a] servant-less Lear and an unattended Hamlet [...] share a growing isolation [while] Antony and Cleopatra [appear] as [...] two Shakespearean characters most dependent on servants and most exposed to the effects of servant desertions” (Richardson 2007, p.101). The only servant character that Anderson (as cited in Richardson, 2007) praised was Shakespeare’s Old Adam (*As You Like It*), to whom she credited “loyalty [as] second nature” (p. 101).

Weil’s *Service and Dependency in Shakespeare’s Plays* (2005) also examines the dynamics of servitude in Shakespeare’s plays. In *Hamlet*, the protagonist preferred Horatio’s independence over his loyal servants Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *Winter’s Tale* and *Othello*, Weil observed how the servants were drawn into the strained relationships of their master(s) and mistress(es). She also analyzed Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* in which the servants exploited Hal’s ascension to the throne. Contrary to Anderson’s focus on the masters, Weil concentrated on the servants’ loss of identity without their master(s), as exemplified by Enobarbus (*Antony and Cleopatra*) when he deserted Antony.

The literature review thus far suggests that much more remains to be said on Shakespeare’s masters and servants. Anderson acknowledged that “while modern critics have paid some attention to rebellious and resistant servants in Shakespearean plays, they have been generally ‘oblivious’ to virtuous or obedient servant-characters” (Anderson 2005; as cited in Dowd 2006, p. 644). Robbins (1993) posited that servant characters are less intriguing because they were “forced into the mold of character” (p.34). In Anderson’s (2005) view, readers who neglect Shakespeare’s good servants impose “limitations on the texts and thereby limiting [their] understanding of what these texts can tell [them]” (p. 29). Likewise, Weil (2005) maintained that “[b]ecause they function as mediators, servants often participate in crucial dramatic sequences” (p.10). Therefore, treating their actions as secondary dismisses “the full significance of their interventions” (Weil 2005, p.10). After all, “servant characters are ubiquitously present without exception in all thirty seven of Shakespeare’s play, the only single social group to be so represented” (Richardson 2007, p.100-101).

While most discussions focus on the comical bearings of Shakespeare’s servant characters, this paper centers on the serious nature of loyalty portrayed through the Steward’s treatment of his master, Timon. Echoing McMahan, Funk and Day (1988), “as you analyze characters, consider their *motivation*, their response for doing the things they do [to] fully appreciate the story” (p.17-18, italics original). In Oppenheim’s (2005) words, “our task, then, will be to discover what makes loyalty genuine, as opposed to the many forms of false loyalty” (p. 48). For Brown (1990), studying Shakespearean characters helps readers to “apprehend the action and some of the personages of each [selected drama] with a somewhat greater truth and intensity” (p. 23). Anderson (2005) believed that “virtuous servants can be used, and often are used by Shakespeare, to comment upon misbehaving upper-class characters, who are shown to be inferior in true

nobility to those who serve them” (p. 27). The analysis of the loyalty displayed in the master-servant relationship within *Timon of Athens* is further strengthened through the following account on the establishment of loyalty during the Elizabethan period.

Servitude and Loyalty in the Elizabethan Society

Elizabethan society was divided into four major hierarchical levels with the highest position occupied by the ruling class, “those whom their race and blood or at least their virtues do make them noble and known” (Kinney 1999, p. 3). At the bottom of the social ladder sat the commoners; day labourers, poor husbandmen, artificers and servants. Labourers were further distinguished into those who “‘lived out’ and were hired in casual fashion, whereas servants ‘lived in’ as part of the master’s household and serve by the year” (Burnett 1997, p. 3).

In record, “the whole of Renaissance society [was] implicated in ‘service’ of some sort” (Hopkins & Steggle 2006, p.48) involving “various forms of dependency” (Weil 2005, p.1). Nevertheless, the identity of a ‘servant’ “was far from universally agreed or established” (Burnett 1997, p. 2). When the English introduced the Statute of Artificers in 1563, a ‘servant’ was defined through “[t]he receipt of a wage” (Burnett 1997, p.2). Among the servants of the upper class, this could be “in the form of land or political privileges” (Burnett 1997, p. 3). While it is not known whether the Steward in *Timon of Athens* was bound by any contracts or rewards, these definitions hint at the character’s position and responsibilities in Timon’s household.

