

Language and Sovereignty: the Use of Titles and Savoy's Royal Declaration of 1632

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In one of the most influential and monumental works of Savoyard history produced during the early modern period, the *Histoire généalogique de la royale maison de Savoie* (1660), Samuel Guichenon devoted one of his chapters to the definition of *souveraineté* [sovereignty]. Both ancient and modern writers had grappled with the question, describing sovereignty's qualities and essential markers. Jean Bodin, he wrote, identified seven characteristics, encompassing the powers to impose laws on all, to make war or peace, to institute magistrates and other officials, to act as the ultimate arbiter, to exercise clemency, to mint coins and to impose levies. Others writers considered different qualities, such as the right to naturalize foreigners, to legitimize bastards, or to receive ambassadors.¹ Defining sovereignty by the ability to exercise authority domestically and internationally was one thing; grades of sovereignty were another, and across the first part of his treatise Guichenon was principally concerned with Savoy's status, the antiquity of the Savoyard states, the ruling family's un-broken line that dated back six centuries, its claims to various kingdoms, its marriages into Europe's most illustrious ruling dynasties, and even with the nature and quality of material possessions such as crowns and relics.²

The *Histoire généalogique* was borne out of Savoy's intense campaign for royal status, which reflected a much wider characteristic of early modern international relations: the obsession amongst Europe's dynasties and states with issues of precedence, and notably about whether one princely family outranked another or whether a republic was of a higher status than a dynastic state. These were not idle concerns in some way divorced from 'real' power of men and arms, and what might appear to modern audiences as matters of antiquarian interest consumed enormous amounts of energy during the sixteenth and

1 Samuel Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique de la royale maison de Savoie*, 2 vols (Lyon, 1660), I, Chapter VII.

2 Ibid., I, Chapters, V, VI, VIII, XI.

seventeenth centuries, and also reflected very real political processes.³ The fluidity of sovereign status was a striking feature of international relations. As Guichenon noted in his chapter on sovereignty, 'ever since Fortune was thrown into the affairs of the world, she has so altered the order of powers by her continual revolutions...that is it very difficult, above all in these past centuries, to recognize those one ought to call truly sovereign'.⁴ The sixteenth century in particular saw the creation of new titles for princely families – for example, the Gonzagas as dukes of Mantua, and the Medici as dukes and then grand-dukes of Florence-Tuscany – and the intensification of status competitions between rival dynasties. These 'surrogate wars' over grades of sovereignty raise fundamental questions for historians more generally.⁵ How could a ducal family become royal, an issue of enormous sensitivity in Italy? Who had the power to change grades of sovereignty?

Savoy's royal campaign affords an excellent case study both of the ways in which a dynasty sought to change its status, and of the limits of its success on the stages of domestic and international politics. In turn, it provides a means for examining critical issues relating to sovereignty in the early modern period, not least, as will be seen, with fresh analytical and methodological tools.

On 23 December 1632, Duke Vittorio Amedeo I issued an edict publicly declaring that

3 On the intensity of ceremonial competition especially amongst Italian powers see, for example, Toby Osborne, 'The Surrogate War between the Savoy and the Medici: Sovereignty and Precedence in Early-Modern Italy', *The International History Review*, 29 (2007), 1-21; Maria Antonietta Visceglia, 'Il cerimoniale come linguaggio politico. Su alcuni conflitti di precedenza alla corte di Roma tra cinquecento e seicento', in *Cérémonial et rituel à Rome (XVIe - XIX siècle)*, edited by M. A. Visceglia and C. Brice (Rome, 1997); P. Gribaudo, 'Questioni di precedenza fra le Corti italiane nel secolo XVI. Contributo alla storia della diplomazia italiana', *Rivista di Scienze Storiche*, 1 (1904), 166-77; 278-85; 347-56; 2/1 (1905), 87-94; 205-16; 475-85. 2/ 2 (1905), 29-38; 126-41. For a wider appreciation of diplomatic ceremonial as a matter of power politics see W. Roosen, 'Diplomatic ceremonial: a systems approach', *Journal of Modern History*, 52 (1980), 452-76.

4 Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique*, I, 80.

5 On ceremonial rivalries as surrogate wars see Angelantonio Spagnoletti, *Le dinastie italiane nella prima età moderna* (Bologna, 2002), especially pp. 128-57.

his family was now to be treated as a royal dynasty, the so-called *trattamento reale* [royal treatment]. The famous edict opened with broad observations about how Vittorio Amedeo wished to mark the coming of peace (following the treaties of Cherasco and Regensburg that ended the war for Mantua and Monferrato, 1628-31), Savoy's salvation from the plague that had ravaged Italy after 1629, and lastly (and most pertinently) the birth in September 1632 of a son and heir, Francesco Giacinto. For the dynasty's reputation and for posterity's sake:

We have judged it convenient to add to our ordinary arms those of the Kingdom of Cyprus, which our antecessors bore only in the most important arms, and with that declare that while the said Kingdom is violently occupied by the enemies of Christianity, it seems legitimate to us, as all the world knows, that we can bear the title of King, and enjoy all the honours and prerogative due to royal dignity.⁶

While Francesco Giacinto's birth was the principal catalyst for the *trattamento reale*, Savoy's royal ambitions did not come out of the blue. The campaign, grounded principally in claims to the kingdom of Cyprus (then occupied by the Ottomans), had become increasingly important to Savoyard rhetoric from the 1580s, and had been triggered by competition with rival Italian powers, the recently created grand-duchy of Tuscany, and the republic of Venice. The late Robert Oresko, whose commitment to the study of early modern Savoy played a leading role in bringing the region to the attention of Anglophone scholars, examined this royal campaign in what remains his most significant and most often cited essay.⁷ Set against the

⁶ Felice Amato Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine di materie delle leggi, editti, manifesti ecc. Pubblicati dal principio dell'anno 1681 sino agli 8 dicembre 1798 sotto il felicissimo dominio della Real Casa di Savoia*, 31 vols (Turin, 1818-69), VIII, 11.

