The Making of a Leader: The Rhetoric of Power

Alexander the Great, Augustus, Prophet Muhammad, and John F. Kennedy

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INTRODUCTION

The focus of my work is to understand how reputations of leaders are constructed through words and images. The purpose of this study is to evaluate how rhetoric affects whom we choose to be our role models. I wish to uncover the traits we value and what traits we should value. I wish to do this by studying a few of the world renowned leaders. There are many influential individuals to choose from, but there are only a handful of leaders so greatly remembered in modern historical memory. I began with a healthy list of leaders including Lysander, Agesilaos of Sparta, Philip II of Macedon, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Emperor Augustus, Moses, Jesus Christ, and the Prophet Muhammad. Among the modern leaders that crossed my mind included Napoleon Bonaparte, Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and Bill Clinton. I finally chose Alexander the Great, Augustus, the Prophet Muhammad, and John F. Kennedy. I felt that these great leaders were a good representation of different civilizations.

I will study these great men’s lives by studying their descriptions in primary sources. The main focus of the study is to look at the rhetoric regarding the early lives of the leaders. I initially set out to study their entire lives including their social lives, education, military affairs, government affairs, and their family lives. However, as I began writing, the information I found on their early lives was so copious that one could not possibly compress the entire lives of these great leaders into one literary work.

My definition of rhetoric includes any way that people express themselves. Rhetoric includes narratives about the individual, speeches supposedly delivered by the leader, oral
communication, the written word, music, works of art, and later film. This study evaluates how rhetoric shapes their image and reputation for modern society. Some of the sources I use were written during the lives of the leader at issue and others were written well after the death of the leader. Moreover, the overriding aspect I wish to hone in on is the leader’s lasting reputation or posterity as presented to a modern audience. The leaders’ reputation among his contemporaries is not the subject of this study. Next, I do not wish to state that rhetoric is always used as a manipulative tool by leaders to wield authority over people. Nonetheless, I do wish to describe three patterns in literature common among each of the leaders. Each of these models uplifts the leader’s image in modern consciousness. A study of these patterns and their influence helps evaluate the leader’s reputation embellished by romance. These three patterns are the subject of each of my three chapters.

My first chapter discusses how a name can be used to construct the reputation of a leader. A nickname is chosen for the leader. Next, several great attributes are linked to that nickname. When that nickname is later attributed to that leader, so are those great attributes. A new identity, integrated with the old one is therefore created. My workable definition of a nickname is the shortening of the leader’s original name. For example, John F. Kennedy was nicknamed Jack from his childhood. The nickname Jack was associated with hope and change during his presidential campaign. Therefore, John F. Kennedy was a symbol of hope and change. Also, the living leader can be called by the name of another great person. For example, Alexander the Great was called Achilles, the mythological Greek leader from the Iliad. On the other hand, an epithet is an attribute directly stated in the name of the leader. For example, Alexander is called Alexander the Great in order to state that he was a great leader.
My second chapter discusses how narratives describe a leader’s birth as a miraculous event. The birth of the leader is defined as their biological birth or their arrival on the political stage and movement into public awareness. For example, in the Roman epic the *Aeneid*, the coming of Emperor Augustus is predicted retrospectively to be the salvation of the Roman people. Furthermore, I wish to show that events from the leader’s early life are used in literature to prophesize future success. These images of leadership potential give the modern audience certainty in the credibility of a leader.

My third chapter discusses how greatness is ascribed to leaders by associating a previously acclaimed leader to the identity of a new leader. Writers, both contemporaries and biographers, aligned Alexander the Great, Augustus, the Prophet Muhammad, and Kennedy with the leaders of old in order to bolster their image in public perception. For example, the Prophet Muhammad was connected to Moses and Jesus Christ. Muhammad was described as a man who would follow in the tradition of these pious men.

We are to learn from this work that image is everything. I want to teach the readers to distinguish false images from the true ones. If the false images help tell the truth, we should value them accordingly as providers of entertainment and truth. If not, we should set the false images aside as a testament for our need for entertainment. In the matter as significant as the way we lead our lives, we should seek the truth.
CHAPTER ONE

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Giving and receiving a name establishes identity and points of reference. Name giving is universal. A name functions as a label. Some individuals like Julius Caesar, Genghis Khan, and Winston Churchill have had additional attributes added to their names. As a result, their name and furthermore their reputation was augmented to an elevated status. In name formulations, rhetoric plays a major role in the perception of a person’s public identity. Ancient sources as well as modern ones use the written word as a tool to promote leaders. The documentation of a leader’s early life, whether collected during his life or after his death, particularly enhances their reputation. In ancient times, there was not always an election for a nation’s leader, but as in modern times, both paths to leadership involved some form of campaigning to achieve this position.

The chapters of my work are each devoted to factors that combine successively the constructed identity and perception of a leader. The first chapter discusses a leader’s name that was exploited to instill within the minds of the reader and the listener the idea that the name was one with which to be reckoned. After a leader’s name is established in the public consciousness, connecting the familiar name to an explanation of the leader’s great origins reinforces the leader’s identity. This shores up a leader’s reputation and perception as it also furthers their posterity. The public image of Alexander the Great, Emperor Augustus of Rome, the Prophet Muhammad, and John F. Kennedy was each constructed with these patterns. How the leaders rely on perception based on their names helps evaluate whether a leader functions as a role model. One must look at
the leader’s personality and how the leader behaved before adopting him as a role model. However, perception of a leader can be constructed. This then is the crux of my thesis. How, in essence, words (and images) can create a leader. It is the rhetorical construct of the leader, beginning with name identification that shapes our views and understandings. In our endeavor, we have to critically analyze the sources available to us. One must question authenticity, but it is not reasonable to be completely skeptical about the legitimacy of all sources. The way to learn of the leader’s identity is in how he and his companions describe the leader—it is in the name.

In order for a leader to make a name for himself, he must first select a name. Moreover, an identity must be attributed to that name. Most names do not evoke powerful images. Only when an identity is associated with something grander does the name gain meaning and shape. Ancient sources in particular use the prospective leader’s name and then impress a nickname on to that name. Alexander the Great was often called Achilles. The name Achilles is taken from the Greek warrior and leader from the Greek epic the *Iliad*. The name Achilles was associated with strength and glory. The nickname elicits an association between the former name and the new one. The public during Alexander’s time and now, reading Alexander’s biography, will relate the two names along with their great characteristics. Therefore, the selection of a nickname, epithet, and the characteristics that a biographer associates with that name, is a delicate task—one that influences the lasting reputation of that leader.

A writer under the Roman Empire named Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus or Plutarch (ca. 46-ca.119-125 CE) wrote of the life of Alexander the Great. In his writings, Plutarch attempted to expound upon two men’s lives, one Greek the other Roman, in order to teach others how to live. In the description of Alexander’s education, he recounts how Leonidas, a kinsman of
Alexander’s mother Olympias, was given the responsibility of Alexander’s education. Within the depiction, Alexander the Great is addressed by another name.

The care of his education, as it might be presumed, was committed to a great many attendants, preceptors, and teachers…Leonidas…a man of an austere temper, presided, who did not indeed himself decline the name of what in reality is a noble and honourable office, but in general his dignity…obtained him from other people the title of Alexander’s foster-father and governor. But …his pedagogue was Lysimachus the Acarnanian, who, though he had nothing to recommend him, but his lucky fancy of calling himself Phoenix, Alexander Achilles and Philip Peleus, was therefore well enough esteemed…¹

Alexander is described at length before a nickname is finally linked to his name. The issue of who would be in charge of Alexander’s education is discussed first. In describing the care of a leader’s education, the word care makes the task seem all the more honorable and significant. Many people were employed for the duty of educating the apparently significant adolescent Alexander. Next, Plutarch introduces the one man in charge of the vital task, Leonidas. This man put in charge of Alexander’s education, must, of course, be a man of great morality and temperament. Plutarch’s usage of the idea of his “austere temper” provides the audience with a vision of a man bent on upholding all that is sacred and dear in the ancient world. Notwithstanding, this is a description of the educator which projects the image that the educator is not as great as the educated. The phrase ‘What in reality is a noble and honourable office’ emphasizes the point that Alexander is significant.

Plutarch then establishes that another prominent man, Lysimachus, played a leading role in Alexander’s education. He is described as being ‘well-enough esteemed’ to take on a secondary role as a tutor or pedagogue. The names which Lysimachus supposedly attributed to

himself, Alexander, and Alexander’s father Philip, conjured up mythological stories that resonate with the people of the Greco-Roman world. Phoenix was the esteemed tutor of Achilles, the legendary hero of the Trojan War. Phoenix, along with Odysseus and Ajax, was selected to go to Achilles, the greatest Greek warrior, as ambassadors to convince him to return to the war effort. Without Achilles there was no hope for victory. These three men were appealing to the ultimate hero, to lead the Greeks on to glory—something which may have been alluded to by the association of Alexander with Achilles.\(^2\) Alexander would definitely look kindly upon the idea of being linked to Achilles in any way. Even though Achilles was not described as a man of great intellectual presence in ancient sources, he was a great leader. He inspired his men, fought bravely, and strove for honor as well as glory.

These words of Plutarch seem superficial, but are in fact loaded with nuance. Analyzing the rhetoric describing Alexander allows one to capture the allure of ancient history. The narratives of ancient texts are so imaginative. The emotion and culture of the ancients comes directly off the page. A culture immersed in its language, customs, and intellectual acculturation. The statements simply put by the Greeks and the Romans inspire and resonate with many because they draw on so many cultural traditions. Accordingly, the enormity of Alexander’s persona is intensified by this meticulous introduction and explanation of the selection of Alexander’s educators. The statements before the mention of Alexander’s name of mythological undertones gives the audience a feeling of suspense. The audience is told why this education is such an honorable one. When one attributes greatness, it is rather difficult to separate fact from

perpetuated fiction. The only way to separate the two is by proving that the leader was not great at all. Alexander, like Achilles, had a temper. As we shall see, Alexander’s future accomplishments show that although flawed in some aspects of his life, he was distinguished in so many others. Nonetheless, Alexander’s name gains repute from simple statements such as Plutarch’s and reiterations of the rhetoric to reaffirm the staple of Alexander’s name in the public mind.

The method used to thrust the identity of Alexander into the forefront of people’s minds was to give Alexander a second name that would confirm his first name, Alexander, which translates to “protector of men.” Other leaders, especially of the ancient period, followed in the great Alexander’s way. The first official emperor of Rome changed names rather regularly during his rise to power and nobody knew at the time of naming. At birth, he was named Gaius Octavius Thurinus. ³ Later, Julius Caesar took him as his son in an act of testamentary adoption. Caesar did not have a rightful heir, and as consonant with tradition, he wished to pass on the power to someone in his family. ⁴ He thereby hailed his adoptive son with the new name Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus. Octavian’s name was associated with Julius Caesar’s. ⁵ The influence and authority that Julius Caesar brought to Rome was now reinvested in another man. After Caesar’s assassination in 44 BCE, Octavian would assume leadership after a bitter civil war with Marc Antony in 31 BCE. The first emperor was given a third name, Augustus. His new name would serve to reinforce his reputation much more than any of the previous names he was given.


The historian Suetonius (ca. 71-135 CE) wrote about the lives of the Caesars in *De vita Caesarum*. He expanded upon the lives of emperors including Octavian. In his description of the evolution of Octavian’s names, he describes the methods behind the selections of the names, including his final name change.

