

The Small Republic and the Great Power: Censorship between Geneva and France in the later Eighteenth Century

In September 1759, a seventeen-year-old apprentice called Jean Louis Damoiseil endured two interrogations at the hands of a magistrate in the republic of Geneva. During his second interrogation Damoiseil broke down, begging God for forgiveness with tears in his eyes.¹ Damoiseil's crime was the production of defamatory writings which targeted the French King Louis XV. The French diplomat in Geneva was appalled by these writings and requested that the Genevan authorities find and punish the culprit. Similar misdeeds committed by Genevan authors, publishers and booksellers obliged the French government to intervene in the Genevan print trade on other occasions across the later 1700s. For many eighteenth-century Europeans, the small republic of Geneva seemed to be something of a haven of virtue. Strict moral discipline and an aversion to luxury were fundamental legacies of the religious reforms instigated by Jean Calvin in the 1500s. Despite this, Geneva was also a key site of a continuing trade in provocative books and pamphlets. This article examines the way in which censorship was negotiated between the neighbouring states of France and Geneva. The French government exercised surveillance over the European print trade and made efforts to curb the foreign publication and circulation of contentious material. Genevan officials responded to these efforts not with simple submission, but rather with a complicated blend of cooperation and resistance.

The independent republic of Geneva comprised a territory of some 9000 hectares, centred on a walled city covering about 3 miles. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Genevan population had reached 22,000.² The republic had an oligarchic form of government but was never completely independent, coming under the sway of European powers including the House of Savoy, the

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¹ Geneva, A[rchives] d'E[tat] de G[enève], P[rocès] C[riminels] 10668, *Réponses personnelles* of Damoiseil, 14 September 1759, fols. 20-3 (fols. 21-2).

² Marco Cicchini, 'A New 'Inquisition' ? Police Reform, Urban Transparency and House Numbering in Eighteenth-Century Geneva', *Urban History*, 39 (2012), 614-23 (p. 616).

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Swiss Confederacy, Britain and France. Despite this, Geneva did have international influences thanks to its lively banking industry and its position as an important site of the Protestant Reformation. Geneva's print trade was another significant element of its international identity. A scattering of publishers working in the 1500s eventually expanded into a vigorous industry of publishing and bookselling. The imperative of spreading the Protestant message impelled Genevan printers to trade on an international scale. France's persecution of Protestants, particularly the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, affected the progression of Genevan print as well. An influx of French Protestant exiles decamped to neighbouring Geneva where many became involved in the book business. The expansion of print in Geneva was encouraged by other favourable conditions inside the republic. Structures of censorship did exist but they were not especially stringent. Geneva's geographical positioning was decidedly advantageous for the wider dissemination of literature. Nestled between France, the Swiss cantons and the duchy of Savoy, Geneva was a central point on various trade routes between France, Italy and the Swiss and German states. The growth of Geneva's print trade was further accelerated in the course of the eighteenth century as French gradually replaced Latin as Europe's *lingua franca*. Voltaire's decision to contract many of his later publications to the Genevan brothers, Gabriel and Philibert Cramer illustrates the importance of the republic's print trade.³ By the later 1700s Geneva was arguably one of the most influential centres of book production in Europe, alongside London and Amsterdam.

This article draws upon the Genevan print trade to investigate the question of censorship across borders in the later eighteenth century. It considers how Geneva's relationship with the powerful neighbouring state of France affected the policing of the written and printed word. In doing so, it will shed light on two areas of enquiry. First, this research aims to deepen

³ For more on the Cramers see, Giles Barber, *Studies in the Booktrade of the European Enlightenment* (London: Pindar Press, 1994) and Lucien Cramer, *Une Famille genevoise, les Cramer: leurs relations avec Voltaire, Rousseau et Benjamin Franklin-Bache: documents inédits* (Geneva: E. Droz, 1952).

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understanding of the operation of censorship in the eighteenth century. Second, this article will highlight the complexities of relations between large and small states in this era.

