

'Roi d'Angleterre' and 'Le Pretendant': A Cultural Semiotic Approach to the Use Of Titles By Swedish Diplomats, 1715-17

Emma J Forsberg

Introduction

ON 26 April 1716, Carl Gyllenborg (1679-1746), the Swedish Minister to the British Court, sat down to write a report to his colleague Erik Sparre (1665-1726), the Swedish Ambassador to the French court. The two Swedish diplomats were active during a period of great power struggles in Europe, when diplomacy was in the middle of a process of professionalisation. This article will focus on two nations entrapped in these power struggles, namely Sweden and Great Britain. Both played fundamental roles in the power struggles of Europe during the early decades of the eighteenth century, a Europe in which a theocratical bureaucratisation was emerging. Several of the great political struggles were based in a hierarchical hegemonic dimension, aided by power-hungry ambitions. On the one hand, Britain was attempting to smother the political turmoil caused by the Glorious Revolution. At the same time, after having suffered a brutal defeat at Poltava in 1709, Sweden was craving new allies to aid in its wars.¹

In the report mentioned above, Gyllenborg brought up the usual business; information gathered through different sources, the movements of foreign armies (both allies and enemies), and the ongoing political antagonism concerning the Swedish provinces Bremen-Verden. The last topic in particular was described in detail and debated throughout Gyllenborg's correspondence between 1710 and 1717. Seldom was a letter sent without mentioning the latest news regarding the two crucial provinces, essential as they were for the dwindling Swedish empire which

1 Ahnlund and Rosén 1952, 19.

was in desperate need of monetary resources to provide for its salaried conscription-based army.

Gyllenborg's report takes centre stage in this article along with other letters sent by him and Sparre. However, the focus will not be on intrigues, political jousting or grand schemes but, instead, the tiny, intriguing nuances and minuscule hermeneutical and semiotical choices, reflecting a more significant political question. Namely, how both Gyllenborg and Sparre intentionally used several different titles when discussing one individual, George I, and what implications this had for the broader political situation.

The aforementioned titles are *Roi d'Angleterre* (King of England), *Roi de Grande Bretagne* (King of Great Britain) and *Electeur d'Hannover* (The Elector of Hannover). Two of the three titles are conventional, *Roi de Grande Bretagne* and *Electeur d'Hannover*.² However, *Roi d'Angleterre* should, politically speaking, not have been used by Gyllenborg. Gyllenborg and Sparre habitually never mention titles in regards to royals, preferring to refer to them simply as *Roi*. However, throughout the almost 400 letters sent over two years, the titles mentioned above are cited a handful of times. This article will argue that Gyllenborg's treatment of the different titles shows the labyrinthian nature of Euro-politics during the first decades of the eighteenth century.

Another complexity regarding Gyllenborg's semiotics will also be dealt with in this article, i.e., how he uses *Le Pretendant* to describe James Francis Edward Stuart and his struggle to regain the throne from George I. Although the ongoing political hostility plays a central role in understanding the spatial situation on the diplomatic stage between Sweden, Great Britain and Hannover, this article will not dwell on the correspondence between Gyllenborg and Sparre in its entirety, but will instead, as previously stated, focus on the small nuances where we can read social, cultural and political changes.

Political background

To understand the political significance of the titles mentioned above, we need to evaluate the context in which they existed and were used. The political situation between Great Britain, Sweden and Hannover in the first decades of the eighteenth century was characterised by conflict. The issue of Bremen-Verden and Gyllenborg's discussion of the same with Charles

2 Throughout this article the two political identities of the state of Hanover and of George I Hannoverian politics will be differentiated by the use of Hanover/Hannover.

Townshend (1674-1738), at the time Secretary of State for the Northern Department, had its origins in the accession of George I to the British throne. The death of Queen Anne I on 1 August 1714 triggered a series of events with several complex consequences, which led to uncertainty regarding her heir to the throne. Due to the Bill of Rights no one of the Catholic faith was eligible to become the heir presumptive to the throne. This resulted in uncertainty regarding who would become the next sovereign of Great Britain. This was rectified by the Act of Settlement³ in 1701 in which Sophia of Hannover, the daughter of Scottish-born Elizabeth of Bohemia was chosen. Unfortunately, Sophia died in June 1714, resulting in her son, George of Hannover, becoming the king of Great Britain only two months later.⁴ George I's accession to the throne was a blow to Swedish diplomacy due to Sweden's antagonistic relationship with Hannover.

Hannover had long desired the two Swedish provinces of Bremen-Verden, both profitable outposts awarded to the Swedish Empire in the Peace of Westphalia. This desire resulted in the occupation of Verden in 1712 and later, in 1715, of Bremen. In an almost jackal-like manner, George I declared that the two provinces were the price for Hannover's aid in the Northern Alliance against Sweden in the Great Northern War.⁵ By acquiring these two provinces, Hannover aimed to end the trans-Baltic grip Sweden had held for decades. However, two other significant benefits were to be had – the provinces would increase the territorial breadth of Hannover and hinder other powers from acquiring them, such as Denmark.⁶ It was clear that George I desired Bremen-Verden and used any opportunity available to obtain them, even if this stood in direct contravention to the Act of Settlement. This was as one clause within the said legislation exclusively forbade British soldiers from defending foreign territory. However, from May 1715, George I gave verbal instructions to his British Royal Navy squadrons positioned in the Baltic Sea to aid his allies in the anti-Swedish coalition.⁷

Gyllenborg, together with several of his continental counterparts, had, in a sense, misjudged the political equation that made up British and

3 The Act of Settlement was passed in 1701, reinforcing the Bill of Rights agreed by William and Mary in 1689. The main aim of this legislation was to ensure a Protestant succession to the English throne. In 1707, as a result of the Treaty of Union, this Act was extended to Scotland. Britannica, 'Act of Settlement', (June 2021). <https://www.britannica.com/event/Act-of-Settlement-Great-Britain-1701>. Accessed 10 November 2021.

