

DIPLOMATIC METONYMY AND ANTITHESIS IN *3 HENRY VI*

BY JOANNA CRAIGWOOD

This essay takes as its starting point the resemblance between the historical practice of diplomatic representation and the rhetorical practice of metonymy. The early modern ambassador acted as a substitute abroad for the sovereign who sent him and metonymy describes a comparable replacement—in words—of one thing by another associated thing. Yet metonyms can all too easily become confused with their referents or even come to replace them, as the sign is taken too literally for its signified, creating a kind of rivalry between representative and represented, as competing sources of authority, in a shift from relations of likeness to opposition. As an exploration of *3 Henry VI* can point out—and as this article argues—the metonymic characteristics of early modern ambassadorial representation made it vulnerable to this drift towards antithesis. Antithesis, the figure of opposition, governs the contentious disorder of *3 Henry VI*, from the rhetorical patterning of its speeches to its structure and subject matter and politics. The Earl of Warwick's embassy in Act 3 is no exception: it is the pivotal point around which the play's oppositions turn. As Warwick moves from representing to replacing Edward IV, the figures that express his migration from substitution to subversion reflect on a comparable instability in European diplomatic culture. Diplomats could easily misrepresent.

The historical practice of diplomatic representation shared characteristics with the rhetorical practice of metonymy. Ambassadors, as Jean Hotman wrote in 1603, were endowed 'with dignitie to represent their [sovereigns'] persons and greatness during their Ambassage'.¹ Such representation asked that the ambassadorial person be taken for the person of the sovereign, just as metonymy asks that we take one thing for another. The *Henry VI* plays acknowledge that relationship: ambassador Suffolk calls his representation 'shadow' to Henry VI's bodily 'substance' and Edward IV instructs Warwick to act 'as ourself' before his departure on embassy.² As Pierre Bourdieu observes, political delegation operates through 'a *metonymic* relation' between sender and delegate. Yet as 'a sign which speaks', Bourdieu adds, the delegate can also 'say what he is, what he does, what he

I would like to thank Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, St John's College, Cambridge and the Arts Humanities Research Council for enabling me to undertake this research; also the anonymous readers, the editors, Gavin Alexander, Joanna Bellis, John Kerrigan, Raphael Lyne and William Sherman for their valuable comments on various incarnations of this work.

1 Jean Hotman, *The Ambassador* (London, 1603), B2r.

2 *The Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1998), 2 *Henry VI*, 1.1.13–14, and 3 *Henry VI*, 2.6.104. All further references to Shakespeare's works are to this edition and included in the text.

represents' and so constructs the sender he apparently represents.³ The *Henry VI* plays dramatize this construction and replacement of sender by delegate in exaggerated form: *1 and 2 Henry VI* show Suffolk replacing Henry as lover to the queen he wooed for his king on embassy in France; and *3 Henry VI* gives central place to the diplomatic negotiations of archetypal 'kingmaker' Warwick, in an emphasis that connects his embassy with the creation and destruction of kings. In these plays, the paired terms Suffolk employs to describe diplomatic metonymy—shadow and substance—describe relations of strife and reversal. The *Henry VI* plays depict diplomatic representation drifting from metonymy to antithesis.

Antithesis does important structural and ideational work for all three *Henry VI* plays. Such intense interest in the figure of juxtaposed oppositions is understandable in these plays that trace the encounters and reversals of the opposed factions of the Wars of the Roses. Shakespeare makes great use of juxtaposed opposition at a structural level in the plays, as Roger Warren has observed: he repeatedly sets one extreme against another and creates further oppositions through frequent reversals.⁴ The aptness of antithesis to the plays' subject matter and structure is clear from George Puttenham's description of the figure in *The Arte of English Poesie*, published in 1589, just before the plays were written. Puttenham's marginal header anglicizes antithesis as 'the renconter', a word that primarily described a hostile engagement between two adversaries—a battle, fight, skirmish or conflict.⁵ He also calls it the 'quarrelling figure', explaining that 'to answer the Greeke terme [*antithesis*], we may call [him] the encounter, but following the Latine name [*contentio*] by reason of his contentious nature, we may call him the Quarreller'.⁶ Puttenham's distinction echoes Quintilian's dual naming of the figure as *contrapositum* and *contentio*: this figure of static balance, familiar from the witty oppositions of euphuistic writing in the late sixteenth century, is also a figure of dynamic conflict and struggle.⁷ In this contentious character, the figure creeps allusively into the original titles of the plays, which call the Wars of the Roses a *Contention*.⁸ The centrality of antithesis to the plays has gone unnoticed, despite the importance of other figures to other Shakespearean works and the recent turn to rhetoric in early modern

3 Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John Thompson and tr. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA, 1991), 206.

4 Roger Warren, "'Contrarities Agree': An Aspect of Dramatic Technique in *Henry VI*", *Shakespeare Survey*, 37 (1984), 75–83 (75).

5 *OED* 1a and b.

6 George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London, 1589), 175.

7 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, tr. H. Butler, vol. 3 (London, 1921), 494.

8 *The First part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster, with the death of the good Duke Humphrey* (London, 1594); *The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the death of good King Henrie the Sixt, with the whole contention betweene the two Houses Lancaster and Yorke* (London, 1595). Following *The Oxford Shakespeare* (55), I treat *2 Henry VI* and *3 Henry VI* as a two-part play written circa 1590–1591, and *1 Henry VI* as a later prequel written in 1592.

studies.⁹ Yet as this essay will argue, the figure infects diplomatic metonymy in the plays in ways that comment on the nature of early modern diplomacy.

The *Henry VI* plays' international concerns have received little critical attention, the national and popular having historically dominated scholarly interest in their politics.¹⁰ John Watkins' essay on diplomacy in *1 Henry VI* is an exception: it resituates part one within the international conflicts of the Hundred Years' War and links the play's misogyny with the gradual historical rejection of dynastic diplomacy in which women played primary diplomatic roles.¹¹ These plays have more to contribute to current critical reassessments of early modern literature and diplomacy.¹² Drawing on Bourdieu, Timothy Hampton argues that early modern ambassadors and sovereigns were mutually constitutive, since the diplomat is given authority by the ruler and the ruler is given form, voice and practical political authority abroad by the diplomat.¹³ This mutually constitutive relationship explains the words and actions of Warwick in *3 Henry VI*—as this article will show—but his words and actions are equally governed by the operation of metonymy and antithesis. Rhetoric was central to early modern diplomatic practice and has attracted renewed attention within the new diplomatic history of the premodern period.¹⁴ As I will argue here, *3 Henry VI* connects the constitutive character of the ambassador, identified by Hampton, with the rhetorical aspects of early modern diplomacy, currently of interest to historians. The play presents a fundamentally rhetorical vision of the dynamics of diplomatic representation: ambassador and kingmaker Warwick embodies and enacts metonym-turned-antithesis. *3 Henry VI* accordingly alerts historians to the extent of early modern cultural engagement with diplomatic rhetoric, and critics to the literary opportunities—both verbal and formal—diplomatic rhetoric presented to writers.