Furthermore he is often called Thurinus in Marc Antony’s letters by way of insult; to which Augustus merely replied that he was surprised that his former name was thrown in his face as a reproach. Later he took the name of Gaius Caesar and then the surname Augustus, the former by the will of his great-uncle, the latter on the motion of Munatius Plancus. For when some expressed the opinion that he ought to be called Romulus as a second founder of the city, Plancus carried that he should rather be named Augustus, on the ground that this was not merely a new title but a more honourable one, inasmuch as sacred places too, and those in which anything is consecrated by augural rites are called “august” (*augusta*), from the increase (*auctus*) in dignity, or from the movements or feeding of the birds (*avium gestus gustusve*), as Ennius also shows when he writes: After by augury august illustrious Rome had been founded.

The opening lines bring back to life his first name, at least his *cognomen* Thurinus in a way that elevates Octavian’s stature. Marc Antony, embattled for his alliance with Kleopatra of Egypt, attempts to lessen the status of Octavian by bringing back to memory his original name. Suetonius explains how Octavian brushes Antony’s attempt off, as he is not ashamed of his first *cognomen*. His first name no longer stands alone, as the connection to his adoptive father and new name Augustus will prove indestructible. It would only be fitting that Octavian be called Romulus. In the next few lines, the logic behind the declination of the name Romulus and the title Augustus is explained. However, Suetonius is no fool. There is a purpose to the mention of the Romulus story. As in the case with Alexander and Plutarch, Suetonius describes the names of Octavian before getting to the crux of the matter. He does not go into detail about the leadership skills or military might of Romulus, but he does mention his name, as did L. Munatius Plancus and other contemporaries. The mention of the name Romulus carried weight with the
Roman people and provides suspense about learning the new nickname for the new leader. Octavian’s identity is being constructed before a description of the latest name is revealed.

Plancus states that Octavian was not merely receiving a new name, but a more honorable one that identified the emperor with dignity. He relates the new title Augustus to the emperor as if he was a place where people would give sacrifice and seek sanctuary. In describing Augustus, Suetonius elevated Rome’s first princeps to the level of an extraordinary or a divine person. Augustus is further elevated in the discourse and embellished as the savior of Rome, simply by the addition of a new name. Then the discussion of the increase in dignity arises. Suetonius naturally beats the idea of elevating the emperor’s status into the minds of the audience. Suetonius uses the Latin word auctus, or the root of our word ‘authority’, to establish his new reputation. He explains how the title Augustus, which is etymologically linked to the words augusta and auctus has a cultural origin from the augural rites in the ‘movement or feeding of the birds.’ Again the sacredness of his name is portrayed superficially, but with a subtle allusion to Romulus, the mythological founder of Rome.

The foundation story of Rome involved Romulus and his ill-fated brother Remus. They jointly founded Rome, but they got into a quarrel about who would be supreme leader. They would let the gods decide who would govern the city by observing a sign from the sacred birds. Each brother observed different evidence that supported his claim to the throne. However, Romulus eventually killed his brother after he leapt over the new wall built by Romulus, outlining the pomerium, or sacred boundary of the city of Rome. Order in Rome was thereby founded on fratricide in the myth and Roman civil war between Rome’s two sons—Augustus

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and Marc Antony. Now Rome had an opportunity for rebirth. Identified with his new title, Augustus was now celebrated as a legitimate ruler while still maintaining the image of Romulus, as the second founder of the city.

The statement of the augury implies for the audience approval from the gods for Augustus’s hegemony. Also, the title Augustus now serves to protect the city of Rome from the threat of foreign invaders. The last statement Suétoneus uses is a reference from another author that wrote well prior to his own time. Ennius (ca. 239-169 BCE) wrote during the Roman Republic from the late third century into the early second century BCE. He was one of the most esteemed Roman poets along with Horace. Therefore, any words of Ennius with regard to Augustus would not be taken lightly. ‘After by augury august illustrious Rome had been founded’ alludes to augury once again to remind the readers of its importance. Augustus and illustrious are used as adjectives to describe Rome. Adjectives are used to describe nouns. Nouns are defined as a person, place, or thing. Augustus becomes all three. Moreover, Augustus is not only the new emperor of Rome, nor is he merely the savior of Rome; he is Rome. The imagery invites people to hold the name of Augustus in high regard.

Imagery that relates a leader to greatness beckons people to hold a leader in great repute. Some leaders have nicknames ascribed to them to build an identity so that they can gain political influence. Other leaders like Augustus knew that attributing a new name with religious influence was an even stronger tool. Religious figures like messengers or prophets spreading God’s message make an even impression. Holy leaders are given nicknames that speak to their piety and mission on Earth. One such leader was the Prophet Muhammad. He was born in 570

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CE as Muhammad bin’Abdallah al-Hashimi al-Qurashi.  The term *bin* or ‘*ibn* means ‘son of’ in Arabic. The Arabic word usually precedes the name of the individual’s father. One of the earliest sources of the *Seerah*, a biographical account of the life of the Prophet Muhammad, was written by a renowned Islamic scholar and biographer named ‘Ibn ‘Ishaq. He wrote his *Sirat Rasul Allah*, “The Life of God’s Prophet,” over 150 years after the death of Muhammad. Although ‘Ibn ‘Ishaq did not cite his sources, a study of *Sirat Rasul Allah* shows that besides some weak chains of narration, his work was largely based on *ahadith*, the authentic collection of the statements and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. No rulings are taken from the biography; the biography just stands a story of his life. Such a great man whose daily life was so well-documented would have no purpose in making up his biography. Also, a biographer who concocted a falsified account would be unsuccessful because Muhammad’s actions and life were recorded during his lifetime. Furthermore, both ‘Ibn ‘Ishaq’s work and more the authentic narrations of *ahadith* recorded from Muhammad’s time can be used to analyze Muhammad’s historical memory.

‘Ibn ‘Ishaq (c. 704-767 CE) discusses Prophet Muhammad’s entire life from birth to death in his biographical work *Sirat Rasul Allah*. In the following passage, he tells of the selection of the first name given to Allah’s last prophet. "It is alleged in popular stories (and only God knows the truth) that ‘Amina d. Wahb, the mother of God’s apostle, that a voice said to her, 'You are pregnant with the lord of this people and when he is born say, 'I put him in the care

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of the One from the evil of every envier; then call him Muhammad."^{10} The first line begins with an introductory story, a popular one at that, which builds the identity of Muhammad with a background story. The writer uses the phrase ‘it is alleged’ meaning that he has heard in hearsay or as a legend. He reaffirms his doubts by stating that only God knows the truth.

Next, he recounts a story about Muhammad’s mother, Amina, *bint* or daughter of, Wahab. The legend states that a voice told her something in a dream. The use of an external voice adds to image that a fabled story or legend is about to be told. The voice told her that she was pregnant with the lord of this people. The lord of this people could mean the lord of the people of the Arabian Peninsula or the known world. Either interpretation associates the name not yet mentioned as that of a great leader of future days. The voice continues on to instruct Amina to utter a statement at the birth of her newborn child. Amina is told to ask the One, here interpreted as the monotheistic God, Allah, to protect her child from the envious person’s envy. Muhammad did not have much financial wealth as a child for people to envy.\(^{11}\) However, these words lead the reader to deduce that ‘Amina produced a child whose leadership and exemplary behavior were more valuable to people than wealth.

The value of the child’s character is described by the announcement of the boy’s name. The voice finally tells her to name him Muhammad. Muhammad is described to be a name befitting a man of great stature to whom an identity of legendary proportions is attributed. The name Muhammad means “worthy of praise.” The name Muhammad was also rarely used in

\(^{10}\) Ibid.

Arabia prior to the birth of Prophet Muhammad. The leader worthy of praise is now established in historical memory and nicknames may be added to preserve that identity in history.

Malik bin Anas (ca. 715-795 CE) is one of the most respected scholars in Islam, especially in the field of fiqh, or Islamic jurisprudence. Along with a compilation of Islamic law, Malik’s Muwatta contains ahadith that describe the names and titles of the Prophet Muhammad. There is a chapter entitled, “Chapter on the Names of the Prophet.” Within the chapter is one hadith, ahadith in the singular form, narrated by a man named Jubayr b. Mut‘im. The hadith originates from the most trusted collection of authentic ahadith, Sahih Al-Bukhari, from Imam Al-Bukhari, who accompanied Muhammad during his time as prophet and recorded his statements as well as his actions. In order for these descriptions to be recognized as authentic narrations, the narrators of these statements had to be a trustworthy individual. After these individuals were deemed trustworthy and before the narration was collected by Islamic scholars like Imam Al-Bukhari, the individuals had to prove that they were present when the statement they recount of the Prophet Muhammad, was being made. These actions to get firsthand accounts were carried out in order to safeguard truth and authenticity.

The hadith states, “The Prophet said: I have five names. I am Muhammad; I am Ahmad; I am al-Mahi, because through me God abolishes unbelief [or disbelief]; I am al-Hashi

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14 McAuliffe, “Encyclopedia of the Qur’an,” 501-502
because men will be gathered behind me (at the end of time); I am al-‘Aqib (“the last”).”

Muhammad attributes five names to himself. The first name is the name his mother gave him, Muhammad. The second name is Ahmad which originates from the same word in Arabic hamd, with the same meaning as his first name, “worthy of praise.” Muhammad has two names literally meaning worthy of praise. The third name al-Mahi, is a title that involves how God eradicates disbelief through his person. Most Arabic words have a root consisting of three letters from the Arabic alphabet. Mahi comes from Meem-Ha-Waw which means to erase, eliminate, or remove. The word is actually used in chapter 13, verse 39, Surat Ar-Ra’d, “The Thunder,” in the verb form yamhu, with the same meaning. The third name Muhammad attributes to himself involves his role as a guide to the truth and closeness to God. He is therefore described as the solution to societal and further global problems. He is the champion of religious education and henceforth wishes to curtail ignorance of religious knowledge. Each name intensifies the meaning and lifts Muhammad above the ordinary. Muhammad becomes extraordinary.

Next, he is al-Hashir because mankind will stand behind him in a symbolic nature, following his example for years to come. The three-letter root for Hashir is Ha-Sha-Ra, which means to gather. The word is also used in chapter 59, verse 2 of the Qur’an called Surat Al-Hashr, “The Gathering,” referring to the specific gathering of the human population at the end of

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15 Ibid.


17 Ibid.

days; the same gathering to which Muhammad refers in his account. The Prophet Muhammad establishes a religious footing as well as a secular one from this account. Mankind will follow him in their upright behavior and will meet the end of days with their righteous deeds displayed as a testament before God. Muhammad’s identity is reinforced because through him, God is offering people success in this life and the afterlife. There is no more glory and reward to be expected by any human being than eternal honor. Lastly, Muhammad arrives at the final name to rule them all. Alexander the Great and Augustus’s narratives exhibit the pattern of leading up to their nicknames just like Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad is gifted with rhetorical skill and proves so in his final statement. The final name that cements his identity is al-‘Aqīb or the last. The interpretation of ‘the last’ is as the seal of the prophets and that no messenger from God shall come to humanity after him. He is the final God-appointed leader that has been given a message to mankind. From the last name he mentions to the first Muhammad, the rhetoric attributed to each name revitalizes the idea that Muhammad is a leader larger than life who live on in historical memory.