According to Anderson (2005), the assumption that Shakespearean servants reflect Elizabethan servants is “largely incorrect” (p. 10). Since the twelfth century, servants “were able to buy their freedom, and move to the growing towns” (Edgar & Sedgwick 2008, p. 126). When capitalism arrived, the feudal system lost its authority over the lives of the Elizabethan servants. The previously static social hierarchy became mobile as “fortunes [...] notoriously rose and fell, either through changes in a man’s wealth or through the crown’s ability to raise inferiors to higher places” (Elton 1985, p. 14). For Crosse, “domestic service [became] characterized not only by disloyalty but by vices which have alarming social repercussions” (Cross 1603; as cited in Burnett 1997, p. 87). These changes precipitated the declining state of loyalty affecting the lowest social class where “a clever servant could rule over his master” (Bradbrook 1980, p. 7).

Consequently, Renaissance plays began exhibiting a “determined preoccupation with matters of social rank [as] evidence both of the evolution of the social structure, and [how] this produced a tension between the emerging classes and the old aristocracy” (Barker & Hinds 2003, p.4). The increase of socio-political studies of the Elizabethan era paralleled the “recognition of the socially embedded nature of literary texts and of their relationship to other discursive practices” (Burnett 1997, p. 5). Dramatic characters involving “dishonest, unscrupulous and ambitious stewards, [became] staple ingredients of romances, religious treatises and the theatrical repertoire” (Burnett 1997, p. 155). For Riyad, Noraini and Ruzy (2011), this “occurs because many authors cannot disconnect

their writings from the political events that happen in their societies” (p.59). Servants who displayed commendable values in the public showed differing characteristics in private. Burnett (1997) wrote of “stewards who actively sought their employers’ economic downfall” (p. 164). The Elizabethan society involving the commoners seemed permeated by individualism and self-interest. Conversely, the Steward in *Timon of Athens* displayed genuine loyalty towards his master, Timon. As Weinstock (1971) asserted, “a normal sense of duty, in Elizabethan drama as elsewhere, requires constancy, courage, courtesy, diligence, faith, frankness, honesty, industriousness, intrepidity, loyalty and obedience” (p. 447). The following section provides a brief overview of the loyal Steward.

The Steward in *Timon of Athens*

In *Timon of Athens*, the Steward is the third most prominent character who occupied 8.6% of the play’s total lines (Hunt 2001, p. 507). According to Burnett (1997), servants of a noble household such as Timon’s were further divided into:

- i) The upper levels, gentlemen servants or chief officers comprising of the steward, chamberlain, comptroller, receiver, secretary and gentleman usher.
- ii) The lower levels or yeomen servants comprise of grooms, stable-hands, waiters, footmen and musicians.

Badawi (1981) asserted that the steward was “the head of the household [...] responsible for all financial matters, for the provisioning, the necessary repairs and the discipline of the staff” (p. 35).

For Dillon (2007) the Steward was more preferable than Timon as “the play’s clearest instance of unqualified nobility” (p. 102). Anderson (2005) recognized the servant as a character who remained “faithful to Timon in adversity” (p. 12). Jowett (2004) saw the Steward as a figure of integrity with “qualities of financial prudence” (p.80). The servant character’s concern towards Timon’s excessive lavishness is seen throughout the play. In scene 2, he was appalled at Timon’s philanthropy. In scene 9, the servant expressed his anxiety at Timon’s intention to throw a banquet despite their financial woes. Through these scenes, Burnett (1997) recognized the Steward as “the only character who spends constructively” (p. 163).

