

# Authority and Diplomacy from Dante to Shakespeare

*For Kersti, Anders and Thomas*  
JP

*For Vicki and Hartley*  
WTR

*Edited by*

JASON POWELL  
*Saint Joseph's University, USA*  
*and*  
WILLIAM T. ROSSITER  
*Liverpool Hope University, UK*

ASHGATE

with foreign princes. But here he takes the role of the sovereign, writing the words for Stella to speak. In reading them, she becomes his orator and he therefore becomes the sovereign, able to script her actions. But he also becomes her audience and the ostensible judge of her skill (along with his readers). Her role – and her measure of control – is almost entirely written out of the sonnet. Of course, sovereignty is suggestively implied in her face and voice. But, again, that dynamic is held up to question, since his delight as an audience implicitly depends upon his ‘piercing phrases’. Sonnet 58 enacts a series of ironies and inversions – restaged in crucial moments throughout *Astrophil and Stella* – in which Stella’s power is confirmed only through his words, even if the power is nominally located in her ‘sweete breath’.

### Conclusion

John Donne famously referred to sonnets as ‘pretty rooms’.<sup>42</sup> At points in *Astrophil and Stella*, Sidney created something more akin to ‘pretty states’. The sequence repeatedly forefronts mutually dependent representations of a speaker’s internal and external ‘states’ framed against actual, historical, and fictional issues of state. This arguably culminates in the penultimate sonnet of the sequence, where Astrophil again names Stella ‘as a Queene’, ‘a Princesse’, and ‘soueraigne’, and asks that she ‘on my thoughts give thy Lieftenancy / To this great cause’ (107). The biographical equivalents to this ‘Lieftenancy’ are numerous for a man whose father was lord deputy in Ireland, who later himself became governor of Flushing, and whose subsequent literary works are also metaphorical candidates for this charge.<sup>43</sup> However, no clear and convincing ‘cause’ presents itself. More problematic still is the syntactical ambiguity of this request: in giving ‘Lieftenancy’ to Astrophil’s ‘thoughts’, would Stella be sending him to do her ‘will’, or instead accepting his ‘thoughts’ *in place* of her objectives? If Sidney’s life reveals us a man willing to substitute his own or his uncle’s ‘will’ for the queen’s, his sonnets depict a speaker who repeatedly seeks to undermine, complicate, and usurp the rule of his ‘Queene’ even while ostensibly representing her. Sidney’s political frustration in the years 1581 and 1582 encourages us to read the offer of ‘Lieftenancy’ as declined by his ‘Queene’, leaving Astrophil finally as rejected in the political metaphor as he is in his affections. But the final sonnet itself may suggest otherwise: it is Astrophil who, instead of departing from Stella, finds his ‘yong soule’ returning to her. It is Astrophil who refuses to leave when ‘rude dispaire ... Clips streight’ his ‘wings’, and it is Astrophil who decides to stay in the ‘light’ of Stella’s presence (108) rather than accept the temporary dismissal he requested in sonnet 107. Sidney’s speaker does indeed despair of Stella’s love, but there is no evidence that his request for ‘Lieftenancy’ is refused. In the end, representation – whether poetic or political – fails to satisfy him. The sequence thus begins with a conflict of muses and ends with a lieutenant who refuses to take up his post, a royal agent who finally declines to represent his ‘Queene’.

<sup>42</sup> *John Donne’s Poetry*, ed. Arthur L. Clemens, 2nd edn (New York, 1992), p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> *Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Duncan-Jones, p. 371.

## Chapter 11 Public Diplomacy and the Comedy of State: Chapman’s *Monsieur D’Olive*

Mark Netzloff

The idea of *public* diplomacy, especially in the early modern period, would seem to be a contradiction in terms: diplomacy is traditionally associated with the *Arcana imperii*, the secrets or mysteries of state, which by definition must be withheld from public scrutiny.<sup>1</sup> But the reign of James I serves as a valuable case study that may offer an exception to this general rule. One effect of the peace policies inaugurated by James on his accession to the English throne was a subsequent need to publicize the workings of the state in order to generate support for a new pacifist foreign policy. There was consequently an unprecedented public deliberation on the role of ambassadors and other diplomatic agents. Part of this process took place at a theoretical level, with the publication of some of the earliest diplomatic treatises translated into English, including Jean Hotman’s *The Ambassador* (1605). Diplomatic handbooks attempted to codify a set of rules and procedures to regulate the innovative potential inherent in the capacity of ambassadors and other diplomatic agents for representing political authority in extending state power beyond the nation. Theoretical discussions of diplomacy often naturalized these emergent practices of political representation by drawing on metaphors from the analogous framework of dramatic representation.<sup>2</sup> As ambassadors were rendered as actors in diplomatic literature, it was only appropriate that they became the subjects of theatrical performance as well, and a corollary theorization of diplomatic practice was accomplished on the stages of early modern London, with the appearance of diplomatic plots and ambassadorial characters.