The first section of this article provides context for the antithetical diplomacy of the *Henry VI* plays: I argue that antithesis shapes the political landscape of the

9 E.g. Frank Kermode, *Forms of Attention* (Chicago, 1985) (hendiadys in *Hamlet*); Heather Dubrow, *Captive Victors: Shakespeare's Narrative Poems and Sonnets* (Ithaca, 1987) (syneciosis in the narrative poems); Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander and Katrin Ettenhuber (eds), *Renaissance Figures of Speech* (Cambridge, 2007).

10 E.g. Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago, 1992), 195–245; Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley, 1988), 51–105; Annabel M. Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford, 1989), 32–51.

11 John Watkins, 'Shakespeare's *1 Henry VI* and the Tragedy of Renaissance Diplomacy', in Carole Levin and John Watkins, *Shakespeare's Foreign Worlds: National and Transnational Identities in the Elizabethan Age* (Ithaca, 2009), 51–78.

12 John Watkins (ed.), 'Toward a New Diplomatic History', *JMEMS*, 38 (2008); Timothy Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, 2009); Jason Powell and William Rossiter (eds), *Authority and Diplomacy from Dante to Shakespeare* (Farnham, 2013); Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani (eds), *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission, Traffic, 1550–1700* (Farnham, 2009).

13 Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy*, 166–7.

14 See Watkins (ed.), 'Toward a New Diplomatic History', 7, 11.

plays; that the figure provides a plausible rhetorical frame for English perspectives on foreign and diplomatic relations in the early 1590s; and that early modern diplomacy provided fertile ground for such rhetorical thinking. The second section of the essay suggests that the plays' portrayal of ambassador and king as shadow and substance exposes the theatrical and philosophical significance of diplomatic relations within the plays—and the inseparability of that meaning from the paired terms' rhetorical form as an alliterative antithesis that describes metonymic representation. I move from the artistic and Platonic resonances of shadow and substance to the use of the terms within the characteristically antithetical rhetoric of Euphuism, a late Elizabethan writing style of acknowledged influence on the *Henry VI* plays. The third section of the article brings these diplomatic, philosophical, rhetorical and stylistic contexts to bear on the analysis of Warwick's embassy to France in *3 Henry VI*. There I argue that Warwick's representation of Edward IV is structured around a series of oppositions and substitutions that comment on the inherent drift of diplomatic metonymy towards antithesis and diplomatic rhetoric towards insincerity.

I

Antithesis is aptly most marked in the play the title of which boasts it concludes the *whole contention: 3 Henry VI*. Set amid the violent exchanges and dynamic reversals of the battle of Mortimer's Cross, Act 2 Scene 5 especially emphasizes the antithetical nature of the *Henry VI* plays' civil wars through rhetorical and structural antitheses. The scene begins with King Henry delivering a long monologue on the wars laden with rhetorical devices that render it a pointed exercise in rhetoric. Antithesis is particularly important to the king's opening account of the battle that surrounds him:

This battle fares like to the morning's war,
 When dying clouds contend with growing light,
 What time the shepherd, blowing of his nails,
 Can neither call it perfect day nor night.
 Now sways it this way like a mighty sea
 Forced by the tide to combat with the wind,
 Now sways it that way like the selfsame sea
 Forced to retire by fury of the wind.
 Sometime the flood prevails, and then the wind;
 Now one the better, then another best—
 Both tugging to be victors, breast to breast,
 Yet neither conqueror nor conquerèd.
 So is the equal poise of this fell war. (2.5.1-13)

The epic similes Henry uses to describe the battle each portray balanced opposition. The rhetorical antitheses of their 'dying clouds' and 'growing light' (2), day and night (4), the tide and wind forced first this way then that (5-8), and 'conqueror nor conquerèd' (12), all react to the play's governing structural

antithesis: the ‘equal poise of this fell war’ (13). Anaphoric use of ‘now’ and ‘forced’ and epistrophic use of ‘sea’ and ‘wind’, such alliterative and rhyming repetitions as ‘better [. . .] best [. . .] breast to breast’ (among many other figures of repetition) and such structural parallelisms as isocolon and syncrisis all contribute to the governing sense of balanced opposition. Henry’s ornate rhetoric highlights the consciousness with which the plays that bear his name draw on the figure of antithesis to think about the conflicts and reversals of the two opposed factions in the Wars of the Roses.

The scene goes on to underline this point through a staged action witnessed by Henry: a man enters by one of the stage doors dragging the body of a man he has killed, whom he discovers, to his horror, is his father, while at the other side of the stage a father enters with a body he discovers to be his son. A series of antitheses highlight these horrors of civil division: the antithesis of father and son and the antithesis of expected reward transformed into sudden pain—‘is this our foeman’s face? / Ah, no, no, no—it is mine only son!’ (2.5.82–3)—are antithetically matched by an inverted version of the same at the opposite side of the stage. The intertwined laments of living son and father for their dead father and son repeatedly invert each other’s rhetorical antitheses:

FIRST SOLDIER

Was ever son so rued a father’s death?

SECOND SOLDIER

Was ever father so bemoaned his son? (2.5.109–10)

Meanwhile the king uses the figure in asides that link these immediate events outwards to the wider civil conflict, such as his apposite metaphor for the blood lying on the dead son’s pallid cheeks: ‘The red rose and the white are on his face’ (2.5.97). The entire scene repeatedly attaches antithesis to the *Henry VI* plays’ action and subject as it reflects on the figure’s aptness for the depiction of a kingdom pitted against itself in civil war.