4 For more information on the events surrounding the ascension of George I see Hatton 1978, 104-111.

5 Szechi 2019, 180.

6 Black 2005, 309.

7 Szechi 2019, 181.

Hannoverian foreign policies in the early eighteenth century.⁸ While British politics primarily aimed at dominating the mercantile world, Hannover, as previously stated, sought to procure Bremen-Verden.⁹ In no way was Hannover able to aid in Britain's goals, and Britain, in return, viewed themselves as separate from Hannoverian concerns because of the Act of Settlement.

Meanwhile, the Jacobites were aiming for an amicable relationship with Sweden. Aware of the precarious situation that Sweden had faced for the previous few years, the Jacobites had looked for an opening to start negotiations as early as 1706.¹⁰ The Jacobites and Swedish diplomats conducted cautious negotiations throughout the following years. However, a breakthrough came in February 1715 when the Jacobites offered a loan of £200,000 in exchange for military aid from Charles XII. Unfortunately, the Jacobite uprising of 1715 disrupted these plans.

Nevertheless, after these turbulent times, negotiations restarted.¹¹ In 1716, Erik Sparre received a positive response from the Jacobites regarding Sweden's involvement in their cause. At the same time, Gyllenborg had been approached by prominent Jacobites active within the Tory party. He reported this to Sparre and his superior, the Swedish *éminence grise*, Georg Henrich von Görtz.¹²

Once again, the Jacobites offered a substantial loan in exchange for military aid in the form of 10,000 men. However, the Swedish diplomats refused to commit their sovereign to waging war on Britain. Although this was a blow to the Jacobites, they saw the potential of having a Protestant king aid them in their cause, refuting the oft-repeated Whig statement that they were restoring popery in Britain because they aimed to restore the Catholic Stuart dynasty.¹³ Rallying his subjects, James II and VII endorsed the effort to procure a loan of £90,000 for Sweden in exchange for political support.¹⁴

Cultural semiotics – a study of culture, context and conversation

If we are to understand how and what the titles mentioned above can tell us, we need to understand both the context in which they existed and the

8 Coroban 2010, 137.

9 Coroban 2010, 138–139.

10 Szechi 2019, 181.

11 Ibid.

12 Coroban 2010, 141–142.

13 Szechi 2019, 182.

14 Ibid.

actors who used them. We have already established the general context in the last section. We will now focus on our leading actor, Carl Gyllenborg, the Swedish Resident¹⁵, and later Minister to the British court, and the theoretical perspective of this article. Gyllenborg was born in 1679 and sent to Uppsala University in 1686 when he was seven years old.¹⁶ He was noticed as a boy with a studious temperament and therefore granted the honorary title of Rector Illustris between 1688 and 1689. At Uppsala University, his focus was on jurisprudence, Latin and history. After graduating, he began a military career in 1701, but since he lacked any education within the military, he was appointed to serve as a secretary. After having produced excellent work, he was sent by his employer, Adam Ludwig Lewenhaupt¹⁷ to Torún and the headquarters of Charles XII, where he was nominated as the new secretary to the Swedish delegation in Great Britain.¹⁸

After starting in his new post at the end of July 1704, Gyllenborg asked for permission to travel and learn about Great Britain's economic, political and cultural life. Charles XII approved and Gyllenborg started his diplomatic career by travelling not only in England, but also in France to advance his proficiency in both the English and French languages.¹⁹ For diplomats, language was both a weapon and a shield. Several historians have acknowledged this phenomenon, with Sophie Holm and Lisa Hellman identifying the way in which diplomats withheld, altered and gained knowledge through their use of language.²⁰ During this period, the languages used at the courts were varied and their use or otherwise often related to political shifts in Europe.²¹

Gyllenborg was chosen as the new Swedish Resident at the British court in 1710. However, his time as chief of the delegation in England (1710–1717) cannot be counted as successful. Although he was promoted to Resident in 1710 and later to Minister in 1715, he was, for extended periods of time,

15 The titles assigned to the official accredited diplomats during this period were, from lowest rank to highest: Envoy, Extraordinary Envoy, Resident, Minister, Plenipotentiary Minister, Ambassador, and finally plenipotentiary Ambassador. The title assigned to a diplomat depended on his experience, the relationship between the two countries and what rank he held in nobility.

16 It was not unusual during this period to start University at such a young age. For more information see Thoré 1998, 33-35.

17 Adam Ludwig Lewenhaupt (1659-1719) was a Swedish General who was especially famous for his participation in the Great Northern War. Artéus, 1977-1979, 618.

18 Grauers 1967-1969, 529.

19 Ibid.

20 Holm 2021, 469–483; Hellman 2021 485–501; Hellman and Tremml-Werner 2021, 453–467.

21 Holm 2021, 474.

often to be without essential diplomatic tools such as a Letter of Credence²² and orders from his sovereign. He wrote, in a letter to Sparre on 27 January 1715, 'I (Gyllenborg) am still without Letters of Credence from the King, and without orders, which means that I remain here entirely inactive. I am expecting these (credentials and orders) at any moment'.²³ Without a Letter of Credence, Gyllenborg traversed dangerous waters where he could not rely on any official support. Since he lacked such an essential part of his role, he often had to negotiate unseen diplomatic paths, relying on his confidants to gain the necessary information to provide to his sovereign back home. He constantly worried about his increasingly difficult financial situation, which, if he was not protected, could lead to his arrest, as stated by the following quote: '(I) fear that since my (letter of) credence has for so long been absent, it will come to pass that I will no longer be considered a Minister, and therefore lose the only privilege I have which is to not lose my right not to be sued or arrested for my indebtedness.'²⁴ Gyllenborg thus became dependent on his new wife, Sarah De Rit, and relied heavily on her inheritance as a widow, going as far as having to pawn her jewels to provide enough funds to maintain his life as a diplomat.²⁵

Because of insufficient funds, Gyllenborg also faced problems in sending his required correspondence. For example, in a letter sent on the 10 May 1715 to Sparre, Gyllenborg wrote, 'This is not the only malicious consequence of my destitution, I have had to limit my correspondence, which cost almost three or four times as much here as in other places, both incoming and

22 A letter of credence is a formal diplomatic letter which designates the diplomat to another sovereign state. It is addressed from one head of state to another, giving credence to the diplomat's claim of speaking for his country. It marks the beginning of a diplomatic assignment.