Leaders in the twentieth-century relied a great deal on the rhetorical methods of their ancient counterparts. Although mythological heroes and epics were not an integral part of American culture in mid-twentieth century, name changing was still popular. John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the thirty-fifth president of the United States, was given a nickname like the leaders of Greece, Rome, and Arabia. He was called Jack since childhood. His name was John, but he elected to use the nickname Jack to reform his identity in a campaign song sung by old blue-eyes

\[\text{\footnotesize{\cite{19}}\text{Ibid.}}\]

himself, the famous singer and entertainer Frank Sinatra. Frank Sinatra changed the lyrics of his 1959 hit single, “High Hopes,” into a campaign song to help Kennedy win the presidential election of 1960. The association made with Kennedy’s name and the path to success is evident in this musical number. Hope is shown to reside within the nickname Jack and the future’s only chance is in the support of Jack as a leader. Like the leaders before him, Kennedy assembled a stronger identity in adding another nickname to his repertoire that strengthened his original title, and further his memory in the minds of the voters. He was a “common” man (Jack-one of us) and as such he would work for the average man.

Sammy Cahn wrote the lyrics for “High Hopes (for John F. Kennedy).” Cahn was also the lyricist for Michael Dukakis’s campaign song in 1988 when he changed the title of Sinatra’s “My Kind of Town” to “My Kind of Guy.” At any rate, in the John F. Kennedy version, Cahn associates popularity, optimism, hope, leadership skills, and personal as well as the nation’s path to success with the nickname Jack.

Everyone is voting for Jack  
Cause he's got what all the rest lack  
Everyone wants to back -- Jack  
Jack is on the right track.  
'Cause he's got high hopes  
He's got high hopes  
Nineteen Sixty's the year for his high hopes.  
Come on and vote for Kennedy  
Vote for Kennedy

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22 Ibid.
And we’ll come out on top!
Oops, there goes the opposition - ker -
Oops, there goes the opposition - ker -
Oops, there goes the opposition - KERPLOP!

K--E--DOUBLE N--E--D--Y
Jack's the nation's favorite guy
Everyone wants to back -- Jack
Jack is on the right track.
'Cause he's got high hopes
He's got high hopes
Nineteen Sixty's the year for his high hopes.
Come on and vote for Kennedy
Vote for Kennedy
Keep America strong.
Kennedy, he just keeps rollin' - a -
Kennedy, he just keeps rollin' - a -
Kennedy, he just keeps rollin' along.

The beginning of the song and the chorus relate the extent of Kennedy’s popularity. If one was uncertain of the reputation of John F. Kennedy previously, now that everyone is supporting him, then he must be a force with which to be reckoned. Verses like ‘Everyone is voting for him’ and ‘everyone wants to back Jack’ have an effect on people--especially undecided voters. When people are filled with uncertainty and doubt, they look to others for guidance. The song speaks of the entire nation supporting this one man named Jack. Next, the song’s opening lines associate the name Jack with popularity and the ability to govern. Words like hope are powerful rhetorical devices because they relate universalities to people that we all can agree are good in nature. As Augustus before him was Rome incarnate, John F. Kennedy stood for hope. Therefore, Cahn and Sinatra state in the next verse that 1960’s the year for his high hopes, meaning that high hopes and by extension Jack Kennedy, should get elected to presidential office in 1960. Furthermore, the voters are voting for popularity, success, youth, and hope incarnate to govern their nation. The majority would be inclined to vote for the new John “Jack” Kennedy.
Besides the chorus, the song serves to promote the identity of John F. Kennedy to become leader of the free world. The crux of the songs is found at the end of each stanza. As before, the writer of the rhetoric puts the reader and listener in suspense until the point of the rhetorical exercise is reached. In the case of the previous leaders, the punch line was left until the end. Kennedy’s goal was to link his name with the nation’s overall success. Therefore, Sinatra and Cahn begin with the introduction leading to these aims. The first stanza ends in stating that Americans will be the best, after they vote for Kennedy. The nation was enduring tensions with the Soviet Union at the time as a result of the arms race. Victory for America is what Americans wanted. Kennedy was claiming the ability to give the United States the upper hand. The song continues to speak of how the opposition, the Republican candidate Richard Nixon in the election and even the Soviets would be defeated by the symbol of hope, youthfulness, energy, and the future—Jack Kennedy.

Sinatra begins the second stanza by spelling out Jack’s last name, Kennedy, a world renowned name because of his father’s position as ambassador to England for the United States under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Then after a reiteration of Kennedy’s popularity and the idea of his hope leading to American success, another nationalistic goal is described. The climax of the song occurs when the voters are told that their support of Kennedy by way of popular vote, will keep America strong. The strength of the nation is apparently in the hands of the people, giving the people self-worth. However, Kennedy’s name is repeated once more, to

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25 Ibid., 93
solidify the perception that Jack is the one who has the ability to keep America strong. Kennedy just keeps rolling along on the road to success and his personal success will lead the nation to success as an international superpower. John F. Kennedy’s campaign song recycles his childhood nickname to build a new identity as a symbol for American’s pursuit for happiness. The nickname also transforms Kennedy, part of the Bostonian family that symbolized wealth and pretension, into Jack the personable American man. Jack’s dual identity as a regular guy and an outstanding leader make him the solution to America’s woes. The name Jack in conjunction with John F. Kennedy constructs a symbolic identity Americans and the world wished to support.

Biographical narratives contort the identity of a leader in so many ways. The patterns of self-naming and description along four different cultures, ancient and modern, tell of the power of rhetoric. The writers and biographers of these great men do not merely state their original names. They discuss the origins of their first name and sometimes discuss how leaders’ nicknames took shape. Writers tend to link attributes to the name of their patron. They select words that have a deeper meaning to them. Writers are usually well read, so in order to grasp the full meaning of their rhetorical discourse, people should be familiar with classical and contemporary literature. The subtlety of rhetoric demands that it never be taken for granted.

A look into the goals of a leader can also be established from biographical narratives. If the leader spreads his names across his land and advertises them, then his ultimate goal may just be absolute power and influence. Another leader who rarely mentioned the name change may have only used rhetoric to gain relations with the public. Rhetoric itself should not take on the connotation of manipulation. It is used, however, to create perceptions. Rhetoric can be used to inspire and gain leadership opportunities. Marketing one’s name is not inherently bad. The
problem emerges when a leader’s reputation and efficacy stand purely on rhetoric. If individuals actively seek education and enlightenment, a leader who defines their success by empty rhetoric will be less likely to maintain influence.
Narratives explain how potential emanates from the young man’s presence. Image has a grand effect on a leader’s success. Images constructed through various media can change the perception of a leader’s ability to succeed. Individuals can set a leader up for success through poetic verse. From Horace to Sinatra, poetry was a common vehicle for placing a leader on a path to success. Even today poetry and metaphors remain in use, although prose is the more used mode of expression. A timeline that emerges is a story from their birth or political birth that constructs an image of one destined for greatness. Metaphors recount a story of the “origins” of leaders in ancient times and in the modern era. However, in antiquity, myth and miraculous occurrences were more widely accepted as opposed to the modern era. The modern era is not as susceptible to believe miraculous happenings with the same fervor as an ancient audience, but modern audiences are predisposed towards conjecture. Regardless, both periods recognize the origins story of great men. Both the ancient and modern eras describe how a leader was born miraculously and how that suggests the ability to lead. The only difference is that some modern leaders will use metaphor to prophesy success without using allegory to describe their biological births. However, the influential few are each set up for political accomplishment in a manner that promotes their political birth. For example, the Prophet

Muhammad was described as an honest and trustworthy in person to conduct trade with at a very young age. Each leader’s future greatness was forecast at an early age.

Alexander the Great was described as having a birth was surrounded by extraordinary happenings. Plutarch once again in his Parallel Lives writes a vivid account of Alexander’s biography. The author depicts a sort of creation myth of the one who will rule the world. Plutarch goes on to describe the dream of Alexander’s mother, Olympias, and the interpretations of that dream with respect to the future of Alexander. Then Plutarch describes the events that occurred after the sexual relations between his parents, Philip of Macedon and Olympias.

The opening lines of the passage depicting the story of Alexander’s birth are ominous. The use of the night and dreams brings about imagery that sets the rhetorical stage for a great leader. Plutarch writes that the night before Philip and Olympias consummated their marriage; a dream came to the mother of Alexander in her sleep. It is said that a thunderbolt fell upon her body as if it was involuntary and divinely ordained. The thunderbolt story implies that Zeus impregnated Olympias. The thunderbolts most probably made people think of Zeus or Jupiter, as if the king of the gods gave his stamp of approval for Alexander’s leadership. The thunderbolt may also represent all kinds of awesome power. The thunderbolt can represent the cause and ability to bring rain to a desperate land. Thus, Alexander (356 BCE-323 BCE) could stand as a symbol of blessing to the ancient world. The symbol could also show Alexander as a destructive force, able to wield over the foreign enemies. In fact, according to Plutarch, the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, in present-day Turkey, was said to have burnt down on Alexander’s birthday.

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27 Rogerson, The Prophet Muhammad: A biography, 72

The priests of the temple foretold that the happenings associated with the destruction would cause the destruction of Asia.\textsuperscript{29} However, in this context, he is probably not seen as a destructive force. Alexander could even be seen at this time as a potential destructive force against his fellow kinsmen. The reader is either way enticed by the description because of the imminent consequences of the leader’s reign and is invited to continue reading. The thunderbolt most probably projected the image of a natural force originating from the heavens. As the thunderbolt is borne from the sky, virtually so is Alexander. Moreover, the divine attribution to Alexander’s birth provides for some divine blessing from the gods. Alexander may also reign as a ruler in heaven and a ruler on Earth with the prudence of a divine monarch like Zeus.

Along with a divine attribution are associations with natural forces that denote the ability to lead. Leaders in ancient times and the modern are described as holding, controlling, or even radiating the element of fire. There is a Greek precedent established in the \textit{Hymn to Demeter}, in which Demeter, the goddess of fertility, disguised herself as an old nurse, feeding Demophoon ambrosia and placed him in a fire to make him immortal.\textsuperscript{30} Consequently, Plutarch writes that a great fire breaks out when Alexander was to be born. The idea of fire being associated with birth is not an original archetype used by Plutarch.

Another writer and historian, Livy (59 BCE-17 CE), who wrote towards the end of the final century BCE, described one of the seven Roman kings, Servius Tullius, using fire or the flame in a description of his birth. Servius Tullius, as an infant, was sleeping one night when his head was surrounded by flames. He was not injured in any way, and continued to sleep. The

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{30} Sarolta A. Takacs, \textit{Vestal Virgins, Sibyls, and Matrons},
wife of the king in power advised her husband to adopt this boy as his heir, for he would soon prove a powerful leader.\footnote{Livy, \textit{The early history of Rome: books I-V of The history of Rome from its foundations}, (trans.) by Aubrey De Selincourt. (London, New York: Penguin Classics, 2002), 78.} Servius Tullius was raised like a prince and used his great potential to become the next king of Rome. When King Tarquin was assassinated, Tanaquil, his wife, acknowledged that Servius should take power as the gods predicted that he would wield power when she stated that the ‘circle of heavenly fire declared that your head should wear the crown.’\footnote{Ibid., 80-81} The flames were equated with a divine endorsement. Here too in the example of Alexander, the great fire portends a great leader’s coming. Alexander’s historians take this known fire motif from Livy’s account of early Roman history and take it one step further by stating that his prominence was known before Alexander was even born. Alexander’s identity is bolstered with imagery of natural forces that make him a force with which to be reckoned.