These divisive antitheses affect the working of diplomatic metonymy in the *Henry VI* plays. The plays’ historical context helps explain this spread of antithetical relations from their domestic to their international politics. When they were written in the early 1590s, England’s immediate experience of such civil conflict was not her own historical Wars of the Roses but France’s contemporary Wars of Religion, raging more violently and bloodily than ever in the wake of Henri III’s death. Those were the years Elizabeth I made the most active interventions of her reign in continental affairs, in support of the Protestant heir to France, Henri IV, fighting his Spanish-backed Catholic countrymen for his throne. English support for a French king was itself an unexpected reversal of traditional enmities and alliances, the outcome of England’s parlous negotiation of its vulnerable position between the two rival superpowers of Europe, France and Spain.¹⁵ ‘The state of the world is marveleously changed,’ wrote Lord Burghley in

15 R. B. Wernham, *The Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy, 1558–1603* (Berkeley, 1980), 44, 71–82.

1589, ‘when we trew englishmen have cause for our own quietnes, to wish good succes to a french Kyng’.¹⁶ England’s international concerns must have made the oppositions and reversals of her own recent civil wars—and her relations with France during those years of turmoil—seem an apt subject in the early 1590s. They lay the groundwork for the plays’ contamination of their international relations with the antitheses that haunt their domestic politics.

The fictional nature of diplomatic metonymy was especially evident under Elizabeth I, both because of the gender differences between her person and her ambassadors’ persons and because the queen allowed her ambassadors relative freedom of expression and action.¹⁷ The claim that Elizabethan ambassadors were ‘metonymic representations of their prince’ is misleading, argues Jason Powell, since they often worked for their own or factional ends.¹⁸ Diplomatic manuals of the period certainly discuss sovereigns who misinform their ambassadors and ambassadors who contravene their orders.¹⁹ Such deceptions merely extend the necessary constitutive role every diplomat played in realizing and giving form and voice to sovereign power abroad. International recognition has always played a part in the authorization of sovereign entities, and early modern diplomatic relations were no exception: on the death of Henri III in 1589, just before the *Henry VI* plays were written, French Protestant and Catholic factions both sent embassies to Rome because diplomatic recognition would strengthen their claims to the throne.²⁰ Defining ambassadors as those sent by sovereigns in his 1585 treatise *De legationibus libri tres*, Gentili then defines sovereign senders as those whose diplomats are everywhere accepted.²¹ Discussing the powers implied in free instructions elsewhere, Gentili cites an ambassador sent by the Duke of Brittany to Louis XI who received a blank sheet of paper for instruction, on which he was himself to write down what he wanted done by his Duke in negotiations with the king.²² Metonymy does not do justice to these mutually constitutive

16 *The Talbot Papers from Lambeth Palace Library, London*, reel 5 (vol. I) (East Ardsley, 1984), 11r.

17 Jason Powell, ‘Astrophil the Orator: Diplomacy and Diplomats in Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*’, in Powell and Rossiter (eds), *Authority and Diplomacy*, 171–84 (173–4); Gary Bell, ‘Elizabethan Diplomacy: The Subtle Revolution’, in Malcolm Thorp and Arthur Slavin (eds), *Politics, Religion and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of De Lemar Jensen* (Kirkville, 1994), 267–88.

18 Powell, ‘Astrophil the Orator’, 174.

19 E.g. Sir Francis Thynne, *The Perfect Ambassadour* (London, 1652; manuscript publication 1579), 140–60.

20 James Crawford, *The Creation of States in International Law*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2006), 6–12; Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy*, 115–37.

21 Alberico Gentili, *De legationibus libri tres* (London, 1585), 6–8.

22 Gentili, *De legationibus*, 128. On the construction of sovereigns through diplomats’ rhetorical and textual work, see Jason Powell, ‘“For Ceasar’s I Am”: Henrician Diplomacy and Representations of King and Country in Thomas Wyatt’s Poetry’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 36 (2005), 415–31 (422–3); Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy*.

relations. The *Henry VI* plays propose antithesis as a more appropriate figure to describe the competing authority of diplomat and prince.

Antithesis captures certain dirty realities of early modern diplomatic practice evident in the plays and inadequately described by metonymy. In the decade preceding the *Henry VI* plays, the so-called Mendoza affair became a notorious English public focal point for such underhand diplomatic dealings. Discovered plotting to assassinate Elizabeth, the Spanish ambassador Don Bernadino de Mendoza was expelled from the country in 1584. The Privy Council had taken advice on Mendoza's ambassadorial privileges from Jean Hotman and Alberico Gentili—both lawyers, and later writers on diplomacy—and Elizabeth sent an envoy to Spain to explain her actions, but Philip II refused to see her messenger.²³ English public debate over the rights of such perfidious ambassadors inspired legal treatises on diplomacy that asked how treasonous, criminal and espionage activities related to accredited diplomatic status.²⁴ Hotman surmised that Philip's refusal to see the envoy was an attempt to resolve the tension between these real practices and the fictions of transparent and peaceful representation, by avoiding officially acknowledging Mendoza's actions without disowning his ambassador.²⁵ In her equally disingenuous publicity on the affair, Elizabeth claimed that she was motivated by Mendoza's refusal to present royal letters accrediting 'that it was the Kings will that he should deale with vs in his Masters name in sundrie things [...] which wee did iudge to be contrary to the Kinge his Masters will', recasting her exposure of Philip's allegedly rogue ambassador as an act of international goodwill.²⁶ Like the diplomatic deceptions and betrayals of the *Henry VI* plays, the real and attributed diplomatic double-dealings of the Mendoza affair are better described by antithesis than metonymy: the antithesis of nation against nation, show against reality, accredited representation against discreditable and discredited diplomatic actions, ambassadorial against sovereign authority.

Such applications of rhetorical figures to a world beyond language as these were widespread in early modern thinking: rhetorical figures 'permeate Renaissance literature and culture as dynamic and evolving nuclei of thought and expression'.²⁷ Diplomacy offered fertile ground for this kind of expansive rhetorical thinking since humanist rhetorical interests fuelled Renaissance developments in the diplomatic profession and rhetorical speechmaking and persuasion were essential to diplomatic work.²⁸ Diplomatic treatises note that the Romans called their

23 Wallace MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572–1588* (Princeton, 1981), 312–29; see also Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy*, 138–44.

24 Gentili, *De legationibus*, esp. 77–80; Anon., *De legato et absoluto principe perduellionis reo* (Oxford, 1587), esp. A4r, A7r.

25 Hotman, *Ambassador*, H5v.

26 *A Declaration of the Causes Moving the Queene of England to Giue Aide to [...] the Lowe Countries* (London, 1585), 13.