<sup>1</sup> After a decades-long period of neglect, there has been a resurgent interest in early modern diplomacy in recent years: among other sources, see John Watkins, ‘Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38/1 (2008): 1–14, Timothy Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, 2009), and Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox (eds), *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture* (Houndsmill, Basingstoke and New York, 2011). Particularly useful earlier studies include James Der Derian, *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement* (Oxford, 1987) and Costas M. Constantinou, *On the Way to Diplomacy* (Minneapolis, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Hotman, *The Ambassador* (London, 1603), STC 13848, B.2, F.7<sup>b</sup>, and G.4<sup>b</sup>.

George Chapman's *Monsieur D'Olive* (perf. 1605, publ. 1606), offers the most extended treatment of the cultural effects stemming from the diplomat's arrival on the political stage.<sup>3</sup> The play's depiction of its eponymous character – an urban wit recruited into state service as an aspiring diplomat – demonstrates how James's diplomatic agenda forged a political framework that was in many ways unimaginable. Chapman's text reflects the inability to locate a cultural position for the emergent figure of the diplomat: neither part of the court or a quasi-public, neither a member of the state or household, D'Olive is left in a comic stasis, preparing for an embassy that never transpires. The play offers a rare example of what I will describe as a *comedy* of state, and uses the generic conventions of comedy as a means to reflect on the problems of representing emergent and previously undefined forms of political community.

The difficulties of representing diplomats, and defining the elusive cultural and political role of state agents more generally, is an impasse that is reflected in the absence of such figures within the two dominant theoretical frameworks used to analyze the early modern origins of the state: sovereignty and the public sphere. With the resurgence of interest in the early modern history of sovereignty in recent years, discussions have tended to devote exclusive attention to the elaboration of theoretical models of political power in the work of canonical figures such as Bodin and Hobbes, confining analysis to *theories* of state rather than its *practices*. Yet the administrative practices of the state in fact served to challenge if not undermine many of the imputed traits often conferred to conceptual models of sovereignty. This was most acutely evident in the extraterritorial setting of diplomacy: as diplomats represented and extended authority abroad, sovereign authority was far from indivisible in its character or decisionist in its intent.

My discussion will return to some of the conventional concerns of theoretical work on sovereignty in the context of my discussion of Chapman's play. But I wish to begin by reflecting on the implications of another political framework for the study of early modern diplomacy: the public sphere. Early modern state formation is seldom analyzed in reference to the concurrent emergence of a variety of publics in the early modern period. The seemingly antithetical nature of these political forms derives from the oppositional framework set out in Jürgen Habermas's classic study, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Habermas initially describes 'state servants' as the prototypical 'public persons' of the early modern period.<sup>4</sup> But as he charts the increasing separation of civil

<sup>3</sup> The play is included in volume one of *The Plays of George Chapman: The Comedies*, ed. T.M. Parrott (New York, 1961). All textual references to Chapman's play are drawn from this edition and will be cited in text.

<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (1962; Cambridge, MA, 1991), p. 11. All further references to Habermas will be cited in text. Among the many valuable critical reappraisals of Habermas's study, see Craig Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA, 1993); Mike Hill and Walter Montag, eds, *Masses, Classes, and the Public Sphere* (London and New York, 2000); Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York, 2002); and Bronwen

society from state power, and thereby restates modern liberalism's characteristic separation of private and public spheres, the state drops out of his analysis: state agents lose a separate identity as they are subsumed alongside other professional, bourgeois subjects within civil society, while the state itself takes on an abstracted, bureaucratic identity as it is reduced to the component spheres of 'public authority' such as the 'court' and 'police'.<sup>5</sup>

As Habermas traces the development of a public sphere in late seventeenth-century England, he repeatedly insists that the space of civil society could take shape and flourish only after it had situated itself outside the jurisdiction of the state: the social equality of the public sphere, for example, is described solely as a possibility 'outside the state' (35), a space in which the 'laws of the state' were suspended (36). As he charts the social position of the public sphere, placing it in a median space located between the private realm of the family and 'spheres of public authority' such as state and court, he nonetheless also draws a sharp boundary between the public sphere and state as spaces that are not traversed. 'The state', in other words, remains as an abstraction adamantly located outside the public sphere, serving as an oppositional force that is evoked solely in order for the public to define itself against its power.