⁷ Robert Oresko, 'The House of Savoy in search for the Royal Crown', in *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of Ragnhild Hatton*, edited by Graham Gibbs, Robert Oresko, and Hamish Scott (Cambridge, 1997). The essay remains striking for the depth of its copious footnotes, and indeed the long captions to its numerous images. Oresko took a militantly empirical approach to his scholarship, and was deeply hostile to theoretical models – that much can be understood from his treatment of his visual sources, predicated on the scepticism he shared with Sydney Anglo and Theodore K. Rabb of iconographic readings of imagery (*ibid.*, pp. 274–5, 278–9).

backdrop of Savoy's rivalry with the Medici and Venice, Oresko argued that the *trattamento reale* comprised two key elements. First, members of Savoy's ruling dynasty expected to be addressed with royal titles, which were to be used in written communications. Secondly, Savoy pursued a diplomatic initiative around Europe after 1632 to obtain royal treatment for its ambassadors in court protocols. This two-pronged campaign was in turn linked to a shift in the visual and material culture of the court, a shift characterized by changes in the dynasty's imagery, and it was on this that the greater part of Oresko's essay focused.

Since the publication in 1997 of Oresko's essay, methodological interest has burgeoned amongst pre-modern historians in the kinds of questions he examined, notably with regard to the representation of status and of how status was performed. Much is currently made of 'symbolic communication', elements of which both provide an important analytical tool for re-conceptualizing Savoy's royal campaigns as outlined by Oresko, and serve as the point of departure for this essay. The rituals of late-medieval and early modern rulership have, indeed, proved rich territory for recent work grounded on symbolic communication, in particular in relation to the Burgundian Netherlands, with its traditions of civic rituals and *Blijde Inkomsten*, and on the Holy Roman Empire.⁸ Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, in particular, has applied the ideas of symbolic communication to the empire. Symbolic communication, she contends, is broad in its scope, encompassing a wide range of interactions between rulers and the ruled embodied not only in words and language, but also in gestures, rituals, and material culture.⁹ In terms of the Holy Roman Empire, she argues

8 See, for example, *Symbolic Communication in Late Medieval Towns*, edited by Jacoba van Leeuwen (Leuven, 2006).

9 Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, 'Le rituel de l'investiture dans le Saint-Empire de l'époque moderne: histoire institutionnelle et pratiques symboliques', *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 56 (2009), 7-29. More generally see eadem, 'The Impact of Communication Theory on the Analysis of the Early Modern Statebuilding Processes', in *Empowering Interactions. Political Culture and the Emergence of the State in Europe, 1300-1900*, edited by Wim Blockmans, André Holenstein and Jon Mathieu (Burlington, 2009), 313-318. Though it should be added that the ubiquity of 'symbolic communication' in all human interactions potentially weakens its analytical value. See Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual. Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, 2001), especially the introduction.

that too much attention has been given to a narrowly-framed conception of constitutional history, and that in order to understand how imperial power was sustained we should examine the symbolic roles of imperial rituals such as investitures of imperial princes.¹⁰ Importantly, as this implies, court rituals encompassed not just the emperor but also the various imperial princes. Indeed, their success was largely defined by convincing performances from emperors and willing participation from his imperial fief-holders, and when the princes of the empire gradually lost interest in its rituals, the empire itself weakened.¹¹

Symbolic communication owes much to earlier studies in history, semiotics, anthropology and philosophy. It is not surprising, therefore, that Stollberg-Rilinger explicitly locates her work in the context of work by scholars such as Gerd Althoff, Ernst Cassirer and Pierre Bourdieu, arguing that symbolic communication gives meaning to identities by balancing the familiarity of rituals, inscribed in the dispositions of participants, with the need for identities and rituals to be performed in convincing ways. Her work more generally bears comparison with the kaleidoscopic range of disciplines and methodological turns relating to performativity and performance studies, dating back to the 1940s and 50s.¹² It was in 1955 that J. L. Austin, whom Stollberg-Rilinger cites and who was perhaps the most influential progenitor of performativity in its various guises, delivered his Harvard lectures on language. Whilst Stollberg-Rilinger seems as much concerned with non-verbal acts as with words, and whilst some anthropologists have sought to claim Austin for the study of rituals that could combine both words and actions,¹³ Austin's primary focus on language and its consequences

10 Stollberg-Rilinger, 'Le rituel de l'investiture'.

11 See also Leeuwen, 'Introduction', *Symbolic Communication*, pp. ix-xi.

12 For a valuable essay on the intellectual genealogies of symbolic communication and the 'performative turn' from an historian's perspective see Peter Burke, 'Performing History: the importance of Occasions', *Rethinking History*, 9 (2005), 35-52. For a more general study, see James Loxley, *Performativity* (London, 2006).