27 Adamson, Alexander and Ettenhuber (eds), *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, 11.

28 Douglas Biow, *Doctors, Ambassadors, Secretaries: Humanism and Professions in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, 2002), 16, 101–52.

ambassadors *oratores* as well as *legati*; as Hotman observes, ‘in many places Ambassadors are called Orators’; ambassadors even figured as embodiments, or personifications, of speech and language.²⁹ Although Elizabethan diplomatic manuals recommend less ornamented rhetorical styles for diplomats—perhaps in reaction to flowery diplomatic speechifying since Hotman adds that he has ‘seene many falter through affectation’—they emphasize that these plainer styles still fall firmly within the classical rhetorical tradition.³⁰ Diplomatic orations were printed both for political publicity and as exemplary instances of deliberative oratory, whilst recent historical scholarship has demonstrated the careful rhetorical fashioning of early modern diplomatic relations in such speeches, as well as letters, reports and other surviving sources.³¹

Shakespeare’s chronicle sources for the *Henry VI* plays include many such model diplomatic orations, both ornate and plain in style, both fictional and real.³² The 1587 continuation of Holinshed’s *Chronicles* prints a speech given by the deputies of the Spanish-ruled Low Countries at the English court in 1585, for example, as England moved towards war with Spain in the wake of the Mendoza affair. The Dutch diplomats skilfully use figures of repetition and division to emphasize and contrast Spanish cruelty towards the Dutch and desired English aid in the Dutch rebellion against Spanish rule in such hendiadic and diazeugmatic pairings as ‘tyrannie & servitude’ and ‘destruire & ruiner’ (the Spanish) and ‘protectrice & defendresse’ and ‘garantir & defendre’ (the English).³³ The queen came to their aid as requested, although Holinshed suggests that she was unswayed by such superficial flourishes when he reports that she considered the ‘summe’ or substance of their oration. Whether ambassadors were seen as effectively persuasive or as Hotman feared falteringly affected—a dichotomy that plagued the wider reception of rhetoric in the Renaissance—they were strongly associated with oratory.

The importance of persuasive delivery (*pronunciatio*)—or embodied and performed speech—linked this diplomatic oratory to drama.³⁴ In his 1608 *Apology for Actors*, Thomas Heywood recalls the ancient practice of employing actors to deliver diplomatic speeches when he observes that the eloquent Greeks ‘trained vp their youthfull Nobility to bee Actors, so to embolden them in the deliuey of any

29 Donald Queller, *The Office of Ambassador in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1967), 60–76; Hotman, *Ambassador*, C2v; on the ambassador as speech see e.g. Gentili, *De legationibus*, 3.

30 Hotman, *Ambassador*, C3r; Gentili, *De legationibus*, 102–3.

31 E.g. Thomas Norton, *Orations* (London, 1560), esp. Ajr; Denis Crouzet, ‘“A strong desire to be a mother to all your subjects”: A Rhetorical Experiment by Catherine de Medici’, in Watkins (ed.), ‘Toward a New Diplomatic History’, 103–18; Rayne Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters: Royal Correspondence and English Diplomacy in the Reign of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke, 2012).

32 For a highly ornamented example from Edward IV’s reign, see Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Fanelies of Lancaster and Yorke* (London, 1548), CCxxixr–CCxxxr.

33 Raphael Holinshed et al., *Third Volume of the Chronicles* (London, 1587), 1411–3.

34 See, e.g., *Three Orations of Demosthenes*, tr. Thomas Wilson (London, 1570), Q4r, R4v.

forraine Embassy'.³⁵ Widespread early modern comparisons of ambassadors to actors and the involvement of London players and playwrights in diplomacy through court performances, courtly service and espionage work can only have underlined these parallels.³⁶ The *Henry VI* plays draw on an extensive identification of ambassadorial actors with embodied rhetoric when they place diplomacy within the operation of figures of speech—when they render their ambassadors the embodiments of metonymy-turned-antithesis. The role of shadow and substance in that process is the subject of the next section.

II

2 *Henry VI* opens with Suffolk giving his 'title' to Queen Margaret, whom he has married in France by diplomatic proxy, to her new husband, Henry VI—or as he puts it, 'To your most gracious hands, that are the substance / Of that great shadow I did represent' (1.1.12–14). A line division reinforces Suffolk's implicitly antithetical grouping of king, bodily hands and substance in opposition to their metonyms ambassador, representation and shadow. Yet Suffolk's precise words make shadow the object of his representation (he represented a shadow) and since the king was also the object of his representation (he represented the king), his ambiguous syntax creates a lurking affinity between king and shadow that intrudes on the opposition and threatens to collapse it into identity. The ambassador soon shows that this is more than just a verbal quibble, for he realizes that threat: instead of delivering up his title in the queen, Suffolk replaces the king as her lover, collapsing the distinction between ambassador and king. Shadow and substance are an antithesis that describes metonymic representation and they are attached to diplomat and king in the *Henry VI* plays. Like the plays' other contentious antitheses, they tend towards conflict and reversal.

3 *Henry VI* also uses shadow and substance to express political representations, antitheses and usurpations, as 'true king' and usurping 'shadow' 'like a king' exchange places (1.4.66–97, 4.4.22–3). When Warwick slips from diplomatic representation to rebellion, he reveals himself as another of the plays' substantial shadows. Upon his appointment as joint protector to Henry VI, having deposed Edward IV, he promises that he and Clarence will 'yoke together, like a double shadow / To Henry's body, and supply his place—/ I mean in bearing weight of government—' (4.7.49–51). Warwick's immediate qualification of 'supply his place' with a hasty 'I mean' only underlines its subversive potential, while his mixed metaphor grants his representation substantial presence, in its unshadowlike ability to bear weight and replace the body that cast it, just as on his earlier embassy he supplied—both supplemented and took—Edward's place. The subversive relations between shadow and substance impart particular theatrical and

35 Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London, 1612), C2v–C3r.

36 Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy*, esp. 143; Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company, 1594–1642* (Cambridge, 2004), 51–2.

philosophical meaning to ambassadors in the *Henry VI* plays, and these antithetical terms also reveal the link between that meaning and the operation of figures of speech, through common origins in the late sixteenth-century euphuistic rhetoric that influenced the plays.