After the story about Olympias’ dream, Alexander is described in another dream as a natural force of might that presides over all the other animals in the wild—the lion. Plutarch discusses the dream that Philip had about the coming of his son Alexander. Philip dreamt that he sealed up his wife’s body or her reproductive organs, and that she was some sort of lion. Initially, Philip was suspicious of his wife, the supposed ferocious beast as he thought his dream prophesied that his wife would cause his political doom. The use of the phrase, ‘the queen was with child,’ or ‘the queen was pregnant’, is a rhetorical tool that speaks of Olympias as a vessel that holds something very valuable. Alexander’s mother is not simply bearing a child, but that unborn child is raised to the level of a venerated individual. The diviners go on to state that the child was a boy that would be as stout and courageous as a lion. Plutarch defines the
characteristics of the lion that Alexander most notably will exemplify. He will be stout, strong, and a distinguished leader of men. Also, Philip’s son will be courageous in battle, wielding his power against Macedonia’s enemies.

Another significant point to be made about Plutarch’s selection of the lion to represent Alexander, is that Achilles, the courageous Homeric hero whom Alexander was associated with previously in Plutarch among others, was also compared to a lion. In battle, Achilles’ anger and military might is also compared to a raging fire. The descriptions of Achilles in the *Iliad* as being lion-hearted in battle and tearing up his enemies like a lion are now transferred to Alexander. Moreover, Plutarch uses the metaphorical devices related to the character of Achilles once again. This reestablishes the relationship between Alexander and Achilles with the addition of his own creative style. The description of his miraculous birth that prophesies Alexander’s future success as a leader is intertwined with a repetition of the significance of the nickname of Achilles. Alexander’s identity as a leader was lifted to a higher level than it once was before the description of his origins.

Historical accents cast Alexander’s birth as an extraordinary event. Descriptions of the ancients’ origins were thrust into peoples’ perceptions. The ancient world continued with these vivid descriptions of miraculous births with the coming of the Emperor Augustus. The foundation myth of Rome was described in Rome’s national epic, Vergil’s (70 BCE-19 BCE) *Aeneid*. The heroic figure of the epic, Aeneas, was a Trojan who escaped war-torn Troy in

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33 Sophia Papaioannou, *Redesigning Achilles: "recycling" the epic cycle in the "Little Iliad,“* (Berlin, New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2007), 70

search of a new settlement. He would eventually found a settlement called Lavinium, his son
would found another settlement called Alba Longa, and these would serve as the precursors for
the establishment of the Rome. As Aeneas and his son founded the pioneering colonies,
Augustus would serve as a new founder of Rome. The origins of the empire and the origins of
Augustus are now one in the same. This perception suggests that the two events are no longer
mutually exclusive.

The Roman poet Vergil wrote about the establishment of an ancient superpower in his
epic poem. He explains how Aeneas, through great hardship, launched the process of Rome’s
founding. In book six of the Aeneid, Augustus’s miraculous birth is described with his coming to
power prophesied for greatness. Vergil recounts the accomplishments that Augustus is predicted
to achieve and how none before him thus far has achieved his feats.

Vergil uses the phrases ‘here is Caesar’ and ‘here is the man,’ which give the reader the
idea that the person they are being introduced to is one of great stature. Next, Vergil describes
the coming of Augustus Caesar as one that who is so often prophesied. The coming of a figure
that has also been prophesized gives the individual arriving on the political scene, here Augustus,
religious charging. The individual being described now has a sacred element added to their
identity. The person could possibly be akin to a divinity or someone to whom divinity has been
ascribed. Vergil, like many of his contemporaries, uses the first few lines to build a rapport
between the character and the reader. Vergil, rather than delaying the name to the end, states the
name following the short influential opening because the name is not the central focus in this
passage.

The epic poem goes on to state that he is Augustus, son of a god, here referring to his deified adoptive father, Julius Caesar. The divine nature of Julius Caesar and Augustus of this study plays a major role in their alignment with success. Alexander was also classes with the divine by the symbol of the thunderbolt. Therefore, the writers, leaders, and the public in general must have found the association with the divine a significant characteristic in distinguishing a great leader from the rest. Vergil then uses Augustus’ human side immediately to show that even as a man Augustus can accomplish god-like feats. In one of Vergil’s earlier works called the Eclogues, in selection 4, Vergil introduces the idea of a golden age in Rome. Vergil’s accounts in the Eclogues and the Aeneid largely coincide with the Greek tradition in Hesiod’s (8th cent. BCE) Works and Days which discusses the golden age and the gradual ages of man in decline. A new crop of men is born in a catharsis or cyclical rebirth of the human race in its most virtuous form. Augustus is predicted to bring back this golden age to Rome. Such golden years are often used to give citizens an image in their minds of a time in the romanticized past of Rome when all things were in order. When individuals worked hard, they reaped the benefits. The Roman state was at peace not war. Citizens abided by the law and there was social harmony.

Vergil even alludes to the time, the golden age, when Saturn, the father of Jupiter, the king of the gods, was in charge. The allusion serves two purposes. The first serves to provide the citizen with the knowledge that Rome will be returning to the humble ways set up by their ancestors. The citizens can view this change in policy as the rebirth of the founding fathers of the nation or a recall to the city’s original purpose. This rebirth depicts the new governing body or simply Augustus deterring political corruption, and bringing virtue back to the nation’s leadership. As a result of past leadership, Vergil is saying that times are hard now and that
Augustus is Rome’s respite. Augustus is divine in his own right, and, as he is the one man responsible for bringing Rome back to the golden years, Augustus should rightfully rise to leadership.

Vergil puts forth that Augustus shall bring tranquility to all of Rome and the Italian peninsula spanning the fields of Latium. The success of the empire will reach all corners of Italy and the agrarian class will benefit as well. Moreover, the poor will see a change in their lives for the better. After the introduction, the lines of verse serve to exemplify Augustus’s economic policies. Augustus will make Rome a prosperous state for all. The economic policies he introduces provide social harmony and justice. The description of the golden years, not only suggests economic prosperity, but total success due to Augustan leadership.

Vergil continues with a description of the political and military achievements of Augustus. He wishes to emphasize that Augustus is not merely an economic genius. He predicts the breadth of the future leader’s power and international might. It is said of Augustus that he will extend Rome’s borders. Augustus will be responsible for making Rome bigger. Not only will the future first emperor extend Rome’s borders to the land of India in Asia, but to a land beyond the known world. The poet mentions the figure of Atlas, who according to myth hoists the Earth onto his shoulders and turns it on its axis. The imagery created by talking about the cosmos in relation to Augustus makes Augustus larger than life. The task of extending Rome’s boundaries and influence to the far reaches of the Earth in addition to keeping peace on Italian soil is difficult enough for any one man. However, Augustus is not described as an

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average human being unless it serves the speaker’s program. Here he is compared to demigods and gods in an effort to show the breadth of his power.

A few lines later in the passage, Vergil explains how even Hercules did not reach so many lands as Augustus will reach.  Even Bacchus, the corresponding Greek God of the Roman Dionysus, did not attain the opportunity to encounter such peoples in his divine chariot. In attribution to his divine nature, Augustus is projected to have economic, social, political, and military success. Images are put in the mind of the reader surrounding the biological and political birth of Augustus. The rhetoric propels Augustus beyond the human. In fact, Roman civil wars began in 49 BCE, and Augustus’s victory occurred at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE. Moreover, Augustus’s description in the *Aeneid* casts the event of his coming to power as a reprieve from years of sorrow. The overall message is that Augustus is the refounder of the city. In this he joined the ranks of Aeneas and Romulus. Furthermore, Augustus made it his business that he was returning to the ideals of the founders of Rome. Augustus was elevating his own status almost to the level of a god.

Not all leaders were raised to the level of a god. Some leaders’ origin stories, like Alexander and Augustus, revolved around the prophecies for their eventual success and the miraculous events that occurred around the time of their birth. The Prophet Muhammad in many accounts is said to have had an early life filled with predictions of greatness. However, the Prophet Muhammad was never likened to the divine because Muhammad and the Islamic tradition preached that nobody was on equal footing with the divine. Alexander and Augustus were eventually raised to the divine. Accounts about Muhammad do not rely on divine self-

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attribution, but direct attention to predictions of Muhammad’s ability for leadership and miraculous events that occurred in the year that Muhammad was born. In the year of his birth, 570 C.E., a power-hungry Abyssinian Christian named Abraha wished to destroy the religious site of the Arabs in Mecca. He attempted to destroy the site accompanied by elephants.

In a miraculous happening, in *Surat Al-Fil*, “The Elephant,” God sent a flock of birds to rain clay-pebbles onto the armed forces of Abraha to foil his plans. This was a testament to the power of God to thwart those who oppose his will.\(^{39}\) After this event, the year was called the “Year of the Elephant.” Muhammad’s birth year and further his birth were attributed to this event and, ultimately, the power of Allah’s will. Like Alexander and Augustus before him, Muhammad’s birth was surrounded by miraculous events that prophesied great future achievements.

The Islamic scholar, ‘Ibn ‘Ishaq, discusses the early life and coming of the Prophet Muhammad in his work *Sirat Rasul Allah*. ‘Ibn ‘Ishaq describes the marvel of Muhammad’s mother, ‘Amina, carrying Muhammad during her pregnancy. “As she was pregnant with him she saw a light come forth from her by which she could see the castles of Busra in Syria.”\(^{40}\) Light here can be interpreted as the opposite of darkness. The lands stretching from the Arabian Peninsula to Syria may have been thought to be displaying the absence of light or guidance. Muhammad is here represented as the source of the new light that brought guidance to all of the Arabian Peninsula and into the lands of Asia reaching to Syria.


\(^{40}\) ‘Ibn ‘Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah*, (trans.) A. Guillaume, Section 102
The association of Prophet Muhammad as the source of light and guidance comes from the chapter or *surah* in the Qur’an entitled *Al-Baqarah*, “The Cow,” verse two, where it is said that Allah sent Muhammad to guide all of mankind. The first part of the verse states,

This Book, The Glorious Qur’an, the most honored book, that Allah sent down from heaven, to the most honored Messenger of Allah sent to all the people of the Earth, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, (in order that you might lead men out of darkness into light), We sent you, O Muhammad, with this Book in order that you might lead mankind away from misguidance and crookedness to guidance and the right way...  

The Prophet Muhammad has a close connection with the divine, but he is not the divine. The idea that he was sent by God, still gives a stamp of approval similar to the thunderbolt connected to Alexander. Both men are attached to God in some regard, but more importantly the perception is that both received a religious endorsement for leadership. Contrastingly, Muhammad is merely a man who is prophesied to lead men to a better state of being. The account in the Qur’an sheds a great deal of light on the previous account from ‘Ibn ‘Ishaq because the Qur’an is a more authentic source. The task of bringing help and improving the nature of man seems daunting for one man. The descriptions of the honored man allow Muhammad’s ability as a leader who has been given the ability from God to carry out God’s will.

The will of the gods was often sought after in the ancient world. Prophecies stemming from a divine will connected to a miraculous birth could be used to further a campaigning leader’s agenda. Political policies as well as war strategy were foregone if priests of the gods

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advised against a plan. Likewise, in modern society, the public and government officials both look to information about the leaders’ biography and stories that show potential as a leader. Although the sources seem more trustworthy, the basis of one’s knowledge is based on rhetoric. Predictions were and are made about candidates for office. Predictions were made in Kennedy’s biography that he would be a success. Success was not evident within him, but some like his father saw in Kennedy the potential to be a great leader nonetheless.

The biography of John F. Kennedy relates the story of initial doubts in young Jack’s abilities, but predictions that he would accomplish amazing feats is evident in historical documents. John F. Kennedy’s teacher as well as his father saw within him an outstanding individual that had not yet blossomed.