But the strict demarcation of the public sphere from the state in Habermas's analysis of the public sphere at its eighteenth-century zenith is productively complicated by the genealogy he offers in earlier historical sections of his study. Working backwards through Habermas's analysis, one finds that he in fact emphasizes the mutually constitutive relation of the public sphere and the state: 'Civil society came into existence as the corollary of a depersonalized state authority' (19), he argues. The affective bonds linking private individuals together in terms of shared economic interests and through a rational debate on political matters developed only as a result of an exclusion from spheres of state authority. The 'private' status of these subjects is a designation that stemmed from their 'exclusion from the sphere of the state apparatus' (11): even as early as the mid sixteenth century, the term *private* 'meant as much as "not holding public office or official position"' (11).

At the same time, however, Habermas additionally notes the conceptual separation of the state from the court and monarch: 'for "public" referred to the state that in the meantime had developed, under absolutism, into an entity having an objective existence over against the person of the ruler' (11). 'Public', in this sense, 'was synonymous with "state-related"; the attribute no longer referred to the representative "court" of a person endowed with authority but

Wilson and Paul Yachnin, eds, *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge* (New York, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, the chart in Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, p. 30, that situates the 'Public sphere in the political realm' in an interstitial space between civil society (comprised of market relations and the domestic family) and the state (constituted by the court and 'the police').

instead to the functioning of an apparatus with regulated spheres of jurisdiction' (18). One therefore finds two competing models of the public: in a later part of the early modern period, the more recognized version of private individuals gathered together in spaces such as taverns and coffee houses, engaged in literary production as well as political debate. But the emergence of this particular form of the public obscures recognition of what, for Habermas, could be seen as the prototypical public of the early modern period: 'the servants of the state were ... public persons' (11).

My chapter is broadly concerned with examining the elusive place occupied by the state and its agents in critical models of an early modern public sphere. I will be focusing on early modern diplomacy in order to explore the extent to which its practices offered a means for reflecting on the porous boundaries and unsettled status of 'the domestic': in a national political context, the cultural place of diplomats and other state agents demonstrates the overlapping and mutually constitutive relation of the state to a public sphere of civil society. Additionally, diplomacy's extraterritorial setting also shows that the early modern public sphere did not limit its concerns to 'domestic' national politics and was therefore not yet demarcated as a space separate from international politics. These factors help offset two conventional assumptions about the state and its relation to international politics inherent in the Habermasian view of the public sphere: that the state is a territorially bound entity primarily concerned with domestic politics, and that the extra-political space of civil society necessarily transcends the strictly demarcated boundaries of the bureaucratic state. This essay will explore some ways that we can draw on the classic model of the public sphere in order to address not only early modern state formation but also the public aspects of social relations situated beyond the territorial boundaries of state and civil society, especially the practices of early modern diplomacy.

The protocols of diplomacy are often intended to enable domestic culture to replicate itself abroad, providing for an extension of state authority and national culture in the form of the protected extraterritorial space of the embassy.<sup>6</sup> The main plot of Chapman's play, by contrast, opens with a kind of reverse embassy, as Vandome returns home from his travels to find a stagnant, cloistered domestic sphere. Marcellina, with whom he had maintained a platonic friendship, has isolated herself within a section of her home after being falsely accused of infidelity by her husband, Count Vaumont. Vandome's sister, who remains unnamed throughout the play, has long since died, and her husband, St. Anne, has unnaturally preserved her body in state. Duke Philip, the nominal head of this imprecisely defined provincial power, retains a passive role in administering his state: distanced from diplomatic relations with the neighbouring French King, he is prompted to call on the services

<sup>6</sup> I discuss how the domestic life of the early modern embassy complicated this conventional view of embassies as extensions of national culture in 'The Ambassador's Household: Sir Henry Wotton, Domesticity, and Diplomatic Writing', in Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox (eds), *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, pp. 155–71.

of Monsieur D'Olive, an urban wit and head of a literary coterie, to accomplish the play's sole example of policy, the forming of an embassy that will transport the corpse of St. Anne's wife to her uncle the French King, a mission that, in fact, never occurs.