The *Henry VI* plays' ambassadors are doubly laden with metatheatrical significance: first through early modern comparisons of ambassadors to actors, and then through the in-play comparison of ambassador to shadow, punning on shadow as a term for actor.³⁷ These comparisons imply equivalences between the ambassadorial representation and usurpation of kings within the plays and the plays' historical drama, which both represents and (usurper-like) rewrites the history of kings. They make a similar point to the punning exploration of shadow and substance between Talbot and Auvergne in *1 Henry VI*. When Talbot claims that he is 'but shadow' and his 'substance is not here' he momentarily appears to be admitting he is an actor—before he offers another explanation—and Auvergne implicitly comments on the unstable hierarchy between dramatic shadows and their substantial originals when she responds, 'He will be here, and yet he is not here. / How can these contrarities agree?' (2.3.50–9). Drawing out the metatheatrical implications, Brian Walsh finds in Auvergne's contrarities 'a figure for the ambivalent relation of the present and the past' in the plays as theatrical performance seeks both to embody and replace its elusive historical subject.³⁸ In this context, Suffolk's ambassadorial courtship of Margaret towards the end of *1 Henry VI* becomes more than a mere romantic interlude or incomplete gesture forward historically to the action of the earlier-written *2 Henry VI*. René of Anjou embraces Suffolk 'as I would embrace / The Christian prince King Henry, were he here': the ambassador's bodily realization of his king reduces that king to a counterfactual conditional, at once there and not there (5.5.127–8). Suffolk's diplomatic embodiment and replacement of his sovereign is the enactment of Talbot and Auvergne's punning discussion in memory and anticipation of the opening lines of *2 Henry VI* comparing ambassador to shadow and king to substance. Like historical drama, these ambassadors at once recreate and replace kings.

The chaotic, lawless world of the *Henry VI* plays expresses the political and philosophical corollary of this metatheatrical punning: this is a sceptical place in which it is unclear whether earthly shadows truly represent philosophical or divine substance. The distinction between a world of shadowy copies and a substantial realm of immaterial truth originated in the language and images of Plato's allegory of the cave and is widespread in early modern Platonic writings, in which it also draws on a Christian distinction between a sun-like divine substance and the obscured mortal world, so that shadow came to indicate both the imaging and

37 See *Midsummer Night's Dream* Epilogue 1 or *Macbeth* 5.5.23.

38 Brian Walsh, "'Unkind Division': The Double Absence of Performing History in *1 Henry VI*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 55 (2004), 119–47 (119–23, 144).

obscuring of divine truths.³⁹ Wider political uses of the terms to distinguish between royal substance and its shadowy representation (in domestic and diplomatic offices) intersected with these philosophical applications: they drew on pro-monarchical imagery associating the king or queen with the sovereign Platonic form of the good and beautiful.⁴⁰ Shakespeare must have been aware of the Platonic connotations of shadow and substance since he plays on them in the sonnet that opens ‘What is your substance, whereof are you made, / That millions of strange shadows on you tend?’ (53.1–2): a sonneteer commonplace that identifies the addressee with the form of the good and beautiful here introduces a surprisingly complex investigation of Platonic metaphysics.⁴¹ Significantly, though, the opening question remains unanswered, gesturing (like the *Henry VI* plays) at the epistemological problems with a metaphysical model in which earthly shadows relate only obscurely to philosophical substance.

Many of these issues were also explored in euphuistic writing of the 1580s and early 1590s, which had an acknowledged influence on the *Henry VI* plays.⁴² As an alliterative antithesis that expresses a mimetic and metonymic relationship of resemblance and contiguity, ‘shadow and substance’ combines defining euphuistic stylistic characteristics with an exploration of truth and representation, in writing and in the world. The terms became an important rhetorical frame for such ideas within euphuistic fiction.⁴³ An episode from John Lyly’s second Euphuus fiction, *Euphuus and his England*, stresses the relevance of the euphuistic rhetoric and associations of shadow and substance for diplomatic representation and rhetoric in the *Henry VI* plays. In the course of his adventures, Euphuus attends after-dinner discourses that recall the Platonic discourses on love in book 4 of Castiglione’s *Il cortegiano*. One guest, Camilla, responds to another guest’s

39 Plato, *Republic*, tr. Robin Waterfield (Oxford, 1993), 514a–518b. See Baldassare Castiglione, *The Courtyer*, tr. Thomas Hoby (London, 1561), Xxii; Philippe de Mornay, *A Woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian Religion*, tr. Arthur Golding (London, 1587), 31; Jean Calvin, *The Sermons of M. John Caluin, vpon the Epistle of S. Paule too the Ephesians*, tr. Arthur Golding (London, 1577), *.vr.

40 For a survey of the terms’ meanings, see Anthony Gash, ‘Shakespeare’s Comedies of Shadow and Substance: Word and Image in *Henry IV* and *Twelfth Night*’, *Word and Image*, 4 (1988), 626–62.

41 Stephen Medcalf, ‘Shakespeare on Beauty, Truth and Transcendence’, in Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (eds), *Platonism and the English Imagination* (Cambridge, 1994), 117–25 (118).

42 Commentary on collaborative authorship makes much of stylistic and verbal parallels with the works of Euphuistic writers and contemporaneous references that suggest connections with that group; see Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, with John Jowett and William Montgomery, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford, 1987), 86–8, 176, 198, 717–18; Gary Taylor, ‘Shakespeare and Others: The Authorship of *Henry the Sixth, Part One*’, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 7 (1995), 145–205; *The Second Part of King Henry VI*, ed. John Dover Wilson (Cambridge, 1952), xxv–xliii; *The First Part of King Henry the Sixth*, ed. H. Hart (London, 1909), x–l; *The Second Part of King Henry the Sixth*, ed. H. Hart (London, 1909), vii–lii.

43 See (e.g.) the revealingly titled euphuistic fiction by Thomas Lodge, *Euphuus Shadow: The Battaile of the Sences*, ed. Robert Greene (London, 1591).

Neoplatonic account of love with scepticism about the reliability of its implied semiotics. In a series of euphuistic antitheses Camilla challenges the metonymic relationships it assumes (beauty represents virtue; words, works; shadow, substance) and in the process she metaphorically invokes the ambassador as a sign associated with verbal representations: ‘the tongue [is] the Ambassadour of the heart’. Her entire speech comprises a series of interlocking observations on how outward appearances express or conceal inner qualities or meaning. She proposes a lover’s trial that asks that words always be true representations, for which the correspondence she requires between a lover’s ‘wordes’ and ‘workes’, ‘sware’ and ‘performe’, ‘othe’ and ‘deede’, and ‘shadowe’ and ‘substance’ all serve as proxies, but her need for proof through trial shows her scepticism about such stable semiotics. She fears that the lover’s flatteries are far from divine truth (that every ‘gloase’ is not a ‘gospell’), casting doubt on Pietro Bembo’s Neoplatonic account, in *Il cortegiano*, of a love that leads inevitably from corporeal ‘feeble shadow’ (*al corpo una debil umbra*) to the soul’s immaterial and divine ‘substance’ (*sustanzia*).⁴⁴ In other words, Camilla sceptically suspects a world like that of the *Henry VI* plays, a world of obscured truths.