Kennedy’s biography describes his education at Choate boarding school. John was described as a popular child. From his early life, John is already admired by people. The idea of being popular at an early age is a good prediction that his popularity will continue into adulthood. Next, the narrative of young Jack, describing Kennedy as a man, much unlike the introduction to Augustus, takes on the rhetorical strategy of describing the leader as a common man which increases his popularity. He is said to enjoy participating in various sports and reading, emphasizing his commonality with the average American man. His friend described an unusual aspect that John had a subscription to the popular newspaper, The New York Times. The reference provides a separation from the average youth. Although some Americans may

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42 Johnston, Religions of the ancient world: a guide, 383


44 Ibid.
have subscriptions to the same newspaper, the choice to position that statement after elaborating on his normality provides the audience with the idea that John has an inquisitive mind. Also, the public learns from the statements of John’s friend that he had an interest in public affairs from early on in his childhood. Kennedy now has the persona of both an average man and an exceptional personality. Two seemingly exclusive identities are obtained much in the same way that the supposed mortal and immortal dichotomies are transplanted onto one another.

The biographical account continues with a testimonial from Kennedy’s school teacher. The teacher relates that although he was not the best student in class, Jack was of a clever and individualistic mind. The future leader was showing some promising skills. He was intelligent and he was unique. The description of the individualistic mind makes Kennedy stand out from the crowd. Any method of separating one man from the many is grasped by the biographer. Jack’s unique mind would be useful for economic policies, social issues, political debate, and even military strategy. He can build on this identity introduced in the few lines of prose expanded upon by the writer. The idea of Kennedy’s abilities was his spin and Kennedy’s rivals disputed its factuality.

Next, his father, Joseph Kennedy, provides spin and beliefs of his own about the early life of his son. Jack’s father, Joseph Kennedy, explains how he truly believed his son was bound for greatness. The veracity and certainty of his father’s inclination to believe that his son would be a successful leader in America’s future is stressed by Joseph’s willingness to call on young Jack to strive for excellence. The feelings are elicited through the statement that his father sincerely believes his son has the ‘goods.’ The ‘goods’ can be interpreted as the skills needed to be a distinguished leader. Joseph Kennedy’s credibility comes into question in that he is promoting
his own son. However, as Philip had his own diviners, so did Joseph Kennedy. John’s friends and headmaster promoted the identity of John as a potential leader; Joseph just relied on their predictions in addition to his own expertise as a ‘diviner.’

Joseph carries on in saying that in his experience as a business man and foreign diplomat, he has the experience to select a successful individual out of a group of people. Thus, Kennedy is set up for success while he is still in adolescence. His father’s expertise makes him a credible source in the mind of the average American; when he states that a person can be successful, many will believe him. Lastly, Joseph Kennedy states his son will be a worthwhile citizen who will be virtuous. Kennedy is presumably a man who has good judgment as well as an understanding of what needs to be done. These characteristics of virtuosity and sound decision-making skills should prove Kennedy to be the logical choice for a future leader of the United States of America. The identity of John F. Kennedy as a leader is formulated through the prophecies established from his early life. His biography addresses doubts that the people may have about his stature as a leader and uses those doubts to confirm his status. Notwithstanding his biography, after his death a museum was built on the street where John F. Kennedy was born. The house is now open to the public. The house serves as a site to pay the respects to the place where the story of one of America’s presidents and heroes began. The legend of

45 O’Brien, John F. Kennedy: A biography, 109

Kennedy’s early life lives on. The biography of the leader and the presentation of his birthplace are devices that reinforce the thought that John F. Kennedy was a great leader in historical memory.

The biographers of these great men write an introduction leading to the attribution of accomplishments to the leaders’ name. Building on their nicknames, most of the leaders are connected to the divine in some way. Some have a direct connection like Alexander and Augustus. Others do not have a direct connection, but have an element of God’s approval to uplift their identity as a leader willed to rule, in the example of Prophet Muhammad. Next, the rhetoric shows signs in the leader’s early life that portrays the leader as an individual with potential. Their potential for greatness separates these men from the other men of seemingly equal competence. Figures of speech are then used to state that this leader will reach new heights and accomplish feats that no man in the past has ever accomplished. The leader’s identity begins with a description of his natural birth, but immortalizes the future leader by raising his status above any other ordinary man in history. Characteristics like courage and intelligence are attributed to the leader. The leader usually is not lacking in anything and will offer the solution to all of society’s ills. The people of modern society are given the idea that these leaders are the saviors of society and the leaders are given an immortalized reputation of one who will live on in public consciousness.
CHAPTER THREE

TIES TO THE LEADERS OF OLD

Individuals often romanticize the past and wish for things to return to the way they used to be. The leader is often described as one who will return back the state to its idyllic origins. When a leader associates himself with the decorum, civility, and competence of the early generations that are founded on virtue, the leader joins the same class of the great leaders from the past. The leader is thereby aligned with the social harmony and simplicity of life found early in that nation’s history. Leaders select either one esteemed individual in particular or the founding generations as a whole in order to build a socio-political following. Common public perception held that, if a leader’s father governed righteously, the son and his respective leadership would follow suit. Likewise, if the leader constructs a relationship with leaders of old with the same ease as a son in the succession of his father, the expectations and support of the new leader will rise high.

The perception of leadership ties to the leaders of old was significant especially in antiquity. Leaders of the modern era use the same rhetorical strategies of ties to the leaders of old. The association made between the leader campaigning for power and the esteemed leaders of the past strengthens the leader’s identity amongst the people. The individual now has a noble reputation that the people, the military, and government officials can support. Ancient and modern leaders alike seem to ascribe greatness to themselves in a way even surpassing the leaders to which they attribute themselves. Some leaders are described as being a protégé of a leader from the past, but the vast majority align themselves with a group of honored leaders from
an earlier generation. These associations with leaders from the past raise the leaders at issue to the ranks of their revered predecessors. Along with a great name, descriptions of a marvelous early life that predicts success, aligning oneself to a great leader from the past, constructs a wonderful reputation.

Greatness is perceived to be passed on from generation to generation. The method involves a public promotion of the actual ties one has with a revered leader who was once in power or constructing a relationship with these leaders of old that was not previously apparent. Some leaders have genuine bonds to the great men of the past, while others embellish these relationships. Alexander associated himself with his father, Philip II of Macedon, and simultaneously claimed he would achieve more than Philip. He also raised his lineage beyond the level of his father by associating himself with the divine. Augustus associated himself with a prominent leader from the past as well as the divine in the tradition of Alexander the Great. John F. Kennedy linked himself the founding fathers. Prophet Muhammad was linked to his notable religious counterparts before him. Each leader had his own intentions and used his relationships with the leaders of old for different reasons. The common pattern between them all is that the ties to the esteemed leaders of old cemented their position in historical memory for the rest of time.

Alexander the Great aligned himself with his father’s great leadership. Philip II of Macedon was a fierce leader and was known to the ancient world as such. He exemplified the ultimate military strategist and provider of inspiration for his men. Philip was the founder of the Macedonian nation at the height of its power. The statesman and biographer, Lucius Flavius

Arrianus, commonly referred to as Arrian (ca. 89 CE-ca. 180 CE), wrote the *Anabasis*, “The ascent up country or inland,” as an account of the campaigns of Alexander the Great. In the account, Arrian pieces elements of history together. After collecting information about historical events, if Arrian does not have an entire speech, he writes what he thinks Alexander would have said in that particular context. In this account, Arrian referred to the Greek historical works of Diodorus Siculus, Quintus Curtius Rufus’s Latin history of Alexander, Plutarch’s *Lives* of Alexander, a lost Latin history by Pompeius Trogus, Aristobulus the historian, and allusions to many other writers like Strabo’s *Geography*. Most notably, Arrian used the work of Callisthenes, a prominent historian and companion of Alexander on his campaigns. Arrian describes here the speech delivered by Alexander in response to a mutiny on the campaign at Opis, where his troops rally against him and his newfound orientalization.

The two opening lines introduce the situation and Alexander does a good job of gaining his men’s attention. He explains how he wishes to give his men one last message before they depart in mutiny. Moreover, Alexander is delivering the message that his men and he have a reciprocal relationship. He is not reaping the benefits of their spilt blood. They too have benefitted from serving Alexander. As with the other rhetorical devices used to bolster ones identity, an introduction is needed before the matter of importance is reached. The matter of importance is his relationship to the great leaders of old, in particular here his father Philip II of

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Macedon. In the fourth line, Alexander exclaims that his father Philip II found his men ‘wandering about without resources.’\textsuperscript{51} Firstly, Philip’s claim that he found his men with nothing, imparts prestige on both Philip and Alexander. The idea that Philip found his men with nothing, meant that he that he was responsible for their establishment in society. Essentially, Philip and by extension Alexander established the men like he established the Macedonian state—he forged them from the ground up.

Not only did Philip establish the Macedonian people’s role in society, but he provided them with resources when they had none. Alexander continues to describe how these same soldiers were once in sheepskins or animal rags when Philip found them not too far in the past. He is describing the men as animals or poor wretches who owe everything they have to Philip as well as Alexander. The account also describes the men as having been mountain peoples who pastured flocks of cattle. From the fifth line of Alexander’s speech, one understands that the men hid in the mountains because they apparently could not defend themselves against the surrounding tribes of the Illyrians, Triballians, and the Thracians. Alexander is laying the groundwork for the lifting of his men’s morale in a way that lifts his identity as a great leader. Notwithstanding, he, through the use of relation to his father, singlehandedly lifted his men’s social, political, and military status. Alexander does not let the previous statements stand alone in implying his role in raising their status. He reiterates the idea of the cloaks in a manner befitting a great leader and orator.\textsuperscript{52} The cloaks are symbols of social status that translate into a


\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Arrian, Anabasis,} vii. 9, 10, 11, (trans.) P.A. Brunt
modern “rags to riches story”. Also, the cloaks serve to keep the men warm. Alexander then states that Philip brought them down from the mountains to the plains where men of a respected political class use civil law to handle their affairs. Next, Alexander recounts their increase in military might as a result of Philip’s leadership. Alexander instills within his men self-esteem by stating that their bravery and newfound safety is a result of their own will, not the military genius of Philip. However, by instilling within his men these emotions, Alexander is constructing a more positive image of himself within their minds.

After a discussion of the social and military foundations laid by Philip in the Macedonian men, Alexander and Arrian take on the subject of the political sphere in more detail. The discussion revolves around the idea that Philip II of Macedon gave the Macedonians power and that he made them leaders amongst men. The idea that he ‘made’ them is a common recurrence. Alexander states the words ‘he made you’ very often in the next few lines and that is indicative of the entire speech. Alexander’s delivery of the speech therefore reinforces his image as a great leader. He describes how he brought law and order to the lives of the Macedonians. As in the reference before when Alexander declared that Philip took the Macedonian men down from the mountains to the plains, here he stresses that same idea in making his peoples civilized city dwellers. Philip further gave the Macedonians law, justice, customs, traditions, and culture to refurbish their identity as legitimate men in positions of authority.

Next, Arrian explains in his account of Alexander’s speech that the countrymen were made leaders of the barbarians who previously forced them to hide in the mountains. Alexander, presumably Arrian as well, uses many foils to relay his message to his men. The extreme scenarios of situations are related to make the alternative seem all the more grand. A foil is

53 Ibid.
evident in the phrasing of the last line where Alexander proclaims that the Macedonian men were made, again made by the efforts of the Philip-Alexander connection, leaders of the barbarians instead of being sold into bondage as barbarian property. Contrasting a life of political power for Alexander’s men with a life of exploitation constructs the idea that the men profited from fate in the form of the Macedonian ruling family. Alexander the Great profited from this association to his father and fate much more than Philip.

