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A Crown that Seldom Kings Enjoy: Shakespeare's Exploration of  
Ethical and Problematic Leadership in the midst of Political Conflict  
Canterbury Proposal, Spring 2006

The care of human life and happiness and not their destruction  
is the first and only legitimate object of good government  
— **Thomas Jefferson**

**Introduction:**

Citizens and subjects have long been fascinated by their leaders. Epic poems, historical studies, philosophical debates, and theatrical plays have again and again posed the questions of what qualities make a good hero and a good leader. It therefore comes as no surprise that Shakespeare wrote ten plays about English kings (from King John to King Henry VIII), as well as several plays based upon European myth and Roman history that tackled these very questions. A complex exploration of just and excellent leadership emerges from the language of the text, is revealed through characterization, and drives the plots. Contemporary readers often ignore Shakespeare's political commentary on kings and leadership, dismissing it as an artifact from the past. After all, his political vision was constructed with his own time period in mind and connected to the political and cultural debates during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and King James.

**Goals:**

For my Canterbury Fellowship project, I would like both to explore a selection of Shakespeare's plays, which contend with the questions of leadership, and delve into Shakespeare's presentation of what—morally, practically, and religiously—can make leadership not only politically effective, but also morally just. I will also draw on political and philosophical texts, and historical sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth century and Roman history. Furthermore, I will use selected, contemporary literary criticism,

history, and scholarship. In the end, I hope to discover that within Shakespeare's critical look at rulers' successes and failures there is a moral norm, whether explicit or implicit, which can speak to the political milieu of 20<sup>th</sup> century America with equal facility as to the sixteenth / seventeenth century England in which it was conceived.

**Process:**

Because one cannot read and write about all of Shakespeare's plays that touch on politics (as that would include almost all his plays), I will focus on scenes from several specific plays, chosen from the following: Richard II, the two parts of Henry IV, Henry V, the three parts of Henry VI, King John, Coriolanus, and Measure for Measure. I will focus my thesis on specific scenes and excerpts from the list. I have chosen these particular plays because of their emphases on leadership, ethics, and the problems of just and humane ruling. The history tetralogies (Richard II to Henry V, and then Henry VI to Richard III) are plainly relevant to the study of leadership in Shakespeare. However, it would be short-sighted to focus on histories alone for this thesis. Although it is not commonly understood, many of Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies are just as politically pointed as his histories. Specifically, Measure for Measure focuses on the problems of tyranny and how the range of force and leniency in rulers can affect a city. Coriolanus is a more subtly political play and focuses on the divide between democracy and autocracy. Coriolanus will also be performed here at Santa Clara University and will connect with my peer educating for Prof. Dunbar's Shakespeare's Tragedies course (ENGL 116) in Fall 2006.

My first step in my preparation for this thesis would be to read or re-read all of the aforementioned plays. While most of them I have previously read, all of them would need to be examined with new eyes in order to discover Shakespeare's political intention and to hone down my list to a reasonable selection. At the same time, I would also be examining relevant research and criticism by Shakespeare scholars— e.g. Stephen Orgel, Graham Holderness, Barbara Hodgdon, Constance Jordan, and J. Leeds Barroll (please see Bibliography on page 5 for specifics).

Because I believe that analyzing performance of Shakespeare is as important as examining his texts on paper, I would also work to view film and production recordings of these plays, and see them on stage when possible. This summer and fall, three

performances of my selected plays are being staged: King John at the OSF, Measure for Measure at the PacRep annual Shakespeare festival, and Coriolanus here at Santa Clara University. I would also watch the BBC complete-text films of my selected plays, as well as any other notable performance I can track down (e.g. Michael Bogdanov's English Shakespeare Company series, select Royal Shakespeare Company recordings, Branagh's Henry V, and, if possible, several theater archive records). Seeing a play performed has the uncanny ability to open up new interpretations and ideas. Each company, director, and actor interprets characters and meanings differently, and therefore I will examine how these changes influence the political messages. This is an essential part of my project. I will also occasionally reference specific key and groundbreaking performances in my thesis, as detailed by my experience and the Shakespeare in Performance research books.