13 See for example S. J. Tambiah, 'A Performative Approach to Ritual', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 65 (1979), 113-69. For a critical reflection on Tambiah's earlier work on the theme and that of Benjamin Ray, see H. Burehen, 'J. L. Austin and the analysis of ritual', *Philosophical Investigations*, 3 (1980), 39-50. It could, of course, be argued that Austin's interest in the conventional senses of performative statements, and their connections with actions, makes them susceptible to 'ritualized readings', and also vulnerable to misfires and

necessarily brings us back to the first element of Oresko's essay, namely the function of Savoy's titles of address in epistolary communication as markers of royal status.

In the second of his twelve lectures, Austin sketched-out six rules for a statement to be successful or 'felicitous' (to borrow Austin's term), and the first four (A_1 , A_2 , B_1 , B_2), at least, have potential implications for interpreting titles of address and Savoy's pursuit of royalty. For a statement to be felicitous there should be a conventional procedure with conventional effects issued by certain people in certain circumstances (A_1), the person and circumstances of a given case need to be appropriate (A_2), and all participants involved in the statement need to follow procedures correctly and completely (B_1 , B_2).¹⁴ Within this framework (at least in the earlier lectures), Austin was not interested in descriptive statements that could be true or false (constatives), but in statements whose performance had a force that did something. 'I pronounce you man and wife' might be a clear example, where the saying of the words by the right person in the right context effects a change in the identities of the marriage partners.

Austin's central criteria raise important questions when applied to the *trattamento reale*. Did Savoy's royalty only become 'real' when stated in the correct circumstances? Did Vittorio Amedeo have the recognized authority to pronounce on his own grade of sovereignty, and did the *trattamento reale* have tangible consequences? Taking into account Austin's first criterion of procedure and circumstance, it is unclear if there were any commonly recognized procedures for changing sovereign status in early modern Europe. The best example we have of a dynasty changing its status demonstrates this lack of clarity. On 27 August 1569 the ducal Medici were unilaterally elevated to grand ducal status by Pope Pius V Ghislieri by a papal bull, *Pontifex Maximus*. But the elevation was not accepted by the Holy Roman Emperor because the new Tuscan grand duchy included imperial fiefs and the pope was seen as undermining the empire's juridical authority; it was not until January 1576 that Emperor Maximilian II recognized the elevation. In the uncertain period between the papal and imperial recognitions, 1569-76, imperial fief holders were instructed not to use the grand-ducal title because it was interpreted as a derogation of the emperor's feudal power. After all, what right did the papacy have to elevate unilaterally the Medici as rulers of Tuscany, including the imperial fief of Siena, without regard for the emperor's rights?¹⁵ At best this

abuses; on this, see Loxley, *Performativity*, p. 12.

14 J. L. Austin, *How to do things with Words* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 14-15.

15 Osborne, 'Surrogate War', pp. 2-3.

suggests that changes of status depended on the support of traditionally supranational powers (such as the papacy), or feudal overlords (the emperor), and that their participation in effect set a procedural framework. They were 'the only kingmakers', in the words of Juan de Necolalde, the Spanish agent in London, when commenting on the *trattamento reale*.¹⁶ Alternatively, if we adopt Austin's criteria for felicity, we might conclude that the lack of internationally accepted procedural guidelines meant that any change of sovereign status as a performative act was a potential 'misfire'.¹⁷

There is a layer of complexity to the question of procedure and of Savoy's royal campaign. As noted above, one key element of the campaign was that the 1632 declaration was not an innovation. The arguments mustered by the House of Savoy were that it had long been royal, not least because of repeated marriages into other, recognized, royal dynasties: royalty was in the blood, a line of argument that was familiar in early modern discourses on princely status.¹⁸ This reasoning was intrinsic to Guichenon's genealogical history, and a similar case was made in the most important polemic published in the wake of the *trattamento reale*, Pietro Monod's *Trattato del titolo regio* (1633), in which successive chapters dealt with the antiquity of Savoy's royal titles, of marriages into royal dynasties, of Savoy's royal territories, and of its rights to Cyprus.¹⁹ In fact, from the 1580s, royal rhetoric was becoming

16 Cited in *Ceremonies of Charles I. The Note Books of John Finet 1628-1641*, edited by Albert J. Loomie (New York, 1987), p. 164. See also Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique*, I, p. 76. The feudal power of the emperor in particular might be seen as a key element for sovereignty change amongst Italian members of the *Reichsitalien*. On feudalism in Italy see in particular K. von Aretin, 'L'ordinamento feudale in Italia nel XVI e XVII secolo e le sue ripercussioni nella politica europea', *Annali dell'istituto italo germanico in Trento*, 4 (1978), 51-94.

17 On the various 'infelicities' to which statements are vulnerable, see Austin, *How to do things with Words*, pp. 16-24. Here, it should be added, I differ from Burke's suggestion that the idea of 'misfire' is inappropriate for circumstances where there is no "'correct" interpretation' (Burke, 'Performing History', p. 42).