Chapman's play gives dramatic form to the conceptual impasses that accompany the advent of a diplomatic mode of interstate relations. Previous critical discussions of *Monsieur D'Olive* have viewed the play as responding to public interest in the series of embassies that had set out from London in 1604, with the Duke of Lennox sent to France, Lord Hertford to the court of the Archduke, and Lord Admiral Nottingham to Spain.<sup>7</sup> Given the fact that Elizabeth had severed diplomatic relations with European states in the final years of her reign, James's concerted diplomatic offensive was an unprecedented development that dramatically reversed state policy as well as public discourse on England's political relations with other states. The newly ascendant figure of the ambassador therefore served to embody not only the aspirations of Jacobean state initiatives but also the anxieties stemming from the novelty of such state agents assuming a central role in the plots of state. If, as Carl Schmitt once argued, the concept of the political is grounded in a rhetoric of war and an underlying friend-enemy distinction, the play reflects on the difficulties of locating alternative registers to represent a diplomatic mode of interstate relations.<sup>8</sup> Without a foreign enemy against which the nation can be defined, the realm of the political is emptied of meaning and forced to draw parasitically on the codes of domestic social relations for legitimacy. In lieu of realms available for political contestation, erstwhile spaces marked as private or domestic are transformed into surrogate public spheres, a process that enables the state to reinvent itself by drawing on the affective bonds associated with the family and domestic sphere.

Chapman's play is preoccupied with domesticity and private life, an aspect that counters the general neglect of gender as a category of analysis within the traditional framework of the public sphere.<sup>9</sup> In the play's main plot, Vandome resolves the two cases in which characters (Marcellina and St. Anne) have threatened to disrupt the separation of public and private spheres by retreating into the realm of the domestic and familial. Previous discussions of Chapman's play have described the Vandome plot as becoming increasingly mechanical in the course of the play before it is perfunctorily resolved in the final act.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Plays of George Chapman*, ed. Parrott, 2:774; Albert H. Tricomi, 'The Focus of Satire and the Date of *Monsieur D'Olive*', *SEL* 17 (1977): 281–94, at p. 288.

<sup>8</sup> Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (1932; Chicago and London, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> Nancy Fraser provides a valuable survey of feminist responses to Habermas in 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', in Bruce Robbins (ed.), *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis, 1993), pp. 1–32.

<sup>10</sup> The few critical discussions of the play include *Plays of George Chapman*, ed. Parrott; Tricomi, 'The Focus of Satire'; and A.P. Hogan, 'Thematic Unity in *Monsieur D'Olive*', *SEL* 11 (1971): 295–306.

The increasingly marginal position of Vandome, the comic plot's seeming protagonist, reflects the extent to which the play is indeed increasingly swept up in its comic subplot involving D'Olive and his embassy, and perhaps explains why this play takes the exceptional step of naming itself after a secondary comic character. The 'plot' of diplomacy also begins to permeate the play's main comic sequence, as Vandome begins to appropriate the characteristics of craft, dissimulation, and rhetorical performance associated with diplomacy. 'No will, nor power, can withstand policy' (4.1.103), he comments, as he negotiates the settlement of the romantic comic plots: by feigning to love Eurione, Marcellina's sister, he evokes similar feelings in St. Anne, and with their marriage secures the burial of his sister; and, in creating a fictitious mistress for Count Vaumont, he prompts Marcellina to leave her seclusion and confront her husband in public (5.1.115 and ff).

Chapman's play complicates not only the division of public and private spheres constitutive of civil society but also the progressivist chronology intrinsic to the Habermasian public sphere. For Habermas, the public sphere emerges by drawing on the 'audience-oriented subjectivity' of the household while ultimately transcending the private, local concerns of the domestic sphere (28). As a result, the public sphere produces a surrogate replacement of the affective relations of the intimate spheres of family and household, creating a fantasy of a political space occupied solely by men. In Chapman's play, by contrast, the private sphere is always already the central rubric used to define not only the public but also the public authority of the state. In keeping with its comic form, the private or domestic are never transcended through a movement to concerns that could normatively be marked as solely public or political.

There is another kind of household depicted in the play with D'Olive's own domestic space, the 'court of wits' that he dominates before being recruited into state service. But with the play's comic subplot of Monsieur D'Olive and his proposed embassy, the demarcation of civil society from the state does not result from establishing a disembodied, bureaucratic form of public authority separate from and at odds with the public sphere. On the contrary, the civil society illustrated by D'Olive and his coterie not only flourishes in an independent position outside of and prior to the state but also, and more significantly, serves as the social force that constitutes state authority as an object of public analysis and political reflection. The recognition of this surprising dynamic productively displaces sovereign authority from its mythic perch as the centre and origin of political life, including the prerequisite separation of public and private spheres necessary for any definition of the state. As Marxist critics have long recognized, the strict demarcation of economic and political domains into separate spheres of civil society and the state functions to legitimate not only liberalism's fantasies of an individualistic and somehow autonomous economic sphere but also a view

of the state that abstracts it from economic production and relegates it to a 'purely political' status.<sup>11</sup>

