

Feudal kings appealed to a divine right to justify their rule. In Britain, the Archbishop of Canterbury bestows this right through a ceremonial anointment of the monarch. The Archbishop of Canterbury in Shakespeare's *Henry V* references and explicates this concept of a natural political order when he compares the kingdom to a hive of bees (1.2.183-204). His model predicts harmony only when the social agents, king included, know their place in the hierarchy. However, even within Canterbury's argument, and throughout the ensuing text, Shakespeare complicates the equation of monarchical rule and domestic peace. In fact, the text supports an interpretation of the "natural" role of king as not the keeper of the peace, but its chief disturber. In the final act, Burgundy recasts the nature metaphor, providing an alternative to Canterbury's theological determinism, and, arguably, a subtle criticism of monarchical authority.

Canterbury advises King Henry to fulfill his duty by example of the honeybees, which "in nature teach/the act of order to a peopled kingdom." He creates a dichotomy between nature, in which order is achieved spontaneously, and humanity, who must discern God's will through active interpretation. In the passages which follow, the reader is primed to look for Canterbury's interpretation of a king's God-given role in state affairs. We might predict a multifaceted purpose for Henry, sitting, as he does, at the keystone position in the hierarchy. Instead, Canterbury assigns all duties vital to the operation of the kingdom to his officers : magistrates, merchants, and soldiers. This leaves Henry to more literally *sit* at the top, in his "tent-royal," and accept the "pillage" of his military. The conspicuous lack of active language associated with the king lends a comical aspect to a description of him as so "busied in his majesty" that he can only passively survey the domestic realm.

Canterbury's model limits the duties of the king, what few there are, to those of a military character. In arguing the crown's leave to make war on foreign soil, he necessarily casts the king

as superfluous at home. Shakespeare replicates this characterization of a king's occupation elsewhere in the drama. Exeter echoes Canterbury's deterministic sentiments with his own hawkish rhetoric: "Your brother kings and monarchs of the earth/do all expect that you should rouse yourself" (1.2.122-123), as if Henry's contemporaries considered military conquest a fait accompli for a sitting king. Lest we think the king responsible for dispensation of justice, as Henry's action seem to suggest with his executive order to release "the man committed yesterday/That railed against our person" (2.2.40-41), he reveals this merciful act as merely a snare to incriminate conspirators against his military campaign.

The king's own language reveals an understanding of the exclusively military character of his rule. Spurred by the Dauphin's insults, Henry pledges to "keep my state,/Be like a king, and show my sail of greatness" (1.2.273-274). To "be like a king," he must attack his foreign enemies. To rouse soldiers for the invasion at Harfleur, he associates vicious animal behavior with military skill — "when the blast of war blows in our ears/Then imitate the action of the tiger" (3.1.5-6) — and military skill with nobility — "Be copy now to men of grosser blood/And teach them how to war" (3.1.23-24). This inverts conventional characterizations of nobility as lofty and pure, and peasantry as earthy and savage. Henry recapitulates these relationships in the St. Crispian's Day speech, promising that each soldier, "be he never so vile,/This day will gentle his condition" (4.3.62-63). The dual meaning of the word "gentle" gives the line its ironic effect. It promises to elevate the peasant to gentility, but only through bloody deeds that are anything but gentle. Finally, Henry makes the direct link between king and military explicit in his wooing of Katherine. "Take me," he implores, "and take me, take a soldier; take a soldier, take a king" (5.2.170-171).

In the final act, Burgundy's appeal to peace rebukes Canterbury's laissez-faire

interpretation of royal duty. Echoing an earlier observation by the Chorus, which saw how honor bade the men of England "sell the pasture now, to buy the horse" (2.Cho.5), he shows that war does, indeed, have an opportunity cost. Again, Shakespeare creates a metaphor of order in nature to describe the kingdom, but one that contrasts sharply with the earlier model. Instead of a beehive, Burgundy casts France as the "best garden of the world" (5.2.36). Instead of a hierarchy on auto-pilot, he describes how royal neglect makes peaceful work "lie on heaps,/Corrupting in it own fertility" (5.2.39-40). In short, he bases his metaphor on agriculture rather than wilderness; the work of man, not the work of God. Burgundy asserts that, by waging war, Henry has not preserved the kingdom, he has actively imperiled it. As Canterbury himself conceded: "miracles are ceased" (1.1.67). Peace does not arise spontaneously, it must be achieved through active work.

The metaphor yields further implications when we consider not just its tenor part, but the connotations of its vehicle. The tenor calls for a reconsideration of royal priorities, the vehicle for a privileging of agricultural values. I believe this to be significant. One must only assign modern democratic values to a pre-modern text carefully, but *Henry V* seems ripe for application of populist heuristics. Evidence from the text shows the motivations for war as corrupt, its application detrimental to the domestic sphere, and royalty implicated in the cycle of violence. By contrast, Shakespeare elevates the work of the people — the farmers — to a political ideal. This wordplay suggests that kings and queens do no justice to the powers given them. For who better to effect a political model based on agriculture than the farmer?