After a few more examples of the favors bestowed upon the Macedonian men and peoples by way of military expansion as well as the exploitation of the natives, Alexander finally arrives at a direct link to his father. Philip encountered the Athenians and Thebans, both powerful city-states in ancient Greece at the time, and with the help of Alexander, humbled them. Using the term humbled speaks greatly about how vast Philip and by extension Alexander’s power was at that time. The Roman saying from Vergil’s Aeneid, “to spare the defeated and tame the proud” is reverberates here as Arrian was writing in a time of Roman dominance. The ancients surely saw a connection between Alexander’s words and the Aeneid. Lastly, Alexander claims that Philip attributed his successes over the powerful city-states in Greece as well as Persia and becoming commander-in-chief of Macedonia, all to his men, not himself. This element of false modesty worked wonders in the ancient world and does so to the present day.

Alexander spoke at length about his father’s achievements in order to build on the foundations Philip established. Alexander’s main goal moving forward in the dialogue is to-

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54 Ibid.


56 Vergil, Aeneid. 6.847-853, (trans.) David A. West.
explain his role in all of their shared history and how he will achieve more in the near future. Alexander brings his father’s memory back to the minds of his people, but then wipes it all away when he describes the state in which Philip left Macedonia at the end of his life. Alexander even has the audacity to state that his father’s achievements were great, but they were small compared to his own. Alexander the Great describes the strong ties he had his father, Philip II, who is equal if not greater than Alexander in leadership, then strips the relationship of substance by declaring that his achievements are far better. Leaders often associate themselves with another great individual for convenience, and use that identity once established as a pedestal to raise their rank in the eyes of the people.

Alexander goes on to describe how he, like the Macedonians, began his political career with little resources. After successive conquests, Alexander attributes the lands he conquered to the Macedonian men’s rule. Furthermore, he promised the men he would tell them what he has done for them and what they have done for him, but both serve to give him a more powerful identity leaving his men with little to show for their pains. Alexander’s rhetoric, however, depicts an image of himself giving his men the fruits of their labor. The conquests of other lands was said to have occurred spontaneously and Alexander offered his men the wealth of Egypt, the Eastern Mediterranean, and all of Asia.

Alexander also states that amongst the men are satraps, generals, and captains. Alexander claims that all that is left for him is a purple cloak, the cloak as they were given by Philip and that he provided for them, along with the symbol of the diadem. Besides the diadem, the color purple was an elite status symbol in the ancient world. Alexander tried to show his men that although he has the title of the leader of the Macedonians, he is still part of the struggle.

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alongside them as if he were a soldier in the ranks. The account in Arrian goes on to describe how dumbfounded the men were by Alexander’s speech and how they acted like suppliants at the mercy of a Greek god. The rhetoric employed by Arrian and Alexander, used Philip II of Macedon at Alexander’s convenience. Alexander therefore raised his status above that of his father’s.

Alexander did not have to say much to establish a connection between himself and his father. Nonetheless, he used the biological ties and strengthened them with rhetoric. Emperor Augustus was just as lucky. The leader Augustus was linked to Julius Caesar. Julius Caesar was the great-uncle of Augustus, but Caesar adopted Augustus as his own son. Although they were not biologically father and son, the descriptions of their relationship bound them together. Augustus embodied all that was good in Julius Caesar and left behind anything less than fine.

Vergil’s *Aeneid* provides a glance into the relationship founded on Augustan rhetoric. Initially, Augustus took on the adoptive name of Gaius Julius Caesar in order to enhance his reputation. Then he expanded upon that identity by the re-imagination of his birth and the prophecies of his future achievements. Augustus combines two of his previous descriptions by bringing about a third that links himself to the great Julius Caesar in more than name and miraculous birth.

Augustus further makes ties to the great man and his achievements while also surpassing them both without even mentioning Julius Caesar at length.

The *Aeneid*, like the *Iliad*, used descriptions of art in literature called *ekphrasis* to revitalize the imagery of powerful scenes. ⁵⁸ In the *Aeneid*, the shield of Aeneas is described in the same way as the Achilles’ in the *Iliad*. Vergil describes the middle of the shield in which the

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Battle of Actium, the battle which Augustus encountered Marc Antony and Cleopatra is displayed. Along with a description of a monumental battle, the hint of ties to Julius Caesar raises Augustus even further in esteem.

In the middle were the bronze-armoured fleets at the battle of Actium. There before your eyes the battle was drawn up with the whole of the headland of Leucas seething and all the waves gleaming in gold. On one side was Augustus Caesar, leading the men of Italy into battle alongside Senate and the People of Rome, its gods of home and its great gods. High he stood on the poop of his ship while from his radiant forehead there streamed a double flame and his father's star shone above his head.  

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The shield of Aeneas was brought to Aeneas by Venus, Aeneas’ mother, 60 to fight off the last obstacle to establishing a settlement in Italy that would pave the way for the greatest empire known to man, the Roman Empire. Achilles, like Aeneas, was brought his shield by his mother Thetis in order to finally defeat the epic foe of the Greeks, the Trojan warrior Hector. 61

Moreover, Vergil is aligning Augustus to the line of great heroes of the past. Eventually, Vergil will relate Augustus to the great leader in Julius Caesar. As in the previous depictions of the leaders in this study, the leaders are introduced with an elaborate description before the writer reaches the crux of the matter. Moreover, Augustus, in the military setting in this description, is linked to the great military figures of Achilles and Aeneas. Also, the idea of the gods paving the way to success for his counterparts, namely Aeneas, and the founding of a vast empire, enhances Augustus’s identity as one of the greatest leaders in ancient history.

59 Vergil, Aeneid, 8.675-683, (trans.) David A. West.

60 Ibid., 8.618-630

Next, the idea of the scene appearing on a shield feeds into the image that Augustus wants for himself as the quintessential Roman man in all definitions of the word. Augustus wished to display virtus, which encompasses manliness, courage, and virtue. The shield symbolizes manliness (war) and that is exactly the image the Roman emperor wishes to present. The use of ekphrasis helps transmit the ideas that Augustus is related to Achilles and Aeneas, Rome’s pioneer, gives Augustus the image of a great military leader as well as a leader embodying virtue. These descriptions ascribe qualities to the leader that make the public nostalgic for the leadership of the early generations. Augustus is sure to relate himself to the earlier generation of the great leader in Julius Caesar.

The description of Aeneas’s shield reveals that the Battle of Actium, in which Augustus has a triumphal victory, is forged into the center of the shield. The center of attention is Augustus in other words. The middle crest is said to have had the bronze-armored fleets illustrated on the shield. The image of the bronze-armored fleet presents the fleet as one of greatness. Furthermore, Augustus’s image is projected as one of unspoiled reputation. In the remaining lines, Vergil describes the battle scene. He states that the battle occurred right ‘before your eyes.’ Vergilian rhetoric provides the event in the text with such colorful imagery that one is virtually transported to that time. However, the phrase also serves to make each and every reader in the audience a witness to the awesomeness of Augustus. Within the same line, he states that the ‘whole of the headland of Leucas was seething.’ The whole of the land supposedly witnessed the marvel of Augustus’s prospective victory. The land was said to be seething or

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incensed with the rumblings of a momentous occasion that would forever change the world. Augustus plays the role of the leading man in this looming shift of power.

Next, Vergil makes the battle cinematic. As the battle was fought at sea, the framework of the struggle was on the water. The Battle of Actium is presented as a majestic scene and the ties to leaders of old are put on the side at this point. The depiction of the battle scene is used to lead into the relationship with the previous leader Julius Caesar. Moreover, Vergil’s description of the Battle of Actium gives the people the imagery they need to attribute military greatness and virtue to Augustus. Emperor Augustus’s reputation as a military general is reinforced by the depiction of his stand at Actium and his relationship to the Homeric and Vergilian military heroes of old.

Vergil next describes Augustus as a man of the people. However, while Augustus is portrayed as a man of the people, he is simultaneously depicted as an outstanding man. Augustus is said to be fighting alongside the senate and people of Rome. The insignia of the Roman Empire, senatus populusque Romanus, SPQR, was represented here as being one with Augustus. The use of SPQR is an example of the art of rhetoric because the acronym was found around Rome and sent a message that Rome was the senate and the Roman people. Here, Augustus is claiming that he is leading them to victory and he is the embodiment of SPQR, so he reiterates the message that he is Rome. In January 27 BCE, in return for all Augustus supposedly did for Rome, the Senate gave Augustus a shield that was held in the Senate house.

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63 Ibid.
The shield had SPQR engraved on it and the virtues defining Rome. Vergil used art to make a relationship between Augustus and the symbol of the shield that the senate as well as the people would admire.

Along with boosting Augustus’s identity above that of the people by embodying a symbol of virtue, like his ancient counterpart Alexander the Great, Vergil raises Augustus’s status to the divine by stating that Augustus fights beside the Penates, the household gods, and the high gods. When he states that he is fighting alongside someone, he is claiming that he is at their level of influence. Therefore, he is claiming the ability to lead and wield power as if he were divine. Finally, Vergil gets to the main message of his account of Augustus and the shield. In the last line, Vergil states that he stood high on his ship. Vergil gives Augustus the so-called ‘hero shot.’ If this battle scene was filmed in a contemporary film, the camera would be used at a low-angle in order to represent Augustus as a heroic figure. Moreover, Augustus was described in this line as if he was a larger than life-size statuesque leader.

Augustus’s leadership skills are tied to the leaders of old once again when Vergil begins speaking about the ‘radiant forehead and there streamed a double flame.’ Here, Augustus is tied to one of the more prominent of the first Seven Kings of early Rome, Servius Tullius, as mentioned before. The monarchy was despised in Rome, but the image of a flame around the head was bound to the ability to lead. Vergil’s rhetoric mentions the flame motif, but leaves out


the mention of a monarchy. As Augustus is standing tall on his ship, Vergil states that ‘his father’s star shone above his head.’ This is the theme Vergil has been working towards. Augustus is represented as leading in the image of Julius Caesar. Augustus’s adoptive father, Julius Caesar, is therefore tied to his son, the future leader of the Roman Empire. These descriptions related to the head of Augustus allude to the idea that he will wear the diadem and become head of the Roman state.

The use of the word star in rhetoric on Caesar comes in Suetonius as well. Although Suetonius’s biography “The Deified Julius,” was written during Hadrian’s reign (ca. 117 CE–138 CE), much later than Vergil’s Aeneid, it does relate the idea of Julius Caesar’s star. Suetonius tells that after Caesar’s death he was said to have risen to the heavens among the divine. During the funeral games that Augustus held for his fallen father a comet raced against the sky for days and that was said to represent the soul of Caesar. This was the explanation given for the star set on Julius Caesar’s crown on the head of his statue. Moreover, the star helps individuals make connections between Augustus and Julius Caesar. From the beginning of the account to the end, Augustus is associated with the memory of great military leaders and leaders who have their own apotheosis. His ties to these mythical as well as historical figures transform his identity from an ordinary man serving as emperor, to a leader with divine qualities who has an esteemed historical résumé of leadership without having even begun his political career.

Leaders can construct an impressive résumé of leadership even before their tenure starts, by aligning themselves with great leaders from the past. A leader’s status is raised to the level of

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a remarkable leader from history, if not higher. Alexander and Augustus elevated their status in order to gain political clout to achieve their personal agendas. The Prophet Muhammad did so to send a message to the peoples of the world. In primary accounts, including those in the Qur’an and his biography, Muhammad is described as being related to the previous prophets or religious figures before him. These religious figures include most of the messengers or prophets sent to mankind to relay the message of the worship of one God. Islam is defined as ‘submission to God.’ As such, Islam is not believed to have started with the coming of Prophet Muhammad, but from the creation of humankind. Therefore, well-known prophets like Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus, in addition to Muhammad among other messengers, are considered followers of Islam. Muhammad is therefore linked to his fellow Muslim leaders in ancient holy texts as part of a line of prophets.