23 Uppsala University Library, F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre, 27 January 1715, '*Je suis encore sans Lettres de créance du Roy, et sans ordres, ce qui fait, que je demeure entièrement dans l'inaction, J'en attends portant a tous moment*'.

24 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 10 May 1715, '*...ja äfwen fruchta att som mitt creditif så länge uteblifwer, det torde så hända att jag ey mehra för Minister blefwe ansedd och således förlora det endaste privilegium som iag haft att ey blifwa ständ för rätt eller arresterad för mina skulder.*'

25 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 14 March 1715, '*Iag hafwer på någre postdagar ey skrifwit Hans K. May:t till och särdeles intet haft att Eders Excelhe communicera, iag är alt stadigt utan creditif och ordres, hwai före iag ock undwijker ati mycket tahlä med Ministreerne, hwilka kunna wällia antingen de wällia mig ähöra eller ey. Den Keyserl. Residenten est dans le meme cas hwilket är underligt nog efter så många beskickningar här ifrån. Iag hafwer förlorat alt hopp om förbättring på min caractere brist af medel till dess uthförande användas för orsak, jag hafwer begärt att endast kallas Minister få see om iag däri lyckas. Emedlertid så tryter mig nu alt sedan iag äfwen min hustrus joweler pantsatt, ce qui me mortifieroit bien si jag hade en hustru moins raisonable et moins gelée pour le service de sa Mayesté*'

outgoing letters'.²⁶ Therefore, we can consider that Gyllenborg would have regarded both the ink and the paper he used as commodities to be used sparingly. He would also have carefully considered what was included in his correspondence when dictating these to his secretary. Therefore, choosing what words best described particular situations must have been at the forefront of his mind.

Gyllenborg was, as previously stated, known for his linguistic skills, having acquired them through both his studies at Uppsala University and because of the cultural excursions he undertook during his first years as a secretary based at the Swedish residence in London.²⁷ He was intent on learning the local language in order to connect with, and enter, the local cultural sphere of influence. His skills are also evident in his correspondence with his fellow diplomats, where he both received, and sent, letters in English, French, German and Swedish.²⁸ Although Gyllenborg was able to communicate in several languages, there is no clear answer as to what language he spoke while at the British court. However, the most likely options were German, English or French since he, and most people at the said court, were proficient in these.

Titles, and how they were used, were an essential part of the early modern social hierarchy, reflecting a person's position and social, cultural and honorary status. Within Gyllenborg's correspondence titles are used sparingly, and only when necessary to ensure the clarity in his communication, rendering the mention of the titles even more important. According to theorist Conal Condren, even the most minute office-holder held a title in the early modern period. Office, according to Condren, enabled a person to enact agency within the given position, a sister to her brother, a butcher to his customer. 'To claim an official persona was to gain access to these complementary registers and so acquire a social voice'.²⁹ Thus, the titles, or office, were a representation and receptacle of agency, allowing the person to transfer social, cultural and political capital onto the title itself.

While it is essential to understand the agency language held in diplomatic

26 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 29 April/10 May 1715, '*Detta är ey den endaste elaka efterföljden af min armodh, iag nödgas och sielf indraga mina correspondancer hwilka kosta tre eller fyra dubbelt mehra här än på andra ohrter, så för de inkommande som afgående brefwen*'

27 Grauers 1967-1969, 529.

28 For German: *Riksarkivet Diplomata Anglica*, 219, letter from Joakim Fredrik Preis to Carl Gyllenborg 19 June 1716 ; For French: Uppsala Univeristy Library F.148, Correspondence with Erik Sparre; For English: *Riksarkivet, Diplomata Anglica* 523, Letter from Robert Jackson to Carl Gyllenborg 21 December 1710.

29 Condren 2006, 67.

meetings and correspondence, this does not ultimately correspond with the diplomat's choice of words. Overarching concepts such as titles often had the same meaning across languages and were, therefore, inhabitants of agency in their own right. Considering the weight put upon early modern society and its use of titles there is a legitimate need to understand the underlying socio-political semiotics the titles convey. To understand how a choice of words can indicate a broader perception, we need to know the context in which the words were chosen. As previously mentioned, the early modern period was a convoluted and complex world in which the European diplomatic sphere impacted even upon the tiniest parts of its politics.

The issue of titles

The following section discusses the three aforementioned titles in both their opposition and correlation to each other. However, to be able to achieve this, we need to know more about the letters sent. Diplomatic correspondence during the early modern period can be classed as its own genre as certain conventions, confidentiality and expectations could be counted on. Diplomatic letters were at once limited because of their regulated recipients, yet open since they were not classed as private communication.

The letter which sparked the question put forward by this article consists of three different parts, encompassing three meetings held between Gyllenborg and Townshend.³⁰ The two held these discussions because of the previously described political tensions between Sweden, Great Britain and Hannover. Although these conversations formed only a tiny part of Gyllenborg's official correspondence, they ignited several diplomatic problems described and portrayed through various polemical stances.

Diplomats were, in a way, the mirror-image of their sovereign, and expected to represent them in every sense of the word.³¹ Gyllenborg, on the one hand, acted with inadequate instructions and an apparent lack of support from his sovereign and the Swedish state. However, he managed to include himself in the British diplomatic sphere and navigate it through the few instructions and information he gathered for himself.³² At the same time, Townshend acted as both a representative for the British state as well as his new King. Both these protagonists had different and diverging opinions

30 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 26 April 1716.