Levitsky (1978) also acknowledged the Steward as “the only person in the play who exhibit[ed] magnificence in the sense of both resisting temptation and enduring adversity admirably” (p. 119). Despite Timon’s bankruptcy, the Steward continued to call him “my dear lord” (9. 3) and “my lord” (9.5). In scene 14, Timon rejected the Steward and tried to bribe him into leaving. Yet, the loyal servant insisted on staying to serve his master. Jowett described this scene as “the residual possibility of real friendship at the point where money no longer matter[ed]” (Jowett 2004; as cited in Dillon 2007, p. 162). Compared to Timon’s insincere friends and visitors, the Steward was the only good man

in a corrupted society plagued with “ostentatious liberality which scatter[ed] bounty but confer[red] no benefits, and [bought] flattery but not friendship” (Wimsatt 1969, p. 128). For Ribner (1979), the Steward’s encounter with Timon marked a “crucial test in which a fallen Timon [was] offered the chance of redemption” (p. 148). In trying to reconcile Timon to humankind, the servant character became a personification of the Christian Messiah who came to redeem the fallen humanity. On another note, Chambers (as cited in Oliver, 1959) questioned the Steward’s presence within the play:

What [...] is the precise dramatic purpose served by the good steward...and his sentimentalities, which seem to give the lie to Timon’s wholesale condemnation of humanity, without any appreciable effect upon its direction or its force? (p. xv)

Despite that, the paper argues for the Steward as the only loyal servant who stood by his master and prioritized Timon’s well-being above himself throughout the play.

Although the play involves several master-servant relationships, only the relationship shared by the Steward and his master, Timon, will be analyzed. The study discusses examples in scenes 2, 4, 8, 9, 13 and 14 which showcase the servant’s loyalty towards his master. Prior to that, it is necessary to offer a brief overview of Royce’s concepts of loyalty.

Conceptual Theory

The study adopts Royce’s concepts of loyalty from *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (1908), “one of his best-known books” (Smith 1967, p. 8). Although philosophers displayed “historical interest in Royce’s work” (Levinson 1995, p. 608), his philosophy of loyalty “has recently begun to regain attention” (Garchar 2005, p. 147). Wolfe (1997) contended that “a society that neglects loyalty will either self-destruct or be unable to offer its members anything worth living – or dying for” (p. 46). Centralizing Royce’s philosophy of loyalty in the study thus responds to the moral decline of the Elizabethan society.

Royce’s philosophical influences were derived through his readings of German thinkers⁴. He purported the “ideas of harmony” (Roth 1982, p. 12) and “sense of community” (Roth 1982, p. 23), aiming to bring “maximum fulfillment to the individual and to the community as a whole” (Roth 1982, p. 22). Royce’s “essence of loyalty” (Schneider 1963, p.424) lies in the belief that “the well-being of one member is bound up with the well-being of every other member [where] the meaningfulness of human life in time depends on dedication to causes” (Roth 1982, p. 23). Practicing “loyalty [that is] good, not merely to [oneself] but to [hu]mankind” (Royce 1971, p. 121) balances the individual self with his surroundings. With this framework, the paper locates the Steward’s actions in exemplifying loyalty that benefits not only himself but his master, Timon.

⁴ Schelling, Schopenhauer, Fichte, Hegel and Kant.
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Notwithstanding Royce's many concepts of loyalty, only those that are relevant to the plays' selected scenes will be discussed. These encompass how the Steward's loyalty helped him to speak the truth, minimize conflicts, enhance his self-will, idealize the lost cause and forgo self-gratification. The Steward's portrayals of loyalty towards Timon are further discussed through the explications of Royce's concepts of loyalty.

The Steward's Portrayals of Loyalty

Loyalty in speaking the truth

Royce believed that truth speaking signifies loyalty to the social tie which binds the loyal person to his fellow men. For him one "can speak the truth to [his] fellow, and can thereby help him to a better confidence in [hu]mankind" (1971, p. 154). In *Timon of Athens*, the Steward strove to speak the truth to his master even when it angered Timon. In scene 2, Timon's lavishness was causing a financial distress in the household. Despite the servant's incessant warnings, Timon brushed him off:

STEWARD I beseech your honour, vouchsafe me a word; it
does concern you near.
TIMON Near? Why then, another time I'll hear thee. I
prithee, let's be provide to show them entertainment.
STEWARD I scarce know how. (2. 176-180)

Harrison (1956) reasoned that Timon repeatedly refused to heed the Steward's caution because the protagonist was "not used to unpleasant truths and, when the Steward rates him severely for his extravagances, he grows impatient" (p. 259). Apemantus⁵ warnings against Timon's materialistic flatterers were also ignored. When Apemantus grew impatient and left Timon to his wasteful ways, the Steward continued to seek opportunities to advise his master:

STEWARD
What shall be done? He will not hear till feel.
I must round with him, now he comes from hunting. (4. 7-8)

When Timon finally agreed to hear the Steward out, it was already too late. The protagonist became upset that the situation was not revealed to him earlier:

TIMON
You make me marvel wherefore ere this time
Had you not fully laid my state before me,
That I might so have rated my expense
As I had leave of means.