18 Spagnoletti, *Le dinastie italiane*, p. 130.

19 Pietro Monod, *Trattato del titolo regio dovuto alla serenissima casa di Savoia* (Turin, 1633), chapters 1-4. Monod's work provoked manuscript and printed counter-polemics from Venice. E.g., Archivio di Stato di Torino [AST] Cerimoniale Venezia m. 1, 'Critica composta da

increasingly prominent in court-sponsored polemics and diplomatic correspondence. A raft of printed and manuscript tracts were produced from the later sixteenth century in support of Savoy's royalty,²⁰ and Carlo Emanuele himself began to instruct ambassadors to press for the claim on the basis of his family's lineage and the range and quality of its states, points reiterated by ambassadors serving in the field when reporting back of their audiences.²¹ Indeed, ambassadorial letters provide a window into the world of Savoyard thinking prior to 1632. Not infrequently, ambassadors referred to Savoy's intrinsic royalty by using the word adjectivally to describe the qualities or actions of the dukes: 'reali attioni di V. A.' [His Highness's royal actions], of 'il reale suo [Carlo Emanuele] servitio' [his royal favour], or of the duke's 'regia bonta' [royal goodness].²²

In one sense Savoy's 'royalty' was, therefore, not new, or rather it had become entrenched in political rhetoric by the early seventeenth century. We might accordingly

Gaspare Gianotti sul trattato del Padre Monod'; Theodore Graswinckeli, *Dissertatio de Jure Praecedentiae inter Serenissimam Venetam Rempubl. & Sereniss. Sabaudiae Ducem* (1644). See also Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, It. VII, 334, Alessandro Zilolo, *Difesa delle Ragionii, et Maesta della Serenissima Rep.ca di Venetia Contro il Libro Publicato da Savoiaro*.

20 See for example Giovanni Battista Bevilacqua, *Trattato delle ragioni sopra il regno di Cipro appartenenti alla serenissima casa di Savoia* (Turin, 1594); AST Negoziatii con la corte di Vienna, m. 1, fasc. 27, 'Ragioni per le quali pare che convenga il titolo di Regno ai Stati del Duca di Savoia', late sixteenth century.

21 See for example AST Lettere Ministri Spagna m. 2, Pallavicino to Idiaquez, c. 1580; Lettere Ministri Roma [LMR] m. 8, fasc. 4, 249, Carlo Emanuele to Muti, 1590; m. 9, fasc. 2, 191, Della Rovere to Carlo Emanuele, 27 August 1588. More generally consult Luigi La Rocca, 'L'aspirazione del duca Carlo Emanuele I al titolo di re di Piemonte', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 5th Series, 46 (1910), 375-92.

22 See for example AST LMR m. 21, fasc. 3, 39, Germonio to Carlo Emanuele, 27 March 1604; LMR m. 22, fasc. 6, 25, Germonio to Carlo Emanuele, 30 December 1606; AST Lettere Ministri Francia [LMF] m. 31, fasc. 5, 8, Manganda to Vittorio Amedeo, 19 October 1632; Cardinal della Rovere used the royal adjective frequently in letters to Catalina Micaela, but since she was a daughter of Philip II it might be said that she had royalty by right. See for example AST LMR m. 11, fasc. 1, 35, Della Rovere to Catalina Micaela, 26 May 1590.

conclude that the procedural question of becoming royal was not relevant to Savoy. That is not to suggest that the *trattamento reale* was therefore unimportant. The year 1632 represented a qualitative step-change in the fundamental nature of Savoy's royalty. As cited above, the edict recognized that while previous rulers had used royal arms only in 'the most important arms' [scude più grande], now it was to become a norm in dynastic arms, while a series of memorials written after 1632 discussed the consequences of the declaration for court protocols and court structures.²³ With these changes in royal iconography and court practices, the 1632 *trattamento reale* can, indeed, be judged in terms of a constitutive performative act in a way that the intrinsic claims to royalty before 1632 were not. The very act of pronouncing royalty as a formal statement of identity was supposed to be more than a descriptive utterance. It was intended as an act of doing, with consequences both for Savoy's rulers and also for those who interacted with them.

Aside from the question of procedure, what about Austin's other criteria? With regard to the appropriateness of Vittorio Amedeo making the statement, Guichenon, at least, asserted in his chapter on sovereignty that Savoy's rulers exercised unrestricted authority in their states: 'These considerations have without doubt been published by the most famous jurists, that the Duke of Savoy is like an emperor in his states, and that all the rights of rulership without exception belong to him'.²⁴ This was a contentious assertion, especially Guichenon's likening of the Savoyard duke to an emperor in his states, that is to say, to a ruler with unrestricted sovereignty. Guichenon was directly addressing specific counter-claims against Savoy that, since the duchy was an imperial fief, ducal power was diluted – by contrast Venice's supporters argued that the republic enjoyed *plenitudo potestatis* principally because it was outside the empire.²⁵ But if Guichenon were right, then his assertion arguably addresses one key criterion for a successful performance, namely that the speaker, Vittorio Amedeo, had the authority to make a felicitous statement about his royal dignity. Curiously, Vittorio Amedeo was himself timid in using his own royal title, despite issuing the edict. He

23 AST Cerimoniale, Lettere m. 1, fasc. 4, 'Modi e temperamenti rappresentati a S.A.R. per riformare l'abuso dei titoli', 1635.