31 Forsberg 2020, 24.

32 Forsberg 2020, 27–44.

on how politics were to be conducted.³³ In plain terms, the answers that Gyllenborg sought were regarding George I's claims to Bremen-Verden and his dealings within the political environment in the Baltic Sea territories. At the same time, Townshend tried to turn the focus towards the way in which the contesting Swedish and Hannoverian politics affected British geopolitical ambitions.

Townshend's first significant issue in the meetings was Sweden's control of Scania which thus gave it control of one side of the Sound into the Baltic Sea.³⁴ Townshend aimed to ensure that the Sound into the Baltic remained open and was not occupied by one powerhouse. What concerned Townshend here was not George I's intention of attacking Sweden on behalf of his allies through his seat as Elector of Hannover, but rather the British political ambition for mercantile expansion. This aspiration would be significantly hindered if a single state occupied both sides of the Sound, enforcing a monopoly over the trading routes.³⁵

Furthermore, the discussions touched on the diplomatic issue of Jacobite Scots who had sought refuge in Sweden and the growing fears their presence aroused at the British court. The Hanoverian Court feared that Charles XII had accepted the request for help from the exiled Jacobite Court. Gyllenborg was well informed about this but decided to continue pleading ignorance of the topic.³⁶ Regarding the refugees seeking protection in Sweden, Townshend demanded, with leverage from a treaty dating to 1600³⁷ that the Swedish State expel the said rebels who had taken asylum on Swedish soil. Gyllenborg answered these demands by simply stating that he was confident that Charles XII had not and would never get involved with the house of Stuart. However, Gyllenborg mentioned that the treaty in regard to the rebels was not to be used in this instance since Great Britain had already failed to aid Sweden with its military on several occasions, thus breaching the said treaty.

I heard that according to the treaty of 1600 (1700), the King could not offer them (the refugees) asylum. Still, I begged him (Townshend) to tell me, what we could in good faith answer to the objection made on

33 Coroban 2010, 137–138.

34 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 14 April, '*Il me dit que non mais qu'il importoit a la Grande Bretagne les deux cotes du Sund ne tombassent point dans une meme main et qu'ainsi rien ne fut entrepris par le roi entre la Zelande outre cela.*'

35 Coroban 2010, 138.

36 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 14 April

37 Most probably the treaty of Traventhal of 1700, considering there is no recorded treaty between Sweden, Scotland or England in 1600.

his Majesty's side. It may have been made at this request, knowing the failure to fulfil the same treaty in relation to the assistance due to Sweden from Great Britain, my Lord Townshend tells me that to enter into such arguments now might spoil the whole affair ...³⁸

It is clear from reading his correspondence that Gyllenborg, along with his Swedish diplomatic colleagues, was well aware of the establishment of Great Britain in 1707. Both Gyllenborg and Sparre often mentioned Great Britain (correctly) in the guise of a country. However, they seldom used George I's proper title as King of Great Britain, preferring to refer to him as *Roi d'Angleterre* or *Electeur de Hannover*. The mistitling of royalty had precedence as a political tool within early modern European society. One example from the British context was Oliver Cromwell's mistitling of Charles II, especially after his banishment. Cromwell used the title of King of Scots when referring to Charles II - 'These things tend to nothing else but the playing of the King of Scots' game (if I may so call him)'.³⁹ Charles, however commonly used the title of King of Great Britain and Ireland.⁴⁰ The choice that Gyllenborg and his fellow diplomats made in deliberately calling George I by a wrongful title clearly showcases a political point of allegiance. It also shows the rights of precedence and political power which titles, and the use of them, held.

In a letter to Sparre from 28 October 1715, Gyllenborg referred to George I as *Roi de la Grande Bretagne*, a title which he did not usually make use of. The letter described events that transpired at the British court, which saw George I ridiculed by a confidant of Gyllenborg. Gyllenborg disclosed how the diplomat Hermann von Petkum, who represented Holstein-Gottorp, had been on the receiving end of some ridicule by Hanoverian statesmen. Petkum, who had been a French spy since 1707, was officially delegated to the United Provinces but often attended the British court.⁴¹ During these visits he became a confidant of Gyllenborg, who in turn depended on Petkum for information

38 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 14 April 1716, *J'auouis, que selon le traité de mille six cent le Roi ne pouvoit pas leur fair asile mais je le priois de me dire, ce qu'on pourroi bien repondre a l'objection que du coté de sa Mayesté s'étoit peut étre faite a cette deamnde Scavoir le manque d'accomplissement du meme traité par rapport a l'assistance due a la Suede de la Grande Bretagne mylord Townshend me dit que d'entrer dans des pareils raisonnemens a present pouroit gater toute l'affaire...*

39 Carlyle 1903, 178.

40 He also commonly used 'King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland' as is evident by his declarations. For example, see Charles II *Two letters from His Majesty: the one to the Speaker of the Commons assembled in Parliament, the other to His Excellencie the Lord Generall Monck: with His Majesties declaration inclosed, together with the resolve of the House thereupon*, 1660.

41 Bromley 1971, 183.

and protection while still enacting his role as a diplomat without his letter of credence.⁴²

Mr Petkum, who received their ridiculous declaration, handled it yesterday at Court in the very presence of the Hanoverians (through) a *pasquinade* (satire) against the King of Great Britain, which showed (his) falsehoods as well as the lack of coherence. Although nothing is known about Scotland, or the court does not want it to be known, it is believed that unrest is increasing there.⁴³

The quote portrays Gyllenborg's knowledge of the proper title of *Roy de la Grande Bretagne*. However, the only time he used the title in his writings, without addressing either a British or Hanoverian statesman in his letters, was when his trusted colleague Petkum mocked the King through a *pasquinade*, a form of political satire. Thus, Gyllenborg actively chose to partake and illustrate the ridicule aimed at the title and its titleholder showing his own opinion of, as he wrote, the falsehoods and lack of coherence that George I and his fellow Hanoverians displayed.