Rather than analyzing early modern publics either in terms of spatial distinctions (of public versus private, or state versus household) or in relation to a chronology of temporal succession, it is more productive to see the comic, incongruous entrance of D'Olive as marking a conceptual limit, one that enables the play to examine the confusing disjunctions through which, to use Rushdie's phrasing, 'newness enters the world'.<sup>12</sup> The Duke and his courtiers struggle to make sense of the figure appearing before them: 'How happens it', the Duke asks, 'he liv'd conceal'd so long?' (2.2.16). D'Olive's own explanation marks the entrance of a new kind of public subject into the life of the state: 'the times before', he comments, 'Were not as now they be' (67–8):

... for then 'twas policy  
To keep all wits of hope still under hatches,  
Far from the Court, lest their exceeding parts  
Should overshine those that were then in place;  
And 'twas our happiness that we might live so;  
For in that freely choos'd obscurity  
We found our safety (2.2.70–76)

But, he explains further, drawing on the languages of commerce, sociability, and the free use of reason conventionally associated with the public sphere, 'times are altered, monopolies are now call in, and wit's become a free trade for all sorts to live by' (1.1.284–6).

Even though D'Olive is encouraged to transcend his 'private self' (2.2.52) in taking on the interest of the 'public good' (2.2.56), the space that he inhabits prior to his arrival at court – the 'court of all good wits' (2.2.22) that meets in his chamber – is an environment that both opposes and epitomizes the imputed values of public authority:

... my chamber, where we may take free use of ourselves, that is, drink sack, and talk satire, and let our wits run the wild-goose-chase over Court and country. I will have my chamber the rendezvous of all good wits, the shop of good words, the mint of good jests, an ordinary of fine discourse; critics, essayists, linguists, poets, and other professors of that faculty of wit, shall at certain hours i'th'day resort thither; it shall be a second Sorbonne, where all doubts or differences of learning, honour, duellism, criticism, and poetry shall be disputed. And how, wits, do ye follow the Court still? (1.1.299–309)

<sup>11</sup> My discussion is indebted to Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations* (London and New York, 1994), pp. 127–8. A related point is made by Ellen Meiksins Wood in *The Pristine Culture of Capitalism: A Historical Essay on Old Regimes and Modern States* (London and New York, 1991).

<sup>12</sup> Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981–1991* (New York, 1992), p. 394.

This passage demonstrates, at one level, the lack of conceptual models for the increasingly professionalized figure of the diplomat. There is no social space available for D'Olive, and the aspiring ambassador defies placement in the court or household, private or public sphere, and domestic or interstate culture. But, in another sense, D'Olive is anomalous only if one accepts the court as the sole frame of reference for imagining public authority. After all, he has happily flourished in his own alternative court, an urban, associative space of both deliberation and sociability, before being recruited into the ambit of the monarchy. And, for D'Olive, it is the court that is the anomaly: as he sarcastically remarks to the courtiers Roderigue and Mugeron, 'And how, wits, do ye follow the Court still?'

Chapman's play offers a *comedy* of state, one whose generic irresolution articulates the problem of representing new models of political identification. In addition, both of its comic plots are alike in demonstrating the process through which domestic social spaces were subsumed by the increasingly centralized authority of the early modern state. As in other early modern plays, such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the scene of diplomacy remains outside the frame of dramatic representation. There is no conceptual space for diplomatic culture, let alone forms of public diplomacy, even on the public stage. Diplomacy remains off-stage, associated instead with the forms of secrecy attendant to the absolutist arts of state.<sup>13</sup> Although *Monsieur D'Olive* to some extent resembles other plays depicting ambassadors – after all, D'Olive's embassy never actually takes place – the text is exceptional in the extent to which it places its diplomatic agent at the centre of its plot and transforms him into a public figure in the play.