Camilla’s metaphor for the verbal representation of love—the tongue the Ambassador of the heart—picks up on Bembo’s assertion that ‘wordes [...] be the enterpreters of the soule’ (*parole che sono interpreti dell’anima*) and on the sovereignty of Platonic love, stressing the involvement of embassy with the mimetic, metaphysical and semiotic concerns her discourse raises.⁴⁵ Underscoring the continuities between such wider metaphorical and cultural understandings of diplomacy and the diplomatic sphere, Camilla’s variation on Bembo reflects the general identification of ambassadors with personified and embodied speech in diplomatic manuals and inadvertently anticipates Gentili’s particular quotation of Lucretius’s phrase ‘*animi interpres [...] lingua*’ (the tongue the interpreter of the soul) as evidence that ambassadors can be called interpreters in *De legationibus*.⁴⁶ Embassy reappears elsewhere in *Euphues and his England*, in another Platonically-inflected quarrel about love, invoking an inversion that is familiar from the *Henry VI* plays: ‘In deede *Euphues*’, Philautus argues, ‘if the King would resigne his right to his Legate, then were it not amisse for the heart to yeelde to the eyes’.⁴⁷ Lyly figuratively involves embassy with an exploration of sovereign truths (substance and soul) and their metonymic representation (shadow and expression and appearance) that is rhetorically structured by his characteristic parallelism and antithesis; as Robert Heilman observes, ‘the habit of mind which appears in euphuistic style appears also in the structure of relationships and

44 *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, ed. R. Warwick Bond, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1902), 166–8; Castiglione, *Courtyer*, 359; the Italian is quoted from *Il cortegiano*, ed. Vittorio Cian (Firenze, 1894), 428.

45 Castiglione, *Courtyer*, 355; *Cortegiano*, 424.

46 Gentili, *De legationibus*, 3.

47 *Works of John Lyly*, vol. 2, 159.

events' in euphuistic fiction.⁴⁸ The *Henry VI* plays inherit these interlocking political, philosophical and rhetorical relations from euphuism, but in the process, the plays transform the poised and witty euphuistic 'encounter' into violent and unstable 'renconter': sanctimonious King Henry's ornate parody of euphuistic moralizing at Mortimer's Cross is rudely interrupted by the headlong retreat of his faction and Exeter's shouted instruction 'Nay—stay not to expostulate' (3 *Henry VI*, 2.5.135). In these plays, antithetical shadow and substance tend towards contention and reversal.

Frank Kermode suggests that the rhetorical doublings that pervade Shakespeare's writing have ontological force, mirroring a world that is built on the principle of opposition, and adds that 'of that opposition, substance-and-shadow is a primeval figure'.⁴⁹ Kermode draws on George T. Wright's analysis of the doubleness of hendiadys in *Hamlet* as a mirror to the play's thematic doublings, sense of disjunction, and anxieties about the falsity of language, appearances and agents.⁵⁰ Hampton argues that diplomacy and spying double theatricality in *Hamlet* as a parallel form of agency in which the success of the actors depends on their ability to seize control of the representation.⁵¹ For Wright, the disharmonious conjunctions and elusive meanings of hendiadys echo the problem that play full of agents poses, of how to choose and manipulate proxies who never accomplish what they set out to accomplish, and just end up exposing the insubstantiality of images and the oppositions embedded in all relationships, political, metaphysical and even artistic.⁵² The discordant hendiadys of shadow and substance and diplomatic agent and sender in *Hamlet* extends the reversal-ridden antitheses of the same terms in the *Henry VI* plays in a rhetorical move that makes the plays' subversive ambassadors central to their political and epistemological uncertainties. Suffolk gets the first and last words of the *Henry VI* plays, taken in the order they were written, and uses them to establish his influence over King Henry, whilst the lieutenant who captures and executes the exiled Suffolk at the end of part two blames him for all the civil strife of Henry's reign (2 *Henry VI*, 4.1.103). Meanwhile, as Warren notes, it is 'in the characterization and behavior of Warwick that Shakespeare finds the technique of ironic reversal especially useful'.⁵³ Warwick is interwoven with the euphuistic rhetoric and ideas of 3 *Henry VI* and—as the next section discusses—his embassy to France is the turning point for the play's antitheses.

48 Robert Heilman, 'Greene's Euphuism and Some Congeneric Styles', in George Logan and Gordon Teskey (eds), *Unfolded Tales: Essays on Renaissance Romance* (Ithaca, 1989), 49-73 (55).

49 Kermode, *Forms of Attention*, 60.

50 George T. Wright, 'Hendiadys and Hamlet', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 96 (1981), 168-93.

51 Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy*, 138-62.

52 Wright, 'Hendiadys and Hamlet', 178-81.

53 Warren, "'Contraries Agree'", 82.

III

Unstable antitheses crowd around ambassador and kingmaker Warwick: he and his failed embassy embody subversive metonymy and antithetical reversal. Samuel Shaw articulates the wider absorption of rhetoric into early modern thinking when he observes, in 1678, that ‘there is a certain Vein of Rhetorick running through Humane Nature’ that infects feeling and modifies action since ‘men live *Tropes* and *Figures* as well as speak them.’⁵⁴ Warwick certainly lives by antithesis and his diplomatic representation and replacement of his king enacts the dangers of metonymy as Shaw describes them:

It is by a real Metonymy that men of devout and refin’d minds discern the *Creator*, where others see nothing but the *Creature*; that *Idolatrours*, and covetous, and proud men, put the *Creature* in room of the *Creator*; that all *Hypocrites* present us with the *sign* instead of the *thing signifi’d*; that all *Lamyers* seek themselves instead of their Client; and indeed in all ill-order’d Common-wealths, that true *Subjects* are respected as *Adjuncts*, and meer *Adjuncts* are embrac’d as the best *Subjects*.⁵⁵

Ambassadorial representation in the *Henry VI* plays frequently leads to confusions between the sign and the thing signified: when Reignier gives Suffolk Margaret’s hand ‘for sign’ of her betrothal to King Henry in *1 Henry VI*, for example, the ambassador takes not just sign but import too, and by the end of the scene Margaret is kissing Suffolk not for the king but ‘for thysel’ (5.5.118, 141). This—as Shaw underscores—is an inherent danger of metonymic substitution. Shaw’s description of metonymy is strikingly structured by syncrisis and antithesis because the opposition between metonymic sign and its signified is antithetical. Warwick becomes the representative ‘shadow’ that can ‘supply’—both supplement and take—any king’s place through the combined operation of metonymy and antithesis.