There were two other ways in which Gyllenborg used the title *Roi de la Grande Bretagne*. This was either when presented as someone else's word choice, for example, in the meetings mentioned in the letter sent on the 26 April. The other use was when writing official and public correspondence, which would, without doubt, be read by either British or Hanoverian statesmen – for example, the letters which Gyllenborg addressed to Whitehall.⁴⁴ Throughout the rest of the correspondence, Gyllenborg and Sparre used the title of *Roi d'Angleterre*, when referring to the king.

I believe the King of England is beginning to notice the wicked manoeuvre [which] Whigs made him do; they publicly claim that

42 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 31/11 June, 'Iag måste alt fort yrka på mitt creditif, emedan iag dessutan ey wähl kan inlåta mig i något tracterande med folcket här utan måste betiäna mig af H:r Petkum, på hwilkens hädan resa hans hof mycket presserar.' Translation: 'I need to plead for my (letter of) credence, since I without it cannot engage in any official discourse with the people here and have to lean on Monsieur Petkum, on which so far his court pressure him of much travel.'

43 Uppsala University Library, fo.168, Letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 28 October 1715, 'Monsieur Petkum, qui receut leur ridicule menifeste le traita hier a la Cour dans la presence meme des Hannoveriens en pasquinade contre Le Roy de la Grande Bretagne, et en montre les faussetés aussi bien que le peu de Cohenrence. Quoy qu'on ne sache rien d'Ecosse, ou que le Cour ne veuille pas qu'on ne le sache, on croit pourtant que les troubles y augmentent'.

44 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Greve Carl Gyllenborg, Letter to Erik Sparre 11 October 1715.

the Duke of Orleans communicated to the court a project which had been formed during the time of the late [Swedish] King to support the Pretender – which project he must have found in the cabinet of the King with the names of those of the Tory Party who were its accomplices. However, sensible people cannot believe that His Royal Highness wanted to acquire the friendship of this court by such a low action.⁴⁵

Based on this quote and the rest of the letters sent, it was common practice for the Swedish diplomats to use Roi d'Angleterre when referring to George I. Although, as previously mentioned, both Gyllenborg and Sparre were well aware of the unification of Scotland and England into the state of Great Britain, there was a tendency to continue to use the improper title of King of England. The occurrence mentioned above was not an isolated incident for Gyllenborg alone but was perpetuated by other Swedish diplomats. Sparre wrote, 'What appearance I pray of you, that his Majesty intended to use me for the Pretender, in the time that He has just accredited you to the court where you are, by giving a mark of his friendship to the King of England?'⁴⁶

Gyllenborg's peculiar divide between titles can be understood through Condren's theory. When Gyllenborg actively chose to use one of the titles, he, in turn, created a communicative understanding with his reader. Considering that the recipients for Gyllenborg's letters inhabited the same political sphere as himself, Gyllenborg conveyed a sense of where the agency behind the political decision described came from through his choices of titles. In the case of George I, he inhabited all three previously mentioned titles. Nevertheless, when Gyllenborg wrote about the king in his correspondence, the titles changed within a single letter. Therefore, we can understand that the title was the provider of agency, which changed depending on what office or role George I inhabited at the time. Consequently, when Gyllenborg was in discussion with, for example, Townshend and wanted to convey the events to his colleagues, he chose the title based on the political issue.

45 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Greve Carl Gyllenborg, 'Letter to Erik Sparre 3 October 1715, *'Je crois que le Roy d'Angleterre commence a s'appercevoir de la mechante manoeuvre que Whigs l'ont fait faire, ceux la debitent publiquement que le Duc d'Orleans a communiqué a la Cour un project qui avait été formé du temps du Feu Roy pour introduire le Pretendant le quel project il doit avoir trouvé dans le cabinet du leu Roy avec les noms de ceux du parti Torys qui en étaient les complices mais les gens sensés ne pouvant croire que Son Altesse Royale ait voulu s'acquérir l'amitié de cette cour par une action si basse.'*

46 Riksarkivet, Diplomatica Anglica, 220, Letter from Erik Sparre ' to Carl Gyllenborg 7 October 1715', *'Quelle apparence, je vous prie que sa Mayesté ait voulu m'employer pour le Prétendant, dans le temps qu'Elle vient de vous accrediter Ala Cour ou cous estes, en donnant par la une marque de son amitié au Roy d'Angleterre?'*

The attached enclosures contain what is to be asked from here to which I will add that Mr. von Holtz, adviser of the Danish chancellery, arrived here last Friday, sent on behalf of the King of Denmark to ask for help against us (in the Great Northern War). We do not believe (they plan on a) descent into Scania, so we propose to oblige the (Swedish) King to turn back (on) the way towards Norway and that we want (to ensure that) the Elector of Hanover will contribute troops and the King of England ships (towards our cause).⁴⁷

The quote above illustrates this creation of agency excellently. Gyllenborg assigned George I with two different capacities of agency. Although George I inhabited both the roles of Elector of Hannover and, in a sense, King of England, Gyllenborg divided the two titles to convey which persona had been asked to send troops and ships. There was a clear separation in which titles were considered and in what capacity.

We have already discussed the excellent linguistic skills possessed by Gyllenborg. However, the question remains as to whether Gyllenborg's use of the said titles was because of convention rather than being an active [even political] choice. Was it perhaps the case that *Roi d'Angleterre* was the correct title when speaking or writing French in the early eighteenth century? This was most likely not the case. Gyllenborg used King of England when writing in both French and Swedish, his native language. He wrote in his correspondence with Sparre on 10 March 1715, 'Otherwise so it would be said of the Spanish Ambassador, that the K. of England invited the emperor, to want to interpose himself between the King of Spain and the Majorcans, and that he would there be satisfied'.⁴⁸ If Gyllenborg's choice of titles was simply to be colloquial in their intention, he would most likely not have continued these colloquialisms into another language. Therefore, the quote above illustrates the thought put into his word choices. Gyllenborg intended the reader of his correspondence to fully understand the implied political objectives encompassed by the titles he chose.