⁵ Apemantus was a churlish philosopher who constantly criticized Timon throughout the play.
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STEWARD

You would not hear me.

At many leisures I proposed

(4.119-124)

The Steward defended himself by stating: “You would not hear me / At many leisures I proposed (4. 23-24). The protagonist further accused the Steward of giving excuses for his efficiency. In response, the servant reasserted:

STEWARD

O my good lord,

At many times I brought in my accounts,

Laid them before you; you would throw them off,

And say you summed them in mine honesty.

When for some trifling present you have bid me

Return so much, I have shook my head and wept,

Yea, ‘gainst th’ authority of manners prayed you

To hold your hand more close. I did endure

Not seldom nor no slight checks when I have

Prompted you in the ebb of your estate

And your great flow of debts. My loved lord -

Though you hear now too late, yet now’s a time.

To present of your having lacks a half

To pay your present debts.

(4.128-139)

In the lines quoted, the Steward recalled how he brought in the accounts for Timon and prompted his master about the current state of his estate and debts but Timon would often ignore it. Instead, the protagonist gave out large amounts of presents over trifling matters. Even though Timon became angry at the Steward, the servant defended himself firmly. Royce (1971) posited that the truth-speaking person possesses “real peace, for truth-speaking is a form of loyalty and will aid him” (p.1154). When Timon called for a final banquet in scene 9, the Steward was concerned over the scarcity of resource in the household: “There’s not so much left to furnish out / A moderate table” (9. 11-12).

For Anderson (2005), the Steward resisted “what he takes to be his master’s folly” (p.1211). Despite being continuously rejected, the servant persisted in being truthful to his master. Weinstock (1971) also observed that “true servants [...] make every effort to contradict their masters when necessary, to them the truth to their faces, or to dissuade them from mischievous action” (p.1450). The Steward’s acts of truth speaking against Timon’s extravagance were aimed at preserving the welfare of the community he worked and lived with.

Loyalty minimizes conflicts

Although the cause of loyalty is personal and unique to every individual, Royce (1971) maintained that “nobody who merely follows his natural impulses as they come is loyal”

(p. 130). When Timon became bankrupt, none of his friends were willing to help him. Instead, his previous visitors and creditors called demanding payment of debts. In scene 8, the creditors' servants reflected on Timon's previous spendthrift ways. Jowett (2004) equated the phrase 'a prodigal course is like the sun's' with Timon's "spendthrift way of life [which] is like the sun's seasonally declining course" (p. 238, n. 13-4). Unlike the sun, however, Timon's loss of wealth was not "recoverable" (8. 15). His purse became as empty as "the deepest winter" (8. 16). The creditors' servants also scorned their own lords who still "wears jewels now of Timon's gift" (8. 21) yet required Timon to "pay more than he owes" (8. 25). Their masters' ingratitude was worse than stealing⁶.

Even so, they had to obey their masters' order to collect debts from Timon. When the clock was 'labouring for nine' (8. 10)⁷, the servants were already gathered and waiting outside Timon's house. When the Steward appeared instead, these servants began asking him for money. A sense of tension began to arise between the creditors' servants and the Steward in a situation where conflicting loyalties stood opposing each other. In such a situation, Royce (1971) called for the minimizing of conflicting loyalties, aiming instead towards achieving "the cause of universal loyalty" (p. 132). The Steward responded by requesting that the creditors' servants to "let [him] pass quietly" (8. 53). His loyalty has thus minimized the conflict that existed between them.