Relegated to the dramatic function of comic butt, Monsieur D'Olive has effectively played out his role by the end of the fourth act. As he leaves the stage, humorously saddled with a large retinue vying for posts in his embassy, there is no generic compulsion that demands his return. Like with Shylock, Malvolio, and other killjoys and comic scapegoats before him, the comic closure may, in fact, necessitate his absence. But Chapman brings Monsieur D'Olive back on stage for the final scene, allowing him to be incorporated into the social life of the court and state. Not only does the Duke assume responsibility for D'Olive's followers (5.2.124–5), thereby redeeming him from the onerous financial burden that accompanies state service, he also holds out the promise of future employment. Even though his embassy is terminated before it begins, it is D'Olive's exercise of agency – his 'forwardness', or dutiful internalization of state authority – that allows him to gain 'acceptation' in the Duke's 'kind thoughts' (5.2.118–21): 'reserve yourself, I pray', the Duke promises him, 'Till fitter times' (5.2.123–4). The provisional, promissory nature of this final statement is an interesting choice

<sup>13</sup> In *Hamlet*, Voltemand's errand to Norway is similarly left outside the plot of the play, while in Webster's *The White Devil*, the entrance of the English Ambassador at the head of the palace guard brings the play to a close (5.6.275). For a discussion of *Hamlet* in terms of early modern diplomacy, see the penultimate chapter of Hampton's *Fictions of Embassy*, pp. 138–62.

with which to bring Chapman's comedy to a close. It prompts the final line of the play, a unanimous, resounding cheer for the play's comic foil: 'Good Monsieur D'Olive!' (5.2.129). Yet the Duke's comment also undermines the enactment of comic closure, and more generally offsets the timeless and spatially imprecise qualities of the play's cultural setting. The play incongruously points to an extradiegetic future, tacitly acknowledging a prospect for social change. What, indeed, constitute these 'fitter times', and why is D'Olive the suitable figure to be held in 'reserve', in anticipation of their arrival?

I want to foreground the relevance of the play's comic form as a means for imagining early modern publics and representing their entrance into political life through the figure of the comic public servant. Earlier critical studies have generally seen tragedy as the generic template through which the absolutist monarchy and its model of sovereignty were deconsecrated and challenged by emergent publics. For Franco Moretti, the tragic flaw of sovereignty derives from the contradictions intrinsic to its image as a self-originating and self-determining authority that delimits political action to the decision of the sovereign.<sup>14</sup> The idea of sovereignty as founded on a 'state of exception', in which the defining attribute of executive authority is its ability to suspend constitutional restraints in times of emergency, has become a dominant critical model for analyzing sovereignty in recent years, a development that perhaps stemmed as much from the regime of George W. Bush as Giorgio Agamben's influential reading of Carl Schmitt.<sup>15</sup> But as this paradigm has become ubiquitous in early modern studies, less attention has been paid to the competing theories of sovereignty that vied for legitimacy in this period. In other words, we lend too much credence to the arguments of absolutism, failing to recognize that even its early modern defenders such as Jean Bodin did not fully adhere to such a framework, nor were oblivious to its contradictions and its tentative, irresolute conclusions.<sup>16</sup> As an alternative to analyzing early modern sovereignty as either tragedy or state of emergency, I want to offer another,

<sup>14</sup> Franco Moretti, 'The Great Eclipse: Tragic Form and the Deconsecration of Sovereignty', in *Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms* (1983; London, 2005), esp. pp. 42–3.

<sup>15</sup> Drawing on Bodin, Schmitt (in)famously remarks that 'the authority to suspend valid law ... is ... the actual mark of sovereignty' (*Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab [1922; Cambridge, 1985], p. 9). Giorgio Agamben analyzes this paradigm in *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (2003; Chicago, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> As Étienne Balibar notes, for Bodin the state of exception was *itself* an exception, not an abiding mechanism of sovereign power (*We, The People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* [2001; Princeton, 2004], p. 142). Discussions of Bodin typically refer exclusively to the theory of sovereignty outlined in his most influential work, *Les six livres de la république* (1576; trans. 1606); however, in an earlier text, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (1566), he had argued that the power of the French crown was mitigated by other offsetting authorities such as provincial assemblies (Andreas Osiander, *Before the State: Systemic Political Change in the West from the Greeks to the French Revolution* [Oxford, 2007], p. 433).

more comic sense of the 'suspensions' intrinsic to the preservation of sovereign authority. As Paul de Man comments in his analysis of Rousseau's model of the social contract, any such paradigm must 'remain suspended and undecidable': 'The declaration of the "permanence" of the State would thus greatly hasten its dissolution.'<sup>17</sup> Sovereignty is funny that way, because – like comedy – it ultimately resists its intended closure, and its promises must always remain unfulfilled in order for it to work.

