

Shakespeare's Roman Trilogy: The Twilight of the Ancient World. Paul A. Cantor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. 302 pp. \$30.

Paul Cantor's latest book on Shakespeare and Rome continues the topic he began in 1976, with *Shakespeare's Rome* (reprinted with a new preface in 2017). *Shakespeare's Roman Trilogy* elaborates an ongoing relationship with Shakespeare's plays via a conversation with the philosophy of Nietzsche, and the book is at least as much concerned with the study of Nietzsche as it is with Shakespeare; the two play against each other. Part 1 contains two main chapters, one on each figure; part 2 comprises four shorter chapters on aspects of Shakespeare studies.

The first main section is concerned with *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus* as a trilogy about the end of the republic, the emergence of empire, and, finally, the construction of the republic. Cantor discusses these works as tragedies of the city at least as much as tragedies of their various protagonists. He is therefore willing to move away from the common supposition that tragedy somehow inheres within the individual, which can easily be traced to a mistaken critical encounter with Aristotle's concept of *hamartia*. Even so, the writing can be strongly reminiscent of the liberal humanist strand that makes this familiar assumption, with a vocabulary of depth of soul via a fundamentally literary analysis, albeit with a few references to individual performances in the endnotes. The depth of Cantor's knowledge of the critical engagement with Shakespeare and Rome is evident throughout, particularly in the notes. Overall, this section states the position that the politics of a republican city are defined by the horizons of community. The disruption of this community by the emergence of a single all-powerful individual leads to an enervation of traditional Roman political life, which is displaced onto other drives under the imperial state. In effect, he argues that the good of Rome is replaced with the good of the emperor, and citizens become subjects.

It is this position that constitutes the link to Nietzsche in the second section. Cantor provides a sophisticated analysis of Nietzsche's writing on the same master-slave relationship that is so familiar from Hegel, modulating Nietzsche's position, especially with regard to Christianity, via some of the comments in his originally unpublished notebooks. In this part of his book, Cantor moves much more openly toward a philosophy of identity in history. His reading of Shakespeare's engagement with Roman political tragedy provides the framework, which is then related to a Nietzschean conception of a psychology of masters in aristocratic power structures. This is replaced in a large-scale historical process by the psychology of the previously oppressed, and Cantor points out that the way this change takes place needs further investigation. He does so via a return to Shakespeare, suggesting that the career of Julius Caesar provides a superlative example of change at work, as a member of the patricians makes alliance with the plebeians. He glosses this observation further by analogy with the biblical Jewish demarcation between priestly and warrior functions among the aristocracy. In order for

political change to take place, a member or group of the aristocratic elite must make common cause with the lower orders.

The vocabulary in this section is very revealing, with constructions such as “higher and more complex humanity” (145). Characters have souls, which are more or less divided depending on how far along the path of change they are located; the Romans of *Coriolanus*, for example, are described as being less psychologically nuanced than the fully realized souls of so many other Shakespeare tragedies. The move to a transhistorical philosophy of consciousness in this section brings the latent humanism in the first part of the book to the fore.

The short individual chapters that comprise the remainder of the book pick up on the logic of the preceding sections, especially the material on Nietzsche, with the move across large swaths of history weaving a unifying thread. By way of example, in the final chapter the beginnings of the Roman Empire in *Antony and Cleopatra* are related to the twenty-first-century phenomenon of globalization. For the individual reader, much will depend on a willingness to accept such grand narratives.

Paul Innes, *University of Gloucestershire*

Is Shylock Jewish? Citing Scripture and the Moral Agency of Shakespeare's Jews.
Sara Coodin.

Edinburgh Critical Studies in Shakespeare and Philosophy. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017. xvi + 256 pp. £75.

The question this book answers is not whether Shylock is Jewish but what he looks like through a Jewish lens. Coodin has constructed such a lens by using the Hebrew Bible and *midrash* (i.e., rabbinic commentaries) to replace the more commonly used lenses tinged by Christian bibles and patristic commentaries, where Jacob, the favored younger son whom Shylock invokes, often represents Christianity superseding Judaism. Coodin also takes readers beyond the external markers of Jewishness that Shakespeare added to his source—allusions to the synagogue, dietary laws, and Hebrew scripture—and presents Shylock and Jessica not as counters in a theological disputation but as moral agents acting in accordance with “recognisably Jewish patterns” (9). Whereas many critics imagine Shylock as Antonio and Portia see him—that is, as, respectively, a diabolical threat and a denier of Christ—Coodin’s Jewish lens reveals a more complexly human Shylock, akin to someone the great Victorian actors discovered by quite other means.

A Jewish lens was not readily available in early modern England. Shakespeare knew the Bible in English translations but, unlike the Cambridge-educated Milton, seems to have had no exposure to the Hebrew Bible or to Jewish commentaries written in Hebrew. Milton was not alone. Coodin’s first chapter usefully traces the handful of im-