Loyalty enhances self-will

According to Royce, the cause of our loyalty is found through communication with our surrounding communities. The discovery then propels us to seek every means and ways to fulfill the sense of responsibility. For Royce (1971) "in this cause is your life, your will, your opportunity, your fulfillment" (p. 42) that leads to harmonious living. The loyal cause compels a person to express it through his self-will.

The Steward's loyalty towards Timon becomes the will which defines the essence of his being. In scene 8, the Steward told the creditors' servants: "Believ't, my lord and I have made an end" (8. 54-55). Jowett (2004) explained this as the point where both the Steward and Timon had "settled [their] affairs [and] agreed to part" (240, n. 54). The servant was "no longer under obligation to do accounts" (Jowett 2004, 240, n. 55) when he said "I have no more to reckon" (8. 55). According to Anderson (2005), Shakespeare often "depicts servants who are forced out of service with no suggestion that they will be able to find another position" (p. 131). By scene 13, Timon had left the city and went into the woods. The Steward provided for the other servants by dividing his savings among them before sending them off. With the remaining money, he went in search for Timon. In Royce's (1971) words, the Steward has found in Timon, a cause for loyalty

⁶ The word 'stealth' (8. 30) meant "stealing" (Jowett 2004, 239, n. 30).

⁷ "going up to nine" (Jowett 2004, 237, n. 9).

so rich, so well knit, and to him, so fascinating, and withal so kindly in its appeal to his natural self-will, that he says to this cause: 'Thy will is mine and mine is thine. In thee, I do not lose but find myself, living intensely in proportion as I live for thee' (p. 43).

Even though the Steward was no longer bound to serve Timon, he was determined to find his master rather than "scrambling to find new sources of income and protection" (Weil 2005, p. 10) as practiced by most servants from collapsed Renaissance households. The Steward's loyalty echoes Royce's (1971) belief in "the willing and complete identification of the whole self" (p. 105) with the cause chosen. For Royce (1971) loyalty "finds the inner self intensified and exalted even by the very act of outward looking and upward looking, of service and obedience" (p. 125). In scene 14 when the Steward located his master in the woods, he continued to address Timon as "[m]y dearest master" (14. 471). Timon, however, responded to the greeting with fierce hostility: "Away! What art thou?" (14. 472). Anderson (2005) pointed out that "loyalty in service is no guarantee to servants that their employers will reward, appreciate, or even remember them" (p.127). Despite Timon's repeated rejections: "I have forgot all men; / Then if thou grant'st thou'rt a man, I have forgot thee" (14. 472-3), "let me ne'er see thee" (14. 534), the Steward stayed with his master until the protagonist's eventual death. The servant thus fulfills Royce's (1971) requirement to remain loyal to the cause chosen, "hold[ing] it for his lifetime before his mind, clearly observing it, passionately loving it, and yet calmly understanding it, and steadily and practically serving it" (43-4). For Weinstock (1971), "voluntary service frequently exceeds a master's normal expectations. Free will no doubt spurs on a person at the cost of greater privations than duties according to rank or habit ever could" (p.470). The Steward's loyalty enhanced his self-will and motivated him towards an unrelenting persistence in serving Timon. Echoing Royce (1971), "for a man's self has no contents, no plans, no purposes, except those which are, in one way or another, defined for him by his social relations" (p.94).

Loyalty idealizes the lost cause

Apart from causes that are present, Royce also mentioned lost causes that survive in the memory of their loyal proponents and motivate them towards a communal vision for a better future. When sustaining the lost cause becomes difficult particularly when "its consequences are viewed as so far-reaching and stupendous" (Royce 1971, p.281) the feelings of sorrow and grief become remedial. The idealization of the lost cause then ignites within us a sense of need, responsibility and duty to realize the vision of rediscovering it. Loyalty thus draws from these visions which are transformed into deeds and acts.