24 Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique*, I, p. 81. See also pp. 82-3 and Spagnoletti, *Le dinastie italiane*, p. 118.

25 See for example Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. Lat. 5548, 'Trattato delle precedenzae de'principi', ff. 27-9.

stated in his edict that, like Amedeo VIII, the first Savoyard ruler who had enjoyed ducal status (from 1416) but who had retained his title of count, he would continue to use the ducal title alone, following the 'old modesty of our Serene House', not having any other motive than 'to avoid other usurpers bearing further resentment against us and our successors.'²⁶

Certainly, in his own letters written to subjects and state officials, Vittorio Amedeo continued to style himself with his old ducal title. To take one example, in a letter to the council of state written a year after Francesco Giacinto's birth, the letter was headed 'le Duc de Savoye' [the Duke of Savoy].²⁷ However, a close examination of other ducal letters directs us to a significant point with regard to the royal title. In letters written to his youngest brother, Prince Tommaso Francesco, Vittorio Amedeo addressed him as 'Signor fratello' [Lord brother], and styled himself 'vostro buon fratello' [your dear brother] – nothing unusual between the blood brothers. Also, quite typically, on the backs of the letters secretaries wrote the name of the correspondent and occasionally added summaries of the letters' contents. Their language, though, is revealing, for as early as January 1633, a secretary was marking them with the royal title of 'S.A.R.' , that is to say, 'Sua Altezza Reale' [Your Royal Highness].²⁸ The duke's brothers, Tommaso Francesco and Maurizio, it should be added, had themselves switched to the royal 'S.A.R' by the mid-1630s.²⁹

This brings us to the question of reception: of the roles played by Savoyards in the performative statement of royalty, and their responses – the perlocutionary consequences of the *trattamento reale*, to use a theme sketched-out later in Austin's Harvard lectures.³⁰ While Vittorio Amedeo was restrained in his own use of the royal title, his relatives, subjects and those in his service were more forthcoming, as they were expected to be. The 1632 edict concluded that the royal title, driven by Savoy's concern to maintain reputation, had been drawn-up in conjunction with ministers and magistrates, and would 'have the force and power

²⁶ Duboin, *Raccolta*, VIII, 12. See also Oresko, 'The House of Savoy', footnote 93.

²⁷ AST Lettere Duchi e Sovrani [LDS] m. 54, 2184, Vittorio Amedeo to the council of state of Savoy, 22 September 1633.

²⁸ See for example AST LDS m. 54, 2028, Vittorio Amedeo to Tommaso Francesco, 2 [?] January 1633; 2043 bis, Vittorio Amedeo to Tommaso Francesco, 13 March 1633.

²⁹ For Maurizio's switch from addressing Vittorio Amedeo as 'Serenissimo Signore' or 'Serenissimo Principe' to 'S.A.R.' see for example AST Lettere Principi Diversi m. 15.

³⁰ See Austin, *How to do things with Words*, especially lectures 8 and 9.

of a perpetual and inviolable law' [habia forza et virtù di legge perpetua et inviolabile].³¹ The force of the edict within the Savoyard states was also understood by Savoy's principal rival to the kingdom of Cyprus, the republic of Venice. Following the royal edict and the addition of a royal coat of arms to the residence of the Savoyard ambassador in Rome, the Venetian Senate issued a series of instructions to its ambassadors around Europe advising them of the *trattamento reale* and of the need to remain watchful of any changes in the ways Savoy's ambassadors acted or were treated. One example of this appears in the instructions to Antonio Marioni, the Venetian representative in Florence: it was there stated that the duke had ordered his *sudditi* [subjects] to accept the claim.³²

Just as we saw Vittorio Amedeo's ostensible timidity in his own letters, we might look at the epistolary language of diplomatic correspondence as an important barometer of the reception amongst subjects of the *trattamento reale*. While performing the obvious functions of communicating news and carrying information, ambassadorial letters were also carefully constructed statements of deference and political affiliation. Indeed, as evidence, they provide important insights into social relations, quite apart from their traditional use by historians interested in narratives of high political history. To understand this we may draw on a recent essay on epistolary ceremonial from Louis XIV's France, which argues that the precise language used by correspondents, where titles of address and subscriptions were placed in letters, and even the spacing in letters between titles and the text, all carried meanings of rank.³³ This last point, at least, might be taking the case a little far, since ambassadorial letters often included hastily written postscripts which would have weakened any sense of deference tacitly implied by controlled spacing. The key points about language (as acts of symbolic communication, we might add) are nevertheless credible, and remind us of the different ways diplomatic correspondence may be interpreted as evidence by historians. Oresko, in fact, suggested that the shift in epistolary language amongst Savoy's ambassadors from the ducal 'Vostra Altezza' [Your Highness] to the explicitly royal 'Vostra Altezza Reale' [Your Royal Highness] was tentative. In the case of Francesco Provana di

31 Duboin, *Raccolta*, VIII, 12.

32 Archivio di Stato di Venezia [ASVen] Senato: Corti Reg. 4 (1633), f. 105v, Senate to Marioni, 4 June 1633.

33 Giora Sternberg, 'Epistolary Ceremonial: Corresponding Status at the time of Louis XIV', *Past and Present*, 204 (2009), pp. 33-88.

