



# Shakespeare's Rome: Republic and Empire

*Paul A. Cantor*

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## **Shakespeare's Rome: Republic and Empire** Paul A. Cantor

For more than forty years, Paul Cantor's *Shakespeare's Rome* has been a foundational work in the field of politics and literature. While many critics assumed that the Roman plays do not reflect any special knowledge of Rome, Cantor was one of the first to argue that they are grounded in a profound understanding of the Roman regime and its changes over time. Taking Shakespeare seriously as a political thinker, Cantor suggests that his Roman plays can be profitably studied in the context of the classical republican tradition in political philosophy.

In *Shakespeare's Rome*, Cantor examines the political settings of Shakespeare's Roman plays, *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, with references as well to *Julius Caesar*. Cantor shows that Shakespeare presents a convincing portrait of Rome in different eras of its history, contrasting the austere republic of *Coriolanus*, with its narrow horizons and martial virtues, and the cosmopolitan empire of *Antony and Cleopatra*, with its "immortal longings" and sophistication bordering on decadence.

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