The comic irresolution of the problems of sovereignty provides a dramatic form for representing the necessary irresoluteness of the sovereign's decision. Sovereignty, as Derrida so aptly put it, is *stupid*: in presenting itself as the basis of all authority, it will necessarily – and tragically – break down.<sup>18</sup> Sovereignty is therefore always bound to its embodiment in the form of the state. As Geoffrey Bennington notes, although a sovereign may justify his authority in terms of theoretical models emphasizing the unitary, self-originating, and indissoluble qualities of sovereignty,<sup>19</sup> these must necessarily be given 'a local habitation and a name' in the form of the state's representative agents. And it is this process of delegation, I argue, that offers a comic alternative to the problems of early modern sovereignty.

Ambassadors are, in the words of the early modern political theorist Hugo Grotius, 'by a sort of Fiction, taken for the very Persons whom they represent'.<sup>20</sup> D'Olive is similarly described as 'presenting' the Duke's person, and thereby occupying his 'place and power' (2.2.44, 31–2). This transfer of authority is conferred through his 'dispatch' (2.2.31), a term referring not merely to the written documents that secure and enshrine his bureaucratic identity, but also to the precondition that this transfer of authority occur only when he is dispatched beyond the territorial boundaries of the realm. The ambassador's power to represent sovereign authority is limited to the extraterritorial space of diplomatic exchange, and, while remaining at court, he remains an inert force awaiting his activation. It is therefore appropriate that, even after delegating power to D'Olive, the Duke keeps him in a kind of political limbo, never indeed sending him on the mission that had prompted his entrance into the space of the court and play in the first place. Appropriately, he is also instructed that he 'need not look for a commission' (2.2.297–8): while ostensibly granting him rhetorical autonomy – he can represent the Duke without a prescribed script – this gesture also withholds the credentials that are necessary for his acceptance as a diplomatic agent.

<sup>17</sup> Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven, 1979), p. 266.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Beast & the Sovereign, Volume I*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Geoffrey Bennington, 'Sovereign Stupidity and Autoimmunity', in Pheng Cheah and Suzanne Guerlac (eds), *Derrida and the Time of the Political* (Durham, 2009), p. 99.

<sup>20</sup> *De jure belli ac pacis libri tres* (1625), trans. as *The Rights of War and Peace*, ed. Richard Tuck (Indianapolis, 2005), p. 912. From Book 2, chapter 18 on 'Rights of Embassies'.

The scene of D'Olive's arrival at court and accreditation (2.2) is marked by an abrupt reversal in which the Duke, in essence, takes back the power he had just recently conferred to his ambassador. The Duke had initially ceded the stage to D'Olive, and encouraged him to give a sample performance of his rhetorical powers, which, he adds, 'I leave to be enforced and amplified / With all the ornaments of art and nature, / Which flows, I see, in your sharp intellect' (2.2.138–40). Amplification is an appropriate rhetoric term for describing the role of the ambassador: as defined by Puttenham in *The Art of English Poesy* (1589), it is one of the chief forms of figural language.<sup>21</sup> Sovereign authority, in this way, is made manifest only in its figurative or metaphorical forms. And, like amplification, a figure of both iteration and repetition, sovereignty is therefore an effect of its representation: the ambassador not only serves as another person of the sovereign, repeating his authority, but also iterates and performs sovereignty itself, only as a result of which the absent sovereign body can be conjectured as the originating cause of sovereign authority.<sup>22</sup>

What prompts the Duke's about-face is a sudden recognition of the political character of the *arriviste*: as the Duke acknowledges to him, 'Well, sir, if this be but your natural vein, / I must confess I knew you not indeed' (2.2.282–3). D'Olive demonstrates his powers of amplification by giving a long-winded account of a debate about tobacco. For D'Olive, this discussion had concerned a 'high point of state' (2.2.145), and offered a deliberation of comparative politics, 'Whether in an aristocracy, / Or in a democratical estate, / Tobacco might be brought to lawful use' (2.2.166–8). The 'conventicle' that he describes as having met in his private chamber, or 'court of all good wits' (2.2.22), not only draws together disparate social and ideological groups – squire, carpenter, lawyer, sawyer, merchant, broker, justice, and peasant – but also effects a kind of social levelling, as they confer 'without all difference' (2.2.158). This passage describes a scene evocative of not only the Habermasian public sphere but also sixteenth-century English theorizations of the public, precedents that the increasingly dominant strands of absolutist political thought never fully superseded. Its features resemble, in particular, the work of Sir Thomas Smith, both in terms of the dialogue of his *A Discourse of the Commonweal of this Realm of England* (c.1549, publ. 1581) as well as the comparative politics of *De Republica Anglorum* (c.1565, publ. 1583).<sup>23</sup> Smith's long and varied political career – as Regius Professor of Civil Law at

<sup>21</sup> George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesy* (London, 1589), STC 20519.5, V.i<sup>b</sup> [chapter 14].