Druent, Savoy's ordinary ambassador in Paris, the transition to royal terms of address only took place in July 1633, eight months after Vittorio Amedeo's formal declaration, dated December 1632.³⁴ While this was Oresko's sole example (despite his deeply embedded empiricism), a more systematic reading of ambassadorial correspondence from Savoy's ambassadors posted around Europe tends to confirm the shift to royal language as gradual in 1633: there was no definitive point at which all ambassadors uniformly changed their epistolary language. Savoy's ambassador in Rome, Ludovico d'Agliè, whose placing of a royal coat of arms above his residence prompted the Venetian Senate's outburst of letters to its ambassadors around Europe about the *trattamento reale*, was one the first to change his language, using the title 'Serenissima Maestà' [Most Serene Majesty] as early as January 1633. His first letter using a royal title is especially interesting, aside from its obsequiousness, since it touched on the key themes of Savoyard reasoning, namely that the use of royal titles was in part a response to the challenges of rival powers, that the title reflected Savoy's ancient rights and, indeed, that it was not an innovation.³⁵ More generally, the switch amongst Savoy's ambassadors posted abroad took place over the summer and autumn of 1633 so that, by the end of the year, the use of royal titles of address was standard practice.³⁶

What force did the adoption of these titles have? We have already suggested that Vittorio Amedeo was seen as having full authority in his own territories, and thus might be seen as capable of pronouncing on his own identity to his subjects. Compliance amongst his subjects to the *trattamento reale* in turn conforms to another part of the equation for a felicitous statement. Savoy's ambassadors, as participants in the statement, were not merely doing their duty by complying with the royal claim, but were also themselves giving meaning to the claim. This process of shaping concepts and identity through the deliberate manipulation of language also worked in reverse. Savoyard rulers sought to control the titles their ambassadors used to describe other rulers where sovereignty was contested. The

34 Oresko, 'Royal Crown', pp. 282, 284.

35 AST LMR m. 44, fasc. 2, 5, D'Agliè to Vittorio Amedeo, 14 January 1633. The S. Martino-d'Agliè family, it should be added, had pinned their fortunes on close support of the ducal dynasty, and emerged as favourites in the 1630s.

36 For examples of the shift to royal titles see, for instance, AST Lettere Ministri Austria [LMA] m. 10, fasc. 1, 182, Bolognese to Vittorio Amedeo, 2 July 1633; AST Lettere Ministri Inghilterra m. 5, fasc. 2, Ciza to Vittorio Amedeo, 4 May 1633.

papal-imperial tensions over the right to elevate the Medici, especially in the uncertain period between 1569 and 1576, had consequences for imperial fief holders, Savoy among them, who were expected by the emperor to continue using the older title of duke of Florence, a title that clearly excluded references to Siena. For Savoy, this proved a useful means of avoiding recognition of this unwelcome title that potentially threatened Savoy's preeminence among Italy's dynastic powers.³⁷ Even after Emperor Maximilian II's recognition of the Medici as grand-dukes of Tuscany in 1576, Savoy did not accede. The use of the grand-ducal title is very rare in Savoyard political correspondence from the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. When, in 1594, one ambassador in Rome, Francesco Arconato, accidentally used a hybrid title of 'gran duca di Fiorenza' [grand-duke of Florence] in a letter destined for Turin, he seems to have realized his error, crossing out the words and subsequently using the ducal title.³⁸ The norm throughout the period for Savoyard ambassadors was 'duca di fiorenza' [duke of Florence], and while there is seemingly no direct evidence to suggest an official policy after 1576, the consistent use of the lesser title nevertheless implies a conscious political steer from Turin. Indeed, the grand-ducal title was not used consistently in Savoyard correspondence until the 1640s.

This refusal to recognize the grand-ducal title, certainly until the mid-seventeenth century, draws us to an important point that has a direct bearing on Savoy's own claims to royalty, and which raises broader questions about sovereign status. As we have seen, existing work on symbolic communication in late medieval and early modern Europe has principally addressed interactions between rulers and their own subjects.³⁹ Savoy's *trattamento reale*, however, was not intended just for domestic consumption; it was explicitly intended also for international audiences, not least as diplomats were expected to perform Savoy's royalty through requesting royal protocols in Europe's courts where they served. Accordingly, the *trattamento reale* raises further problems about the potential differences between the performances of royalty in domestic and international settings, for while Savoy's

37 R. Galluzzi, *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana sotto il governo della casa Medici*, 8 vols. (Florence, 1781), II, 365; AST LMA m. 4, fasc. 1, 60, Emanuele Filiberto to Santa Croce, 3 June 1570; LMR m. 4, 135, Emanuele Filiberto to Bobba, 1 August 1570.

38 AST LMR m. 15, fasc. 2, 75, Arconato to Carlo Emanuele I, 3 September 1594.

39 Even Stollberg-Rilinger's focus on the empire, while examining the rituals of emperors and imperial princes, is nevertheless set within a framework of a feudal overlord and his fief-holders.

rulers might have had the authority to make pronouncements about themselves in their territories, and equally expected their subjects to comply with their wishes, persuading others was not straightforward. With this in mind, we should note Peter Burke's caution against 'denying the cultural or institutional constraints on effective performance' when applying performativity to early modern history.⁴⁰ What, therefore, constrained Savoy's performances of royalty on the international stage?