Timon's shift from the city into the woods symbolized his transformation from a party-throwing philanthropist to a beast-like misanthrope, displaying an extreme condemnation towards humankind. In Slight's' (1977) view, Timon had reached a point where "the idea of community has not only proved unattainable for him, but remains for him a mockery"

(p.56). Zesmer (1976) noted that every visitor's call to Timon's cave was an "occasion for a fresh display of his misanthropy" (p. 394). Nevertheless, Royce (1971) believed that "[m]an's extremity is loyalty's opportunity" (p. 281), as exemplified by the Steward's optimism:

STEWARD

My most honoured lord,
For any benefit that points to me,
Either in hope or present, I'd exchange
For this one wish: that you had power and wealth
To require me by making rich yourself. (14. 517-521)

Although Timon had given up on humanity, the Steward urged him to forget the loss of the past and envision a better future of possible restoration. Royce (1971) stated that "sorrow over what has been lost pierces deep into the hearts of the faithful [until] [s]o much the more are these hearts stirred to pour out their devotion" (p.282). Edwards (1987) observed that

in general Shakespearian tragedy is about meeting the future, not the past. It looks back to a happier and richer past and is in mourning for it, representing it as something colourful, with power to inspire loyalty and affection even if it was full of faults (p.158).

Tragically, however, Timon remained stubbornly pessimistic. The play closed with Timon ending his life "entombed upon the very hem o'th' sea" (17. 67). Although the Steward's efforts seemed futile, Royce emphasized on the effort to remain loyal over the outcome of one's loyalty. The Steward's grief and sorrow over Timon's downfall fueled his idealization of the lost cause to rediscover it for his master. In this, the Steward qualifies as a genuinely loyal servant.

Loyalty forgoes self-gratification

Lastly, the appreciation of the chosen cause is mediated through the gift of self in painful labours. Royce (1971) alleged that

only the greatest strains and dangers can teach men true loyalty [while] the loyalty of the most peaceful enables us all to experience [...] what is means to give, whatever it was in our power to give, for the cause, and then to see our cause take its place, to human vision, amongst the lost causes (p. 297).

In *Timon of Athens*, the Steward shared his money with the other servants before offering his remaining wealth to Timon. Although the protagonist was doubtful of the Steward's sincerity, the servant affirmed his only wish to see Timon restored:

STEWARD

... My most honoured lord,
For any benefit that points to me,
Either in hope or present, I'd exchange
For this one wish: that you had power and wealth
To requite me by making rich yourself. (14. 517-521)

For Jowett (2004), the lines quoted meant that “Timon’s renewed riches would be the source of reward [and] the Steward would regard Timon’s enrichment as reward in itself” (301, n. 521). When Timon offered the Steward gold and bid him to “[g]o, live rich and happy” (14. 251), the servant pleaded: “O, let me stay and comfort you, my master” (14. 533). Although the Steward could have taken the gold offered and “buy into nobility” (Barker & Hinds 2003, p.10), he denied personal comforts in order to serve Timon. For Royce (as cited in Wolfe 1997, p. 46), loyalty “never means merely following [one’s] own pleasure, viewed as [one’s] private pleasure and interest” (p. 46). The Steward’s loyalty in forgoing self-gratification fulfills Royce’s (1971) claim that loyalty “brings the active peace of that rest in a painful life” (p. 125) of its loyal proponents.

Conclusion

In *Timon of Athens*, the Steward demonstrated loyalty by speaking the truth, minimizing conflicts and idealizing the lost cause which helped him to enhance his self-will and forgo self-gratification. For Oppenheim (2005), “the practice of genuine loyalty requires a disciplined balance and a persistently loving attitude” (p. 47). From the examples of the Steward’s loyalty, the paper agrees with Burnett (1997) that

together these representations suggest that the steward formed an important part of a dialogue about the material foundations on which the greatness of aristocratic families was founded [and] that the steward is at his most attractive as a dramatic subject (p. 166).

From the analysis and evidences forwarded, the paper concurs with Weinstock (1971) that Shakespeare’s lesser-known characters can “surpass his main characters in shedding light on the dramatist’s attitude towards obedience and loyal service. Shakespeare instructs his audience through loyal servants” (p. 470). The application of Royce’s concepts of loyalty further anticipates new perspectives in conceiving how Shakespeare’s servants contribute to the portraiture of their masters. The paper aims to instigate new textual interpretations in the area of master-servant relationships within Shakespeare’s playtexts.

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