That subversive metonymy highlights both the necessity and the dangers of the mutually constitutive relationship between ambassadors and sovereigns. Warwick’s embassy is designed to consolidate Edward IV’s newly acquired sovereignty by establishing his claim to the English throne on the international stage through both recognition and dynastic alliance (2.6.85–95). When the French King Lewis questions him about the lawfulness of that claim, Warwick merely answers ‘Thereon I pawn my credit and mine honour’ (3.3.116). His pledge performatively connects his legitimacy with Edward’s but also acts as an acknowledgement that his credit as an ambassador is already bound up with the legitimacy of the king he represents, since his diplomatic act and reception both presume and so perform Edward’s sovereignty. Pawning (however) risks forfeiture. Letters from England announcing Edward’s marriage to Lady Elizabeth Grey expose the king whom Warwick claimed loved the French king’s sister as his ambassador’s creation, causing

54 Samuel Shaw, *Words Made Visible* (London, 1678–1679), 98–9.

55 Shaw, *Words Made Visible*, 115.

Lewis to call Warwick's embassy 'your forgery and his', a double lie about love built on a double counterfeit of sovereignty (3.3.175).

The exposure of this dissimilarity between ambassador and sovereign destroys the legitimacy of both and when Warwick returns from France he addresses Edward as 'Duke'. 'The Duke?', Edward exclaims, 'Why, Warwick, when we parted, / Thou calledst me king', and Warwick replies:

Ay, but the case is altered.
When you disgraced me in my embassy,
Then I degraded you from being king,
And come now to create you Duke of York.
Alas, how should you govern any kingdom
That know not how to use ambassadors? (4.4.3-9)

Throughout the play Warwick cites his diplomatic humiliation as his primary reason for deposing Edward. The saying 'the case is altered' was attributed to the lawyer Edmund Plowden, who, when acting for a defendant accused of attending mass, learnt that the supposed priest was an informer in disguise, at which 'The case is altered quoth Plowden: No Priest, no Masse'.⁵⁶ Warwick's invocation of this proverbial story effectively informs Edward that no ambassador means no king. Edward's sovereign status is dependent on the domestic and international signs that realize it, the crown and the diplomat: how should he govern a kingdom if he does not understand what makes him king—if he knows not how to use ambassadors?

The language of shadow and substance is not alone in linking these mutually constitutive diplomatic representations with metaphysical questions about truth in the *Henry VI* plays. Suffolk and Warwick both perform mocking travesties of the honourable sovereign love associated with Platonic ideals while seeking dynastic marriages on their embassies, and Warwick's embassy explicitly uses that diplomatic courtship to parody Platonic love and the Platonic association of sovereignty, truth, beauty and virtue that Camilla justly doubts in *Euphues and his England*. When Warwick proposes the match and the French king asks that he set 'all dissembling' aside and tell him 'for truth the measure' of his king's love for Bona, Lewis is not truly asking for an account of Edward's feelings for a stranger, but for an answer adhering to the conventions of formal courtship (3.3.119-20). Warwick accordingly replies in Platonic platitudes that Edward's love is

Such it seems
As may beseech a monarch like himself.
Myself have often heard him say and swear
That this his love was an eternal plant,
Whereof the root was fixed in virtue's ground,
The leaves and fruits maintained with beauty's sun (3.3.121-6)

56 Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England* (London, 1662), *Shrop-shire*, 2. Fuller mentions several versions of the origin of this proverb—already apocryphal when he recorded them—but this is the only one applicable to Warwick's speech.

Warwick describes sovereign love—such ‘eternal’ love as ‘may beseem a monarch’—in a series of courtly clichés that associate the Lady Bona with Platonic goodness and beauty, underlined by a pun on the meaning of her name in Latin (*bona*, ‘good’). This caricature of love may supposedly be ‘for truth’ but, as Lewis’s emphasis on dissembling and truth and Warwick’s repeated ‘seem’ here warn us, it is too obviously illusory. Warwick constructs not only his sovereign king but also sovereign love for sovereign virtue and beauty.

The ambassador is heavily implicated in these precarious Platonic representations and their associated rhetorical relations. His equally clichéd speech to Lady Bona underlines his metonymic relationship with his king:

And, gracious madam, in our King’s behalf
I am commanded, with your leave and favour,
Humbly to kiss your hand, and with my tongue
To tell the passion of my sovereign’s heart,
Where fame, late ent’ring at his heedful ears,
Hath placed thy beauty’s image and thy virtue. (3.3.59-64)

Warwick’s representative function is bound up in his presentation of a sovereign love for sovereign beauty and virtue. His double embassy of ambassador on ‘King’s behalf’ and tongue for ‘sovereign’s heart’ is reminiscent of Camilla and Gentili’s descriptions—drawing on Castiglione and Lucretius—of the tongue as ambassador for the heart and soul. That embassy lacks truth. Queen Margaret, Henry’s representative at the French court, accuses Warwick of ‘thy sly conveyance and thy lord’s false love’: the ambassador may appear to act as a mere conveyor of Edward’s words, but in fact his words are his own cunning device, or conveyance (3.3.160). The breakdown of Warwick’s embassy exposes both the fragility of truth claims and the instability of political diplomacy. The lies embedded in his studied and formulaic rhetoric are hazardous to all, including his sovereign and himself.

Euphuistic patterning in Warwick’s response to Edward’s marriage reinforces the importance of antithesis in structuring these subversive metonymies and mutually constitutive—and so mutually destructive—relationships. He swears that Edward is

No more my king, for he dishonours me,
But most himself, if he could see his shame.
[. . .]
And am I guerdoned at the last with shame?
Shame on himself, for my desert is honour.
And to repair my honour, lost for him,
I here renounce him and return to Henry. (3.3.183-4, 191-4)

The antithesis of honour and shame, or dishonour, repeats through his speech and is reinforced by the further alliteration and consonance of ‘h’ and ‘s’ sounds. The heavy use of alternating first and third person pronouns provide a second antithetical relation, between Edward and Warwick, that intersects with the antithesis of honour and shame, for ambassador and king both share and exchange honour

and shame—a point made particularly well by the transfer of ‘shame’ through anadiplosis and antanaclasis in lines 191–2. The breakdown of Warwick’s diplomatic metonymy (‘No more my king’) participates in a pattern of alliterated stressed words in parallel positions, (No) more / (But) most (183–4) and last / lost (191–3), that is picked up in the half-rhymes of most/last/lost to form a thread of ultimatum and loss brought about by contentious and destructive antitheses.