<sup>22</sup> Alberico Gentili reaches a similar conclusion regarding the effects of diplomatic representation on sovereign authority in the case of foreign nationals serving as ambassadors: 'For if he who represents a prince is a subject of the sovereign to whom he is accredited, the prince himself is a subject in the person of his representative' (*De Legationibus Libri Tres* [1585], trans. Gordon J. Laing [New York, 1964], p. 51).

<sup>23</sup> On Smith's career and writings, see Mary Dewar, *Sir Thomas Smith: A Tudor Intellectual in Office* (London, 1964) and Cathy Shrank, *Writing the Nation in Reformation England, 1530–1580* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 143–81.

Cambridge, Secretary of State, and Ambassador to France – further attests to the longstanding contributions of a professional and civic class to the diplomatic service. Writing at a historical moment when James I was assembling a corps of diplomatic agents after a 20-year gap in which England had severed diplomatic relations with most European states, it is significant that Chapman glances back to the literary tradition of the dialogue, and, by extension, to the ‘commonwealth’ men associated with it, as a way of imagining a public intellectual eligible for recruitment into state service.<sup>24</sup>

The intellectual coterie was, of course, a model of sociability and political association with which Chapman was quite familiar. The ‘school of night’ organized around Chapman, Raleigh, and the Duke of Northumberland is the probable referent in Shakespeare’s Sonnet 86, which describes the rival poet – often thought to be patterned on Chapman – and his ‘compeers by night’ (l. 7).<sup>25</sup> ‘Compeers’, a term synonymous with ‘companion, associate, comrade, fellow’ (*OED*), serves to foreground the politics of friendship and associative social forms that underwrite both early modern state service as well as nascent publics. Although this conceptualization of the public sphere may be ‘nascent’ and ‘emergent’, its *practices* are in fact much more longstanding and pervasive. Like D’Olive’s ‘court of all good wits’, the public already exists in some form, even if it is not yet fully acknowledged by other spheres of authority.

One of the drawbacks of using Habermas as the primary model for analyzing early modern publics is that discussions consequently then follow his paradigm and situate the public sphere as a late arrival on the scene, whether in connection to the emergence of news media (c.1620s and following), or the English Revolution, or the coffee-house culture of the Reformation.<sup>26</sup> Such chronologies neglect the longer history and variety of early modern publics, a recognition of which allows us to see the ascendancy of absolutist models of sovereignty as the exception – not the rule – of early modern political thought. Or, as D’Olive remarks to the courtiers Roderigue and Mugeron in the play, ‘And how, wits, do ye follow the Court still?’ (1.1.308–9). An examination of early modern publics offsets the court-based bias

<sup>24</sup> Although, as Tricomi notes, the play alludes to some of the failures of contemporary embassies (such as excessive costs, delays, and the number of retainers), it significantly transposes the problems of extraordinary embassies led by aristocratic court officials to the figure of a political outsider like D’Olive (Tricomi, ‘The Focus of Satire’: 292).

<sup>25</sup> See, among others, Muriel Bradbrook, *The School of Night: A Study in the Literary Relationships of Sir Walter Raleigh* (Cambridge, 1936). In addition, given Chapman’s own reputation for having a pretentious, overly abstract verbal style – something often thought to have been satirized in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* – the characterization of D’Olive may possess a comically self-referential component.

<sup>26</sup> This point is indebted to Peter Lake and Steve Pincus’s discussion of a ‘post-Reformation public sphere’ in ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England’, *Journal of British Studies* 45 (2006): 270–92.

that oddly characterized much New Historicist work of the 1980s, a preoccupation with the ceremony of early modern absolutism that is restated in recent work on sovereignty over the past decade.<sup>27</sup> An examination of theories of sovereignty alongside models of the public sphere enables us to recognize a more dynamic and contested political landscape of early modern England in which competing spheres of public authority vied for legitimacy. Such analyses also enable us to productively complicate traditional approaches to questions of power, sovereignty, and the state. As Foucault had appealed, ‘We have to study power outside the model of Leviathan, outside the field delineated by juridical sovereignty and the institution of the State’.<sup>28</sup> *Public diplomacy?* Yes, please, and now more than ever.

<sup>27</sup> For an extended critique, see James Holstun’s *Ehud’s Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution* (London, 2000), pp. 46–84.

<sup>28</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘*Society Must Be Defended*’: *Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975–76*, eds Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (New York, 2003), p. 34.