Muhammad and the other prophets have experienced the same process of revelation. The religious prophets were all sent to guide people. Allah gave them each a holy book of guidance that was meant to guide people to the truth. Prophet Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad were all sent to give people warning as well as glad tidings. These associations are made in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Last Testament in the Qur’an, as evidence supporting the idea that all of the religious figures are related to Muhammad. The Prophet Muhammad is not in isolation, but in a tradition. As a result of associations with figures like Moses and Jesus, Muhammad’s status is raised to their level. The descriptions of Prophet

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69 Ibid.

Muhammad as the ‘seal of the prophets or the ‘last prophet’ makes the Prophet Muhammad as great a leader as his religious predecessors. The rhetoric serves to establish guidance for the global community as a whole under the banner of each prophet, towards the rewards of this life and the hereafter. One can state that the accounts in all three holy texts concerning Muhammad’s relationship with the religious leaders of old played a role in establishing his identity as a legitimate religious leader.

In the Qur’an, the divine revelation of God’s word to the Prophet Muhammad, a relationship of similarities to the religious leaders of old is established. The fourth chapter in the Qur’an is the chapter called Surat An-Nisaa; “The Women,” verse 163 is translated and interpreted by Marmaduke Pickthall, later known as Mohamed Pickthall (1875-1936), after his conversion to Islam. He became a well-known scholar of Islam in the United Kingdom.71

“Lo! We inspire thee as We inspired Noah and the prophets after him, as We inspired Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and as We imparted unto David the Psalms; And messengers We have mentioned unto thee before and messengers We have not mentioned unto thee; and Allah spake directly unto Moses; Messengers of good cheer and of warning, in order that mankind might have no argument against Allah after the messengers. Allah was ever Mighty, Wise. 72

In these verses of the Qur’an, the Prophet Muhammad is connected to the past prophets in that they all received a revelation from Allah. God states that he inspired Muhammad as he inspired the revelation and leadership of Prophet Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and Jesus among the other notable religious leaders. The mention of a relationship with such prominent religious leaders...


figures in the monotheistic traditions would resonate with the population in Mecca as well as the world population. When Muhammad is compared to these highly regarded leaders of old, his identity as a leader is further established. Regardless of the religious beliefs held by an individual, when a leader is tied to another esteemed leader in literary sources, people do take heed of the prospective leader’s description.

The historical memory of Muhammad rises to the level of the great prophets of religion. The verse clearly states that Noah received the revelation like Muhammad in addition to the prophets after him, before the list of prophets is offered. The language of the Qur’an beautifully provides a preamble to the record of prophets before the record is listed to illustrate Muhammad’s worth. The use of the verse ‘We inspire thee as we inspired Noah and the prophets after him’\(^\text{73}\) serves to raise Muhammad’s status by explaining that he is among a long line of great leaders. Although Muhammad’s parents were respected, both of his parents passed away in his early childhood.\(^\text{74}\) He was later raised by his paternal grandfather ‘Abd Al-Mutallib and subsequently his paternal uncle Abu Talib, who was head of the declining Banu Hashim tribe in Arabia. They tried to keep Muhammad from starving to death, but, as the fortunes of Banu Hashim were dwindling, that was all ‘Abd Al-Mutallib and Abu Talib could offer Muhammad. Therefore, the many similarities he had with the previous prophets provided him with an even nobler hereditary link, beyond the family, to the great leaders who came before him.


\(^\text{74}\) William Montgomery Watt,” *Muhammad: prophet and statesman,”* pg. 252
The previous prophets were numerous and all were like kin to the Prophet Muhammad. In the following verse, verse 164, Allah informs the reader that there were many messengers that he did not mention in the religious texts sent down to man. In describing how there are a multitude of prophets that were sent to guide mankind besides those popularly mentioned, God associates Muhammad’s religiosity and virtue with that of the religious leaders from history. Moreover, the language of the Qur’an discusses the behavior of Muhammad as a man and further as an influential leader by making ties between the last prophet and his religious predecessors. The end of the verse begins with the idea that Allah spoke directly to Moses as he spoke directly to Muhammad. A divine link is established between the revered Prophet Moses who was sent with the Old Testament, the Torah, and Prophet Muhammad, who was sent with the final revelation in the Qur’an. Muhammad’s image is bolstered both by association to the religious messengers of old as well as the approval for leadership by correspondence with All-Mighty God.

The last verse of this account, verse 165 of the chapter entitled, “The Women,” impels all the prophets, in addition to Prophet Muhammad, onto an elevated status. “Messengers of good cheer and of warning, in order that mankind might have no argument against Allah after the messenger; Allah was ever Mighty, Wise.”

After stating the purpose of sending the messengers, God states that his placement of Muhammad alongside Prophets Noah, Moses, and Jesus to greatness is one beyond man’s contention. The rationale of the Qur’an is that the religious leaders were sent so that humankind would not dispute God’s decree, so therefore he states the people should not question the relationship of the prophets to each other. In the next

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account, the prophets are described as offering humankind the same message based on the same testaments as well as the same ideals.

Muhammad and the leaders with whom he is associated are described as using the same resource to provide guidance and solve the issues plaguing society.\textsuperscript{76} In verse 213 of \textit{Surat Al-Baqarah}, “The Cow,” God repeats the same message, as presented previously, that mankind along with the religious figures of the past, was a group of closely-knit individuals with common goals.\textsuperscript{77} The same message of the worship of one God was passed along from generations to generation. The description gives Muhammad a basis for the people to accept the next stage in the revelation of God’s message he has established his rise to power upon. The Qur’an therefore tells that the source of the religious leader’s rise to power was a commonality along the line of religious prophets including Muhammad. Notwithstanding, the ideals that each messenger came with were reported to be identical as well. The leaders each guided people to the right path by offering them warnings and giving them glad tidings. “…Allah sent (unto them) prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners…”\textsuperscript{78} Moreover, the platform and the method by which these ideals were presented to the people are indistinguishable across the generations of great religious leaders. The accounts in the Qur’an as well as references back to the Torah and the Bible provide the Prophet Muhammad project him as a leader among the ranks of Moses as well as Jesus Christ. Likewise, Muhammad is inspired to be a leader because of God’s divine revelation. Muhammad championed the same religious testaments upon which past prophets

\textsuperscript{76} McAuliffe, “Encyclopedia of the Qur’an,” Vol.3, 444-445


\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
based their leadership, and the Prophet Muhammad offered the world the same message as well as the same methods to lead a righteous life.

Lastly, in the three main monotheistic religious texts, the Torah, the Bible, and the Qur’an, there is mention of Prophet Muhammad and his coming to guide mankind. The verse relays the message that Muhammad is mentioned in the Torah and the Bible. The fact that Muhammad’s coming is prophesied in the Old and New Testament offers skeptics of Muhammad’s ability to lead a strong rebuttal. The verse states “And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! Lo! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming that which was (revealed) before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a messenger who cometh after me, whose name is the Praised One. Yet when he hath come unto them with clear proofs, they say: This is mere magic.” The message of Muhammad observing the laws is bolstered with the reiteration that Jesus was sent with the laws from the Torah. Also, the Praised One, the Arabic equivalent of Ahmad or Muhammad, etymologically stems from the same word hamd’ meaning praise or worthy of praise. Jesus Christ is said to have prophesied Muhammad’s coming and approves of Muhammad’s prophet hood in guiding humankind to the truth. This fact allows legitimization for Muhammad’s leadership. In the Torah, Muhammad is mentioned by name in Hebrew. In the Song of Solomon Chapter five, verse sixteen, the verse reads, “Hikko Mamittakim we kullo Muhammadim Zehdoodeh wa Zehraee Bayna Jerusalem.” The English

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translation is “His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.” 82 ‘Altogether “lovely”’ is an English translation of the Hebrew Muhammadim which seems to prefigure the Arabic name of the prophet. The reference is in reference to Prophet Muhammad and the –im in Hebrew which is added for respect to the Prophet Muhammad. 83 The main point is that it enhanced Muhammad’s prestige among those in Mecca and Medina to whom he was preaching. The reference to Muhammad further serves to shore up his identity among followers of the Jewish faith, other intellectuals, and the entire human population.

Lastly, Prophet Muhammad could have argued to have been noted in several verses of the Bible. Some of the most notable of such references come in the Gospel of John 14:16, 15:26, and 16:7. 84 The translations used in Muhammad Talib’s book are from the King James Version of the Bible. In each account, the ancient Greek, the language the New Testament was originally written, uses the word Periclytos to relate the coming of another being that Jesus declares will come after him to guide all peoples once and for all. If periclytos is construed as ‘one worthy of praise’, it registers in the same sense as Muhammad or Ahmad meaning ‘one worthy of praise’ in the Arabic of the Qur’anic verse. 85 For example, the Gospel of John, chapter sixteen, verse seven states, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go

82 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." 86

The Comforter does not do justice to the Greek periclytos used in this context. Moreover, as a result of the accounts in the New Testament Greek, Jesus Christ could be said to have approved of and promoted Muhammad’s prophet hood. Muhammad’s leadership was therefore supported by the greatest religious figures known to man in Prophet Moses and Jesus Christ.

‘Ibn ‘Ishaq’s Sirat Rasul Allah reuses one of the symbols attributed to great leadership in ancient as well as modern times. In the account, a companion of Prophet Muhammad realized that a Jewish man called upon a group of Jewish people to announce something significant. The companion stated, “I was a well-grown boy of seven or eight, understanding all that I heard, when I heard a Jew calling out at the top of his voice from the top of a fort in Yathrib, the original name of the city Medina in present-day Saudia Arabia. "O company of Jews" until they all come together and called out "Confound you, what is the matter?" He answered: Tonight has risen a star under which Ahmad is to be born." 87 The description of Muhammad’s relationship with the people of the Scripture, the Old and New Testament is established here by the Jewish people’s joy at the Prophet Muhammad’s coming. The symbol of the star is used once again as in the descriptions of Alexander the Great and Augustus. The flame or star is a symbol of legitimate leadership and builds the ties between the prospective leader and his prophetic counterparts as well as with his counterparts in the ancient world. The symbols of the light emanating from the star and the use of his nickname Ahmad serve to promote his name, portend

86 Ibid.

87 ‘Ibn ‘Ishaq, Sirat Rasul Allah, (trans.) A. Guillaume, Section 102
his successful coming to guide the world, and to construct ties to the leaders of old so that
Prophet Muhammad will be remembered as the greatest individual who ever lived.

The modern world also used symbols of light and ties to leaders from the past to
construct leaders’ reputations so that they could compete with the extraordinary leaders from the
past. The leaders indirectly offer a call to the people to return to the ways of old. Citizens often
have nostalgic feelings for previous generations. Great leaders of a forming nation are
associated, in retrospect, with the values of righteousness and virtue. Therefore, when leaders
invite the people back to a time of social harmony, the leader is using the people’s romanticized
view of the past to elevate his status. John F. Kennedy used this method in the presidential
contest of 1960. During his campaign, he called the American people back to the early
generations, but still brought his own new ways to achieve even greater feats than his
predecessors. Kennedy tried to symbolize the rebirth of the nation. 88 Kennedy’s ancient
counterparts like Alexander and Augustus, ascribed mortal as well as divine natures to
themselves so that they could simultaneously take on the identities of men of the people and a
divine leader who stands out from the crowd. Likewise, Kennedy took on the identity of leader
who practices the righteousness of old, but with the inspiration of hope as well as change to build
on the foundations set by the outstanding leaders of the past. The ties he makes to these
venerated leaders through his own rhetoric raises his status in the public eye.