The *trattamento reale* was too contentious to have been accepted without question. That much can be seen in the various attempts before 1632 to obtain the title of 'altezza' [Highness] for ducal sons, a title that carried royal connotations, most obviously when Cardinal Maurizio claimed it following Urban VIII's reforms of cardinals' titles in 1630.⁴¹ Venice's adamant hostility to Savoy's royal ambitions is hardly surprising given their competing claims to Cyprus, while the papacy's caution, demonstrated by the tardiness in acceding to Cardinal Maurizio's ambition, reflected a long-standing reluctance after the controversies surrounding the Medici's grand-ducal elevation to create further problems amongst Italy's competing dynasties over questions of status. Not every European power was necessarily hostile to Savoy's royal ambitions, though. Before the *trattamento reale*, Savoy's unofficial claims to royalty were in fact mirrored by implicit recognition by the royal Bourbons, Habsburgs and Stuarts. Again, we can turn to epistolary language for evidence of this. In direct correspondence, princely rulers typically addressed each other as 'my cousin', a title that encompassed recognition of the other's sovereignty, though without specific reference to parity. A king might write to a sovereign duke in these terms, but the title did not suggest anything more. To address a ruler as a 'brother' or 'sister' was more telling since these were titles more usually given by monarchs to those of the same royal status, a point made by Monod when he argued for Savoy's fundamental royalty.⁴² As a Savoyard historian and court-sponsored polemicist, Monod knew that Savoy's rulers had enjoyed this epistolary familiarity with ruling kings. Louis XIII typically wrote to Carlo Emanuele as 'mon oncle' [my

40 Burke, 'Performing History', p. 42.

41 ASVen AS Savoia filza 28, 43, Contarini to the Senate, 23 September 1606; Oresko, 'The House of Savoy', pp. 287-8.

42 *Trattato del titolo regio*, pp. 15-16. The point was also made in a polemic written to defend Savoy's precedence over Venice; see AST Ceremoniale, Venezia m. 1, 'Discours de la presceance de la Maison de Savoye sur la Republique de Venise'.

uncle], signing his letters 'v.tre bonn nepueu' [your dear nephew], and when Vittorio Amedeo came to power in 1630, the French king switched to the title of 'mon frere' [sic] ['my brother']⁴³ Likewise, during the 1580s and 90s, the future Philip III generally wrote to Carlo Emanuele as 'señor Hermano' [Lord Brother], signing his letters 'V.ro buen hermano' [Your dear brother], a formula he continued to use after he succeeded Philip II to the Spanish throne in 1598. Vittorio Amedeo, as prince of Piemonte, was styled 'senor sobrino [sic]' [Lord Nephew], with Philip III signing his letters 'V.ro buen tio' [Your dear uncle]. In turn, Philip IV wrote to Carlo Emanuele with fraternal titles, as he did to Vittorio Amedeo when he became duke of Savoy in 1630.⁴⁴

Epistolary familiarity extended to the Stuarts too, at least after Henrietta Maria's marriage to Charles Stuart in 1625. The English king, mirroring the familiarity of his French and Spanish counterparts, occasionally wrote to Carlo Emanuele as 'mon père' [my father].⁴⁵ In this case, though, there was some conscious reflection on the title precisely because of its royal connotations, at least when Henrietta Maria opened a correspondence with her elder sister, Marie Christine, who had married Vittorio Amedeo in 1619. Could she correspond with her as 'ma soeur' [my sister]? That provoked discussion, for although they were indeed blood sisters and themselves from the same family, the titles implied Savoy's parity with the royal Stuarts.⁴⁶ This dynastic association might nevertheless explain why the Bourbons, Habsburgs and Stuarts were on familiar terms with the dukes of Savoy, for as Guichenon had noted and as we saw above, the Savoyard House was closely bound to those royal families by marriage. Given such familial intimacy, communicated in epistolary language, we might accordingly conclude that, prior to 1632, Savoy's royalty was recognized by three of Europe's leading royal families, or at least recognized implicitly, just as Savoy itself used its royal claims implicitly.

43 For examples of this see AST Lettere Principi Forestieri [LPF] Francia, m. 33.

44 For examples of this see AST LPF Spagna, m. 3.

45 See for example AST LPF Inghilterra m. 48, Charles I to Carlo Emanuele, 1629.

46 See for example AST LMI m. 4, fasc. 1, Barozzio to Scaglia, 29 October 1625; LMF m. 26, fasc. 1, 271, Scaglia to Carlo Emanuele, 15 November 1625. Anne of Austria, Louis XIII's wife, also wrote to Marie Christine as 'ma soeur'. E.g., AST LPF, Francia, m. 33, Anne of Austria to Marie Christine, 25 September 1632. On the ambiguities of Marie Christine's royal status see also Oresko, 'The House of Savoy', pp. 306-16.