The examples presented in this section illustrate the labyrinthian political

47 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 26 April 1716, '*Les cy jointes contiennent ce qu'il y a mander d'ici a quoy j'ajouterai, que M:r von Holtz conseiller de la chancellerie Danoise arriva ici vendredi passé, envoyé exprez du Roi de Danemark pour demander du secours contre nous. On croit que c'est pas une descente en Scanie, qu'on propose d'obliger le Roy de rebrousser le chemin de Noruege et qu'on veut que L'Electeur de Hannover y contribue des troupes et le Roy d'Angleterre des vaisseaux.*'

48 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 10 March 1715, 'Elliest så är det wordet sagt den Spanska Ambassadeuren, att K. af Engelland tillbiudit Keysaren, att willia interponera sig emellan K. af Spanien och Majorcanerne, och att denne waret der med förnögd.'

and diplomatic structure of agency making in titles. Through Gyllenborg's complex utilisation of George I's titles, a structural hierarchy emerged that depended on the situation showing us the subtleties required to understand early modern diplomatic interaction. This section has also shown that the Swedish diplomats actively used incorrect titles, either nonchalantly or with the intention to undermine.

When Gyllenborg, Sparre and their fellow diplomats presented their correspondents with titles there was an underlying implication of agency. The diplomats of this period had a communal language and sign-system in which they both created and took away agency from the people they discussed. They were aware of the reasons behind the difference in hermeneutics and could therefore illustrate, with just a simple title, power and legitimacy.

***Le Pretendant* – a question of allegiance or diplomacy**

The following section will discuss Gyllenborg's use of *Le Pretendant*. As previously mentioned, the orders sent out to the Swedish diplomats during this period were to acquire financial support to aid the payment of the professional Swedish army. However, most of the open diplomatic attempts to get any financial resources failed, and soon illicit attempts were planned. Sweden had long been rumoured to be associated with the Jacobites and had been approached by different factions in attempts to receive military aid. The Jacobites had been looking for an opening to start negotiations with the Swedish State since 1706.⁴⁹ Although both Gyllenborg and Sparre considered the Jacobites' proposals thoroughly, they were apprehensive.

Both Gyllenborg and Sparre used the title *Le Pretendant* when discussing the Stuart's claim to the British throne. In a quick note sent in September 1715, Gyllenborg wrote 'Today an Express has arrived from Scotland, which brought news of the arrival of the Duke of Argyll to Edinburgh, and the news, that the Highlanders are assembling, (and) that it is believed, that they are going to descend upon the Lowlands with 10,000 men and that they await the arrival of the Pretender'.⁵⁰ Gyllenborg sent this letter early in his residency as the Swedish Minister at the British Court.⁵¹ He had begun to establish himself in his new role as Minister but was still in a precarious situation regarding his opportunities to

49 Szechi 2019, 181.

50 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 19 September 1716, '*il est arrivé aujourd'hui un Exprés d'ecosse, qui doit apporter l'arrivée du Duc d'Argile a Edenbuourg, et les nouvelles, que les Montagnard s'assemblent, qu'on croit, qu'ils vont descendre la plaine avec m/10 hommes et qu'ils attendent l'arrivée du Pretendant.*'

51 Carl Gyllenborg was elected as Resident in 1710 and was promoted in 1715. To read more about his diplomatic practices please refer to: Forsberg 2020.

act in his role as a diplomat. The frequent mention of the ongoing struggle for the British throne were constantly discussed, even within his limited sphere. Again, the small nuances and what is unmentioned can tell us more of the situation.

We can interpret the abovementioned quotes and the complexities they present in several ways. Firstly, there is one specific aspect to consider: neither Gyllenborg nor Sparre ever mentioned the Stuarts by name or as *Roi d'Ecossé*, i.e., King of Scotland. Gyllenborg and Sparre often referenced Scotland as a country, talking about the troubles up north and the rebellions and refugees from there, but never mentioned a King of Scotland. Thus, the title remained empty, hanging unwritten in the air. Gyllenborg did, however, often mention rumours from Scotland, especially regarding the impending disembarking of more Jacobites on Scottish shores.

Here several rumours fly regarding the Pretenders plans to disembark now in England, now in Scotland, however they all seem unfounded in my opinion, so I do not think them worth writing down.⁵²

Another probable cause for Gyllenborg's and Sparre's use of *le Pretendant* was that they viewed the potential alliance between Sweden and the Jacobites not as an ideological aspiration but as way to achieve their diplomatic goals of acquiring financial support. In that respect, they viewed the Stuarts as pretenders to the throne rather than rightful heirs. Furthermore, through their correspondence, it is clear that the only political interest the two had in the Jacobites was what this group of Stuart supporters could provide for the Swedish State. This cause, coupled with the possibility to harm an enemy – in this case, Hannover – was an excellent reason for them to entertain this illicit alliance.

This is evident by the many exasperated stories exchanged between the two. Sparre often mentioned the different plans conceived by the Jacobites, and how the information regarding these plans was often nothing more than hearsay. In a response to some of the rumours circulating in England, Sparre was of the same opinion as Gyllenborg. They both considered the rumours of France aiding the Stuarts as an ill-effect of the suspicions of Lord Stairs and what he

52 Uppsala University Library, F.168, Letter from Carl Gyllenborg to von Müllern via Erik Sparre, 5 August 1715, 'Här går många rykten angående Pretendentens upsåt att göra landstigning nu i England nu i Skottland, men de förekomma mig alla så ogrundade, att iag tror dem ey skrifvårdige.'

reported back to the British Court.⁵³ There are several more instances like this throughout their correspondence. The rumours seemed almost an irritation to them both, hindering their objective of gaining the Jacobites' financial aid.