John F. Kennedy delivered his inaugural speech in 1961. The speech was written by Theodore Sorensen.\(^8^9\) Sorensen and Kennedy worked together to write a speech to be remembered. Kennedy asked Sorensen to study previous inaugural addresses, as well as the Gettysburg address, in order to learn its ‘secret.’\(^9^0\) In his speech, Kennedy offered his objectives in a rhetorical manner that served to bolster his identity as the new great leader of the modern era.

We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans--born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage--and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.\(^9^1\)

The newly-elected president discussed the philosophy of the nation’s mission for success. He began this part of the speech addressing himself and his fellow Americans as if they are in a joint effort. He brings himself down to the level of the common people. Kennedy states that Americans should not ‘dare’ forget their origins. He describes the act of forgetting the founders as if that would taint their honor. Sorensen then writes that Kennedy and the American people alike are heirs of the first revolution to revive American ideals. As Kennedy is the only one


\(^{9^0}\) Ibid., 24

really in power, he is the heir to the revolution. He is the well-reared rebel who will renew the
nation. Furthermore, the first line of the address links the man to the revered leaders of early
American history. Kennedy’s goal to be remembered as an inspirational leader who makes
significant changes is conveyed from the rhetoric. The leader in power before Kennedy was
Dwight D. Eisenhower. Eisenhower and his administration were associated with an old, slow-
moving leadership whereas Kennedy’s leadership was characterized by youth as well as a
revitalization of the state. Moreover, Kennedy is taking on dual-identities that provide him
with a multitude of support.

Like Alexander, Augustus, and Muhammad before him, John F. Kennedy built upon the
image of his relationships with the leaders of old. In other words, Kennedy makes a firm
statement: from this point on in history let everyone know that the torch of victory has been
passed to himself. Once again the image of fire is associated with the leader. The flame of the
torch, as the flames and the star surrounding the head of the new leader earlier, relates that some
kind of light emanates from the figure of the leader. The use of light in the form of a flame or a
star portrays the leader as an individual who will guide the nation out from the darkness. The
leader’s reputation is tied to the great leaders of old, but not tied down to their old ways in so
much that he will bring new light to the nation like a bright star.

Kennedy continues by saying that the new generation of Americans was tempered by war
and an uneasy peace. Kennedy and the writer of the speech compliment the present population

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93 “Transcript of President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address (1961).”

94 Ibid.
of Americans. They instill within the minds of the people that they have been tempered by war in a way that fostered character or moral fiber in each American citizen. Americans are then told that they were disciplined or educated in the matters of life by the uneasy peace that held after WWII, the Cold War prevailing between the United States and the Soviet Union. The American public was said to be disciplined by these historical events as was John F. Kennedy, who in part represented himself as an average American.

Kennedy fought in World War II and he promoted a heroic tale of endurance as a commander of PT-109 after its being attacked by a Japanese destroyer. He swam three miles, dragging his fellow soldier who was injured, and helped the crew survive a week-long wait for rescue. Moreover, Kennedy’s mention of the American people being tempered and disciplined by war can be read as a hearkening back to his military heroics against the empire of Japan. The majority of great leaders call upon their military prowess in their effort to bolster their identity. Every word of the rhetorical discourse has a purpose and they all culminate to make Kennedy collectively embody the military prowess, the social revolution, and the freedom of political expression of ideas. Although Kennedy is attempting to raise his status to that of the esteemed leaders of the past, the founding fathers, he reminds the public of his pledge to keep the ‘founding fathers’ in memory with every action he takes in office.

Kennedy is associated with all that is good and much more. Alongside his military and social skills, he makes the claim that he will be a champion of human rights. The roles of a leader are set up in his inaugural address project the image of a president who exhibits all the necessary as well as the more than necessary ingredients for a great leader. Kennedy has the

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people’s welfare in mind, he is a military hero, and he has inspirational political philosophies.

John F. Kennedy’s charismatic rhetoric in his inaugural address and in his presidency as well, aligned him with the great leaders of old. Kennedy’s inaugural speech not only served to remind himself of his pledge to remember the distinguished leaders of history, but his speech also served as a memento—to remind the public of their pledge to associate John F. Kennedy with the founding fathers as well as all of the great leaders of the ‘ancient heritage’ that led before him.

The ties between current leaders and the leaders of old provided readers of their biographies with a token by which to remember them. Some of the leaders attribute the achievements of the great leaders of the past to themselves. Others have these descriptions associated with their identities through biographies and religious texts. Although, the cultures of Greece, Rome, Arabia, and the United States may differ in their customs and traditions, the rhetoric of power is a constant. Descriptions provide introductions to the leaders which is the crux of the rhetorical art. The language surrounding the main theme of the account, builds a verbal rapport with the reader. Elements of the text provide cinematic scenes that produce telegenic imagery in the minds of the public as if the description was being broadcasted on national television. As a result of the rhetoric of power model, the apparent language barriers in the accounts between the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Arabic, and English fade away. The language of leadership construction in human perception is universal. Individuals can now understand and benefit from a study of role models in history.

96 “Transcript of President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address (1961).”
CONCLUSION

The rhetoric of power has a long history. Historical narratives describe individuals in positions of influence with language that has the power to shape the perception of their successes as leaders. The rise to power of ancient leaders as well as modern ones is described by patterns that endure, through many cultures. Ancient Greek civilization established the field of rhetorical discourse and the Romans believed that when in Rome, they did as the Greeks would do. The Romans borrowed a great deal of their culture, religion, and institutions from the Greeks. Later civilizations, such as the one established by the Prophet Muhammad, may peace be upon him, and the nation revitalized by John F. Kennedy, were influenced markedly by these great ancient examples.

From its formative years, there has been a debate amongst intellectuals about the nature of rhetoric. The ancients questioned rhetoric as a means to persuade by the use of words in an effort to make the weaker argument the stronger versus a discussion aimed to arrive at the truth regardless of one’s initial perspectives.\(^7\) Achilles explains to Odysseus in the company of ambassadors coming to appeal to Achilles to return to the war effort, his disdain for empty rhetoric.\(^8\) Thomas J. Figueira in his book, *Wisdom from the Ancients* relates how “complete candor will not work so well in the boardroom.”\(^9\) As a result, and taking Figueira’s point into


\(^9\) Figueira, *Wisdom From The Ancients*, 142
view, rhetoric can be used for manipulation at times and at others a way to arrive at the truth. In my thesis, I treat rhetoric as neither good nor evil, without rendering a value judgment. I believe that the descriptions of these leaders can serve as entertaining stories and a window into their lives. However, after all the hyperbole is subsided, one must evaluate if these leaders live up to the magnification regarding their reputation. Only on further evaluation of the leader’s behavior during their lives can one truly evaluate which of history’s influential leaders we can emulate. Having an example to follow or someone who embodies many of life’s great principles is easier to follow than implementing extraordinary ideals.

Rhetorical constructs direct the audience’s attention to the good intent of a leader’s actions which in and of itself is fine. The thought is to learn what the driving force of these leaders was behind a perception and how much the leader’s reputation relied on rhetoric. Descriptions of Alexander, Augustus, Muhammad and Kennedy, follow rhetorical patterns. The rhetoric cemented these leaders’ memory in history. The leaders’ great integrity and virtuosity as described in the sources was something that the leaders studied, save the Prophet Muhammad, fell short of exhibiting in their daily lives. Regardless, the accounts of these great leaders, cast them as equals in all definitions of the word. Everyone should be concerned with how our perceptions of leaders, our history, and of life are constructed. The good, the mediocre, and the bad leaders or events can be represented very well or vice versa. The leaders we revere may be great leaders, but they are not necessarily well-rounded individuals leading righteous lives which we could confidently emulate.
Then like now, human expression is all about presentation. Now, with the advent of television and film, public relations are more powerful than ever. Not only are poems, speeches, or works of art methods by which individuals can perpetuate rhetorical discourse, but cinema and television have changed the game. Towards the end of the 20th century, political statements were verbalized through television programs and feature films. Film, like the painting and sculpture, can be used as a medium to bring about self-reflection. Topics such as passion, vengeance, lust, honor, greed, deceit, and virtue became the focus of the film industry as the world entered the 21st century. Heroic figures and character development became an interest to the public. These reformations influenced the media, film, television, art, and all types of rhetoric present in the world today. Moreover, the information we choose to believe and put into action is increasingly susceptible to the rhetorical truths.

Sarolta Anna Takacs writes in her book *The Construction of Authority in Ancient Rome and Byzantium*, describing the image of Emperor Augustus projected to the public. As a result of Julius Caesar’s assassination for his tyrannical actions, Augustus learned that he needed to present himself as a man of the people. Takacs relates that this phenomenon among other notable happenings in rhetorical discourse was one of great significance. Takacs states that “This was a most wonderful fiction, which through perpetual reiteration came to be a rhetorical truth, part of Rome’s [or any individual’s] historical narrative and memory.” Our myths and legends serve as entertainment, but the historical perception may be spun in the same manner, with continuous reiteration and the right exposure, that transform that information into historical


truth. One must sincerely seek out knowledge in order to live a life free of institutionalized ignorance.

Tacitus (ca. 54-ca. 117 CE), the famous Roman historian, urged his audience in the same manner I urge my readers, “not to prefer incredible tales—however widely circulated and eagerly believed—to the truth unembellished by romance.” Tacitus respects the traditional mythical or fictitious truths for their entertainment value. However, when fiction is used to promote imperialistic rule in any personal or professional setting, trouble follows. This dialogue envelops the relationship historians as well as people of all ages should have with rhetoric.

Rhetoric in the form of oral, spoken, painted or sculpted pieces of art ought to be experienced for the respect, pleasure, and enjoyment gained from an intimate relationship with creative works. However, one should also take heed when the experiences we romanticize are used by the powers that be in an effort to influence our perceptions and behavior.

I believe that individuals have control over what they believe to be true. Demosthenes, an Athenian orator who was one of the most admired rhetoricians in the ancient world, made the following statement in response to a political ploy of an opponent, Timokrates. “It is beyond the power of mortal men to take away from you the right to determine and to approve the best policy.” Demosthenes suggests that the laws of the world ought to rely on thought and deliberations among people seeking common good. My discussion of the role played by rhetoric in the rise to power of leaders is but a part of the vehicle driving towards the truth.

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The significance of a leader’s name, the prophecies emanating from his birth as well as his heroic coming to save the Earth, and the establishment of ties to the leaders of old, all provide a deep insight into the rise to power of the leaders immortalized in history. Much study can be done on the legitimization of authority using the educational upbringing, military success, national building projects, and artwork that the ancients as well as modern leaders use in rhetorical expression. When the actions are for the common good of the people, then all is well. However, when the opposite is true and the actions of leaders are but a figure of wood behind which self-serving motives are based, one must beware. If I learned anything from my research, I learned that actions do speak louder than words, but when rhetoric is used to articulate the events, the events thrive further in public consciousness. I hope people learn from my work and implement the knowledge gained from this study in their lives. People should study the classics, ancient history; learn ancient and modern languages, evaluate different cultures and religions, in addition to modern history. I want my narrative to inspire the world’s peoples to become cultured in the knowledge of the world so that we may select the best role models and the best course of action for ourselves as well as our nations. I trust that this approach towards education will be of use and provide a way to understand our histories.