Finally, as I put together all of this information and construct the beginnings of my thesis, I would examine select political issues of our day and investigate whether Shakespeare's concept of leadership can work in our contemporary world.

### **Qualifications:**

I have read, researched, and loved Shakespeare for almost as long as I can remember. In junior high, my eighth grade class studied and put on an abridged production of *Hamlet*. From the moment I heard the poetry of Shakespeare's words, there was no going back. Since then, I have read every Shakespeare play I could; I finished a sizable number of the comedies, read almost all of the histories, and completely devoured the tragedies. Shakespeare's language and writings have become increasingly fascinating to me. In high school, I helped start a club called the Shakespeare Society, which started with five members and grew to over twenty in the next year. After graduation, in the summer of 2003, I helped run a high school Shakespeare camp, and assisted the director with a two-night performance of Shakespeare scenes.

Here at Santa Clara University, I have been fortunate enough to take four different Shakespeare classes (I have taken English 118 twice, as the class Prof. Dunbar taught was thoroughly different than the one taught by Prof. Tollini) to complete the English major 'Area of Specialization' in Shakespeare. In my senior year, I plan to peer-educate Prof.

Dunbar's Shakespeare Tragedies class.

My ultimate goal, upon graduation, is to attend the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-Upon-Avon and obtain an MA in Shakespeare Studies, and then pursue a vocation in teaching at the secondary or college level.

**Budget:**

Because I have several responsibilities next year, including being Editor-in-Chief of the Santa Clara Review, most of my preliminary research will be planned and carried out over the summer. I have therefore planned accordingly and calculated this into my budget, with the estimated expenses for books and performance recordings. This is not a large amount, however, as most of the books and VHS recordings I wish to use can be found in the Orradre library, and San Jose and/or Sacramento public libraries.

I have also factored the Sigma Tau Delta conference into my budget, as I would like to present a paper drawn from my Canterbury thesis there. However, as part of my responsibility as Editor of the Santa Clara Review, I must attend the AWP (Associated Writers & Publishers) Conference, which falls around the same time as the Sigma Tau Delta conference every year. If the dates prevent my attendance of the Sigma Tau Delta conference, I will attend an alternative west coast regional conference and travel to major research connections at Stanford University.

Photocopies, books, media recordings, and paper supplies are the main costs noted in my budget. All estimated prices are taken from Amazon.com, Amazon.co.uk, and Amazon Marketplace Sellers. The only other major section to note is that set aside for performances. The performance at the OSF in Ashland, Oregon is the most expensive of the three performances, as it requires hotel and travel expenses.

The following is my estimated budget for this project:

<b>Photocopying, printing, and paper supplies</b>	\$120
<b>Books and Performance Recordings</b>	\$500
Possible examples:	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Shakespeare Lexicon, Vol. 1</u>, £9.80 (approx. \$20)</li> <li>- <u>Shakespeare Lexicon, Vol. 2</u>, £9.80 (approx. \$20)</li> <li>- <u>The End Crowns All</u>, \$28.75</li> <li>- Richard II (Shakespeare in Performance), \$22.39</li> <li>- <u>Henry V</u> (Shakespeare in Performance), \$9.49</li> <li>- <u>Henry VI</u> (Shakespeare in Performance), \$19.49</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Theater Performances</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- OSF (<u>King John</u>) \$55 ticket, \$70 hotel, \$70 travel cost</li> <li>- PacRep (<u>Measure for Measure</u>) \$15 ticket, no travel cost</li> <li>- SCU (<u>Coriolanus</u>) \$10 ticket, no travel cost</li> </ul>	<b>\$220</b>
<p><b>Sigma Tau Delta Conference</b></p> <p>(flight, hotel, registration)</p>	<b>\$600</b>
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED BUDGET:</b>	<b>\$1440</b>

**FACULTY MENTOR:** Prof. Dunbar

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