I received the day before yesterday the letter that Your Excellency did me the honour to write to me on the 14th. Since all the correspondence of that country now passes through the hands of the Court, we only know what the court wants us to know, which often is only a sliver. On the other hand, the Jacobites spread so many false rumours that it is still impossible to believe more than one tenth of them. I do not fail to tell him (the king) what is going on in Scotland as long as I can (get to) know something genuine.⁵⁴

In a particularly damning letter, which discussed the Jacobites' alleged untrustworthiness, Sparre wrote that it should not be surprising that the Jacobites were exaggerating the situation, since this was their way of life. He also cautioned Gyllenborg that one could never be too much on his guard with them. This sort of communication showed the tentative approach of the Swedish diplomats in their dealings with the Stuart supporters. The Swedish diplomats' intentions were, as previously stated, not to aid the political objectives of the Jacobites. The quotes and letters here presented show caution towards them, as well as almost a direct mistrust. The Swedish diplomats however, similarly to the Jacobites, played on a transcontinental political field in which every ally could potentially aid their hierarchical aspirations.

Another possible explanation of Gyllenborg's and Sparre's use of *le Pretendant* lies in the convention of the eighteenth-century Euro-political hierarchies. During this period the conventional titles for James Francis Edward Stuart and his son were the Pretenders. Therefore, the simplest way to describe them in diplomatic correspondence could have been to use the said title. In a sense, the two diplomats could have simply followed the norms.

53 Riksarkivet, *Diplomatica Anglica*, 220, 'Letter from Erik Sparre to Carl Gyllenborg, 16 August 1715, *'Je suis fort de vostre avis, Monsieur au sujet des bruits qui courent en Angleterre, comme si la France se prepara roit a remettre le Pretendant sur le throne, et je crois que tout cela n'est qu'un effet des soup çons malfondés de Mylord Stairs et de ce qu'il en ecrit a sa Cour, qui est sans doute bien aise d'appuyer ces sortes de nouvelles pour parvenir a ses fins au dedans du Roiaume.'*

54 Riksarkivet, *Diplomatica Anglica*, 220, 'Letter from Erik Sparre to Carl Gyllenborg, 10 October 1715, *'Je receu auanthier celle , que Votre Ex cell : ce m'a fait la grace de m'écrire du 14 , je ne manque pas de lui mander ce qui se passe en Ecosse tant que j'en puis scauoir quelque chose de veritable , mais comme toute la cor respondance de ce pays là passe à present par les mains de la Cour , on n'en scait , que ce qu'elle veut bien qu'on sasche , ce qui souvent n'est que peu de chose , et de l'autre coté les Jacobites repandent tant des faux bruits , que c'est encore trop , que d'en croire la dixieme partie.'*

The trouble when studying hermeneutics and semiotics is, of course, to understand what is intended, and what is simply neglected. A word put on paper contains several different meanings. In the case of the discussed titles, they most likely held significance, considering the sender and recipient (and the dire financial situation of the former). One could argue that the separation between the different titles was simply a matter of unintentional usage because of confusion. However, as a diplomat of the Swedish State, there must have been intentions behind Gyllenborg's choice of words. His apprehension in performing his role as a diplomatic envoy is evident since, as previously mentioned, he constantly referred to his restricted funds. In one letter, he told Sparre of his impoverished situation, which had led to him pawning his wife's jewellery in order to continue his work as a diplomat.

I have not written to his Majesty for several days, and therefore have not communicated with your excellency, that I am still without (letter of) credence or orders, which has resulted in me avoiding to speak too much with the ministers, who can choose to hear me or not. The Russian Resident is in the same situation, which is curious enough after so many letters sent from here. I have lost all hope of bettering my character's lack of means until the enactment of my orders and letter of credence; I have asked only to be called a minister; let's see if that will succeed. However, everything is so deficient for me that I have had to pawn my wife's jewellery, which would well mortify me if I had a wife less reasonable and less unwavering for the service of his Majesty.⁵⁵

Gyllenborg and his Swedish colleagues' situation was not an easy one. Their limited supply of money and instructions created a power vacuum where they had to navigate a stormy political sea. Nevertheless, their political attitudes are easy enough for us to read if we only look beyond the apparent information in their correspondence. Gyllenborg's and Sparre's use of *Le Pretendant* is more complex than the previously discussed use of *Roi d'Angleterre*. Because of their

55 Uppsala University Library, F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre, 14 March 1715, 'Iag hafwer på någre postdagar ey skrifwit Hans K. May:t till och särdeles intet haft att Eders Excelhe communicera, iag är alt stadigt utan creditif och ordres, hwai före iag ock undwijker ati mycket tahla med Ministrerne, hwilka kunna wällia antingen de willia mig åhöra eller ey. Den Keysler. Residenten est dans le meme cas hwilket är underligiit nog efter så många beskickningar här ifrån. Iag hafwer förlorat alt hopp om förbättring på min caractere brist af medel till dess uthforande användas för ordsak, jag hafwer begärt att endast kallas Minister få see om iag däri lyckas. Emedertijd så tryter mig nu alt sedan iag äfwen min hustrus jouweler pantsatt, ce qui me mortifieroit bien si jag hade en hustru moins raisonnable et moins gelée pour le service de sa Majesté.'

diplomatic positions, they had to choose their words carefully and, in the case of *Le Pretendant*, political stances and meanings are difficult to determine.

However, as discussed through this section, there are some demarcating factors within Gyllenborg's and Sparre's cultural, social and diplomatic sphere, which give us clues as to their intention behind their choice. First, because of their instructions from the Swedish State, it is clear that they intended to claim and create alliances to ensure the continuation of the Swedish Empire. In addition, they saw possibilities in the Jacobites' search for assurance of the re-emergence of the Stuarts as the rightful heirs to the British throne. These possibilities, coupled with the ongoing lack of instructions, created an economic opportunity where the Swedish diplomats, although not in an ideological way, needed and wanted the Jacobites as allies. This association could also be the reason for choosing to style George I as King of England, in a similar way to Cromwell's use of King of Scots.