Warwick turns once more to antithesis to find a new beginning: the answer to ‘lost’ honour is the ‘repair’ of honour through the urgent alliterative antithesis of ‘Henry’ to ‘him’ (Edward) right ‘here’ and now, at what proves to be a turning point in the play’s structural antitheses. These lines accordingly place strong emphasis on the play’s *topos* of reversal through an alliterative pattern of verbs prefixed with ‘re-’: ‘repair’, ‘renounce’, ‘return’, and, in the subsequent lines concluding Warwick’s speech, ‘revenge’ and ‘replant’ (197–8). When Warwick restates his grievance and its consequences at the very end of the embassy scene, he sums up much of the play’s plot and the whole of his role in it, and his speech is once again strikingly structured by antithesis and syncrisis (3.3.256–65). ‘I came from Edward as ambassador / But I return his sworn and mortal foe’, Warwick begins, his speech making it clear that the metonymic and antithetical relationship of the king and his diplomatic representative lies at the heart of the play’s political reversals.

Here the antithesis of ambassador and king becomes central to the antithesis of the opposed factions of the plays’ civil wars. Civil conflict also structures the embassy scene, as Warwick and Margaret recreate and create Edward and Henry, in a battle over their candidates’ claims to the throne played out in the theatre of international relations, like the claimants to the French throne competing for diplomatic recognition in the early 1590s. The equivalence between Margaret’s and Warwick’s positions is anticipated and underlined by Henry’s solitary imagining of the scene earlier in Act 3:

Ay, but she’s come to beg; Warwick to give.
 She on his left side, craving aid for Henry;
 He on his right, asking a wife for Edward.
 She weeps and says her Henry is deposed,
 He smiles and says his Edward is installed; (3.1.42–6)

Warwick and Margaret are paired and opposed by antithesis and syncrisis, right down to their envisioned stage placement on King Lewis’s right- and left-hand sides. Henry’s imaginings prefigure the embassy scene, which is indeed structured by the opposition of Warwick and Margaret as well as the antitheses of ambassador/king and dramatic reversals. Warwick does smile as Margaret mingles ‘talk and tears’, although this too experiences reversal at the discovery of Edward’s marriage, when Margaret in turn ‘Smiles at her news, while Warwick frowns at his’ (3.3.158, 168). The factional oppositions and reversals of the Wars of the Roses frame the antithesis that opposes Warwick and Edward, and the rupture of king from his own image in his ambassador enacts in miniature the kingdom’s

civil division. Like England, both unified and split by civil strife, Edward and Warwick are mutually dependent and opposed, through the action of metonymy and antithesis, so that Edward exposes himself when he exposes his other self, the ambassador who will ‘uncrown’ him (4.1.109).

IV

Antithesis lies behind the contentious order and patterned disorder of the *Henry VI* plays, from the rhetorical patterning of their speeches, through their structure and subject matter and politics, to their theatrical and philosophical forays into the nature of representation. That is particularly true of *3 Henry VI*, and Warwick’s failed embassy is the pivotal point around which the play’s oppositions and reversals turn. His rhetorically framed diplomatic relations are connected with Platonic thought through the *Henry VI* plays’ alignment of ambassador and king with shadow and substance, the association of Platonic truths with sovereignty, and the mock-Platonic love evoked by Warwick on his embassy. Those connections allow the plays to employ a series of paired terms as a surrogate for political, metaphysical, semiotic and mimetic hierarchies—king/ambassador, substance/shadow, truth/representation—and to critique the stability of such hierarchies through the operation of the rhetorical figures that frame them. The *Henry VI* plays end up with their contentious and sceptical theatrical world of insubstantial shadows through the fundamental instability of metonymic hierarchies and antithetical relationships. So Warwick may begin his embassy as metonym, but his substitution always teeters on the edge of replacement. His ambassadorial representation is antithetical to his king, mere shadow to royal substance, yet this is no stable hierarchical antithesis, but rather one of dynamic contention and exchange, and it is at the heart of the play’s oppositions and reversals. These rhetorical relations place loyal metonymy and obedient antithesis on a continuum with metonymic subversion and antithetical rivalry and reversal, making sense of *3 Henry VI*’s emphasis on the connections between Warwick as ambassador, kingmaker and usurper.

Hotman implicitly acknowledges the diplomatic opportunities of metonymic misreading in *The Ambassador* when he recommends sending young and handsome men to negotiate marriages; Sir Francis Thynne, its corresponding dangers, in his 1579 treatise on diplomacy, when he cites an ambassador sent to court a bride who (like Suffolk) instead seduces the lady.⁵⁷ Seeking some definition of faithful ambassadorial representation in *De legationibus*, Gentili draws on Platonic writing, and he models his perfect ambassador on the four Christian Platonic cardinal virtues; Torquato Tasso’s sixteenth-century dialogue *Il messaggero* likewise couches its vision of embassy in Neoplatonic thought, although it then contrasts pure angelic messengers with the pandering ambassador forced, in this

⁵⁷ Hotman, *Ambassador*, B7r; Thynne, *Perfect Ambassadour*, 150–3.

imperfect world, to act with iniquity.⁵⁸ These philosophical models suggest ideal embassy to be quasi-Platonic shadow to sovereign substance—and Hotman describes Tasso and Gentili as creating the ‘perfect *Idea* of an Ambassador’—but such perfect representation is unobtainable, as these same theorists recognize.⁵⁹

The inevitable conclusion of diplomats whose representations authorize sovereigns is that diplomacy entails a division of sovereignty that refutes its absolute character. The *Henry VI* plays’ irreverent, theatrical view of the metonymic and antithetical relations between ambassador and king might be an exaggerated fiction but it also comments on early modern diplomatic representation as both necessary and destructive for sovereignty: necessary for its realization in the world, but at the price of the singular supremacy that renders it sovereign. Antithesis, the figure 3 *Henry VI* uses to express and structure Warwick’s embassy, highlights the limitations and dangers of diplomatic metonymy, as ambassador Warwick makes kings at the price of monarchical supremacy. ‘Quod homini est loquela hoc sunt imperiis legationes’ (embassies are to rulers what language is to man) writes Carlo Pascale in his 1598 treatise *Legatus*.⁶⁰ The *Henry VI* plays’ exploration of the ambassador as the expression of language, as the embodiment of metonymy-turned-antithesis, reflects on the imperfections of both semiotic systems, both embassy and language, on the duplicities of both diplomatic representation and diplomatic rhetoric.

Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge

58 Gentili, *De legationibus*, esp. 2–5 and book 3; Torquato Tasso, *Prose*, ed. Ettore Mazzali (Milan, 1959), 61.

59 Hotman, *Ambassador*, B8r.

60 Carlo Pascale [also Charles Paschal], *Legatus* (Rouen, 1598), 6, my translation.