This changed after 1632, as France, Spain and England became reluctant to give public recognition to the *trattamento reale*, even though Philip IV, at least, continued to write to Vittorio Amedeo as his brother. As Oresko noted, Druent's efforts to secure recognition in Paris during 1633 met with reluctance on the part of Richelieu. In response to Savoy's claim for royal treatment, Richelieu laid down difficult preconditions, at one point claiming that a deal could be made if Savoy conceded Genevan territories to France; failing that, France would only recognize the royal claim if Savoy increased its range of territories, a proposal that reflects back to the procedural ambiguity about how a dynasty might become royal.⁴⁷ Similarly, the Spanish Habsburgs seemed reluctant to give open support for the royal declaration, reflecting their concerns as kings of Naples about creating another royal power in Italy. The hesitation on the part of the imperial cousins was particularly significant given the feudal power ascribed to the emperor and his potential to legitimize changes in sovereignty amongst his fief-holders.⁴⁸

In London, Charles I's Master of Ceremonies, Sir John Finet, recorded his uncertainty over what to do when, in 1634, the Savoyard agent St. Germain was travelling to London to seek confirmation of the *trattamento reale*:

The sayd ambassador having it for his chief negotiation in charge to hym to procure for the duke his master the title of king of Cyprus, which his master had assumed not long before and which the pope, the emperor, the kyngs of France and Spayne, had refused to give him ... I had been put to a straight in what stile to have treated him⁴⁹

Finet, who was extremely punctilious with regard to 'correct' diplomatic protocol, may be forgiven for his reaction. Charles I's ministers dodged the issue, expressing similar concerns expressed amongst other European monarchies about provoking a race for status

47 Oresko, 'The House of Savoy', pp. 306-7; AST LMF m. 32, fasc. 1, 107, Druent to Vittorio Amedeo, 1 July 1633; 109, Druent to Vittorio Amedeo, 8 July 1633.

48 See for example AST LMA m. 11, fasc. 1, 23, Asinari di Clavesana to Vittorio Amedeo, 3 June 1634; m. 10, fasc. 1, 314, Bolognesi to Vittorio Amedeo, 1 September 1635.

49 Loomie (ed.), *Ceremonies of Charles I*, p. 163. See also p. 164. On St Germain's failure to obtain the royal recognition see Calendar of State Papers Venetian [CSPV] 1632-6, pp. 257, 269, 272.

between Savoy's Italian rivals.⁵⁰ A Venetian *relazione* [relation] on England written in 1635 reported that Charles I did not want to be the first monarch to give formal recognition to the *trattamento reale*.⁵¹ Savoy's success with the royal title on the international stage therefore seems to have gone in the opposite direction to its domestic reception. Both at home and abroad (at least in France, Spain and England), there had been tacit recognition of Savoy's royal credentials before 1632, but when the issue was pushed explicitly, Savoy's royal relatives stepped back from publicly accepting the claim. Quite predictably, the Venetians viewed with satisfaction, if not glee, Savoy's failure around Europe to give a convincing 'performance' of its royalty.⁵²

When we examine the performance of Savoyard royalty through the methodological lenses of communication theory and, more specifically, of performativity, we may draw some important conclusions that could have wider implications for our understanding of princely status in early modern Europe. The procedural question aside, the performance of Savoyard royalty appears to have been much more felicitous in a domestic setting, where Savoyard rulers seemingly enjoyed the authority to make pronouncements about themselves, and where subjects participated through appropriate perlocutionary responses in the performance so making that royalty real. The attempt to control performances of sovereignty even extended to avoiding the Medici's grand-ducal title for nearly a century after their elevation in 1569. Success in the domestic setting, though, was not repeated on the international stage. While there are instances of other rulers styling Savoyard rulers with royal titles of address, this was not a consistent policy and there are certainly contrary examples of hostility to titles that had royal connotations after 1632, even from sympathetic dynastic allies. These points raise questions. Were domestic audiences more or less important than international ones for the performance of identity? Were dukes of Savoy simultaneously royal and non-royal?

These questions do, in turn, bring us back to the broader issues of sovereignty and identity. One of the most significant elements of symbolic communication and of

⁵⁰ CSPV 1632-6, p. 116.

⁵¹ *Relazioni degli stati europei lette al Senato dagli ambasciatori Veneziani*, edited by N. Barozzi and G. Berchet, 10 vols (Venice, 1856-71), series 4, p. 385.

⁵² See for example CSPV 1632-6, p. 113; ASVen Senato: Corti Reg. 4, ff. 88v-9, Senate to Soranzo, 7 May 1633; ff. 106-v, Senate to Sarotti, 4 June 1633.

performativity, as they have been applied, is that they destabilize rigid identities.⁵³ A core assumption of Stollberg-Rilinger's work, for example, seems to be that imperial rituals were not static but had to be performed compellingly to ensure the credibility of the empire itself. While we might not go so far as to suggest that identity is so unfixed that it only has meaning when performed and re-performed, and that each performance has the potential to be different, these methodological assumptions nevertheless usefully promote an understanding of the fluidity of early modern sovereign status. This essay began with Guichenon's reflections on sovereignty, which grounded his arguments that Savoyard rulers were unequivocally sovereign. In the context of symbolic communication, we might add that markers of sovereignty, such as the power to exercise law or to receive ambassadors, were themselves dramatizations of power. Grades of sovereignty, the obsession of early modern princes and states and Savoy's key concern, nevertheless appear to have been more relative and subject to change. 'Royalty', as Savoy experienced it, may well have varied from one audience to another, contingent to a significant degree on convincing performances of linguistic and ritual acts.

53 For a highly influential account of how performativity might destabilize fundamental identities see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London, 1999).