Both Sparre and Gyllenborg used the term *Le Pretendant*, although they both socially and professionally engaged with Stuart supporters. Sparre, in his role as main communicator with the banished Jacobite court, ought not to have used the negatively loaded *Le Pretendant*. Gyllenborg, on the other hand, served in a social setting where *Le Pretendant* was the colloquially used title, which could have created an idiomatic habit explaining his use of the title. The question is therefore what agency both Gyllenborg and Sparre placed on *Le Pretendant*. We cannot ensure that their utilisation of this title was solely based on a colloquialism. Instead, it appears that, similar to their application of *Roi de Grande Bretagne*, *Roi d'Angleterre* and *Electeur d'Hannover*, they actively chose the titles which best described their political stance in an attempt to convey this to the recipient of their correspondence.

Conclusion

By focusing on the minute nuances of how diplomats such as Gyllenborg applied and utilised titles, this article has shown that several layers of social, political and cultural capital can be analysed through contemporary correspondence. Titles, and their utilisation, can be seen as minute if we do not approach them with a semiotician's viewpoint. However, if we use that viewpoint, we can read their cultural significance and understand the importance title-usage had within the diplomatic sphere of the early eighteenth century.

This article has also highlighted how the complex nature of the British-Hannoverian-Swedish relationship can be read through language and word choices by the actors who inhabit the historical context. In reading the

correspondence of diplomats not through event-based scrutiny but rather in a cultural nuance, several new levels of understanding can be achieved. Particularly in the way in which word choice implied standing and significance as well as tensions and intentions within the labyrinthian nature of Euro-Politics, or more precisely, British-Swedish-Hannoverian politics of the early eighteenth century.

When Gyllenborg chose certain words and titles, he told us his wishes and opinions. This article has explored his application of *Roi d'Angleterre*, *Roi de Grande Bretagne* and *Electeur d'Hannover*, and thus, we encounter a mis-titling of George I which can be read as a way in which Gyllenborg and his fellow diplomats diminished George I's agency. This wrongful use of titles was a hidden diplomatic agenda, shared by the Swedish diplomats in secrecy and confidence, to delegitimise George I's claim to power and position within the broader Euro-political sphere. In a sense, if we apply Conal Condren's theory, Gyllenborg and his colleagues stripped George I of his office and social voice as King of Great Britain when they, amongst themselves, called him King of England.

By reading the examples presented above, it becomes clear that the diplomats actively chose what words and titles to apply. Although the above-mentioned examples provide only a minute lens into the diplomat's semiotic world, they create several overarching questions within the new diplomatic field, for example if the phenomena presented in this article were more widespread among other diplomats within the cosmopolitan sphere.

This article's analysis of title-usage has shown that the choice of titles had a political, cultural and social value attached to it and that serious thought and care was taken in the production of diplomatic correspondence in an attempt to influence the perception of its recipient. Thus, the nature of diplomatic correspondence was heavily affected by the cultural sphere in which it was created. By analysing the minute nuances, we can enter more deeply into the historical perspectives of our subjects.

Bibliography

Unpublished Primary Sources

Riksarkivet

- Diplomatica Anglica, 220, letter from Erik Sparre to Carl Gyllenborg, 16 August 1715.
- Diplomatica Anglica, 220, letter from Erik Sparre to Carl Gyllenborg 7 October 1715.
- Diplomatica Anglica, 220, letter from Erik Sparre to Carl Gyllenborg 10 October 1715.
- Diplomatica Anglica, 219, letter from Joakim Fredrik Preis to Carl Gyllenborg 19 June 1716.
- Diplomatica Anglica 523, letter from Robert Jackson to Carl Gyllenborg 21 December 1710.

Uppsala University Library

- F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 27 January 1715.
- F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 8 March 1715.

- F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 10 March 1715.
F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 14 March 1715.
F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 29/10 April May 1715.
F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 10 May 1715.
F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 31/11 June 1715.
F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 19 September 1715.
F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 3 October 1715.
F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 11 October 1715.
F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 28 October 1715.
F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 14 April 1716.
F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to Erik Sparre 26 April 1716.
F.168, letter from Carl Gyllenborg to von Müllern via Erik Sparre 5 Augusti 1715.

Secondary Sources

- Ahnlund N and Rosén J 1952, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia. 2. 1, 1697-1721*, Stockholm: Norstedt.
- Artéus, G 1977-1979, 'Adam Ludwig Lewenhaupt', *Svensk Biografiskt Lexikon* 22, 618.
- Black, J 2005, 'Hanover and British Foreign Policy 1714-60', *The English Historical Review* 120, 303-339.
- Bromley, J S 1971, *The rise of Great Britain and Russia: 1688-1715/25*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Condren, C 2006, *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England: the Pre-supposition of Oaths and Offices*, Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Coroban, C 2010, 'Sweden and the Jacobite movement (1715-1718)', *The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies* 2(2), 131152.
- Forsberg, Emma 2020, "'A Veritable Country of Lies': Carl Gyllenborg, A Conspiring Swedish Diplomat's Practices According to his Correspondence 1715-1717". Unpublished MA dissertation Uppsala University.
- Grauers, S 1967-1969, 'Carl Gyllenborg', *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* 17, 529.
- Hatton, R 1978, *George I, Elector and King*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Hellman, L 2021, 'Drawing the Lines: Translation and Diplomacy in the Central Asian Borderlands', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 82, 485-501.
- Hellman, L and Tremml-Werner, B 2021, 'Translation in Action: Global Intellectual History and Early Modern Diplomacy', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 82, 453-467.
- Holm, S 2021, 'Multilingual Foreign Affairs: Translation and Diplomatic Agency in Eighteenth-Century Stockholm', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 82, 469-483.
- O'Gorman, F 2016, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688-1832*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Szechi, D 2019, *The Jacobites: Britain and Europe, 1688-1788*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Online sources

- Bill of Rights, 1688 Chapter 2 1 Will and Mar Sess 2. accessed on 21 October 2022
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/aep/WillandMarSess2/1/2/introduction>
Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com>