An expansive understanding of the term 'censorship' has been taken here, in order to encompass the measures which governments use to control the flow of information. The present analysis is concentrated on active attempts made to gain information about and restrict the movement of texts after their first appearance or publication. Scholars were once accustomed to thinking that censorship underwent an inevitable decline in the eighteenth century. Control became increasingly difficult to apply in the context of rising literacy rates, improved communication systems and an intensified demand for the printed word. It can also be argued that censorship started to seem less acceptable in the context of Enlightenment critiques of the status quo. These are fair points but they did not make the decline of censorship a foregone conclusion. We need detailed research in order to provide a more precise picture of eighteenth-century censorship. The existing consensus seems to be that smaller European states like Geneva did not have the sufficient administrative apparatus, authority or will to enforce censorship effectively. The international dimensions of the eighteenth-century print trade also presented a considerable obstacle to censorship. Texts moved across Europe through a complicated web of regional regulations. The work of Jeffery Freedman, Pamela Selwyn and Paul Spalding in particular acknowledges the delicacies of trading across the myriad of states which made up the Holy Roman Empire.⁴ The most in-depth studies on the possibility of international censorship have focused on the role of the French government. France had a singular incentive to attempt to manage print beyond its borders because Francophone publishing was likely to be directed towards a French audience. Book historians including Simon Burrows, Jeremy D. Popkin, Robert Darnton and Pierre Rétat have all explored how the

⁴ Jeffery Freedman, *Books without Borders in Enlightenment Europe: French Cosmopolitanism and German Literary Markets* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Pamela E. Selwyn, *Everyday Life in the German Book Trade: Friedrich Nicolai as Bookseller and Publisher in the Age of Enlightenment, 1750-1810* (University Park, P.A.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Paul Spalding, *Seize the Book, Jail the Author: Johann Lorenz Schmidt and Censorship in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (West Lafayette, I.N.: Purdue University Press, 1998).

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French government was able to block the publication and dissemination of books, pamphlets and periodicals which it deemed offensive.⁵ These studies illustrate that censorship across borders could yield results. Yet the matter of French involvement in the Genevan print trade has yet to be methodically examined. Extant scholarship on Genevan censorship gives us a good idea of its successes and failures but has tended to be inward looking.⁶ The possibility of considering censorship across borders has been demonstrated in some work however, with Francis Montgomery Higman and Marc Neuenschwander studying the movement and reception of Genevan literature in France and the Swiss state of Fribourg respectively.⁷ In line with this work, this article will demonstrate how Genevan officials responded to the international extension of French censorship in the later eighteenth century. It will underline the importance of appreciating the wider political context of censorship by considering the nature of objectionable material and the measures which were taken to curb its circulation.

This study also has implications for the political history of eighteenth-century Europe. Geneva prided itself on its status as an independent republic. However, there were practical considerations which imposed discernible limits on this independence. The Genevan economy was relatively robust but it was small. Geneva's main industries of banking, watch-making and

⁵ Simon Burrows, *Blackmail, Scandal, and Revolution: London's French libellistes, 1758-92* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Robert Darnton, *The Devil in the Holy Water or, the Art of Slander in France from Louis XIV to Napoleon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Jeremy D. Popkin, 'The Gazette de Leyde and French Politics under Louis XVI', in *Press and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary France*, ed. by Jack R. Censer and Jeremy D. Popkin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 75-132; Pierre Rétat, 'Les Gazetiers de Hollande et les puissances politiques: une difficile collaboration', *Dix-huitième siècle*, 25 (1993), 319-35.

⁶ Ingeborg Jostock, *La Censure négociée: le contrôle du livre à Genève, 1560-1625* (Geneva: Droz, 2007); John R. Kleinschmidt, *Les Imprimeurs et libraires de la république de Genève, 1700-1798* (Geneva: Imprimerie du journal de Genève, 1948); Michel Porret, 'Censure et opinion publique dans la république de Genève au siècle des lumières', *Giornale di storia costituzionale*, 6 (2003), 163-78; Michel Porret, *Sur la scène du crime: pratique pénale, enquête et expertises judiciaires à Genève (XVIIIe-XIXe siècle)* (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2008); Catherine Santschi, *La Censure à Genève au XVIIe siècle: de l'Escalade à la révocation de l'Edit de Nantes* (Geneva: Tribune éditions, 1978).

⁷ Francis Montgomery Higman, 'Genevan Printing and French Censorship, 1520-1551', in *Cinq siècles d'imprimerie genevoise: actes du colloque international sur l'histoire de l'imprimerie et du livre à Genève, 27-30 avril 1978*, ed. by Jean-Daniel Candaux and Bernard Lescave, vol. 1 (Geneva: Société d'histoire et d'archéologie, 1980-1981), pp. 31-53; Marc Neuenschwander, 'Solidaires et complices: les gouvernements de Genève et Fribourg à la poursuite des séditeux', in *Cinq siècles d'imprimerie genevoise*, vol. 2, pp. 157-84.

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cotton textiles could not thrive without international commercial links. Geneva was one of the smallest states in Europe and did not have the political authority or military might to exist without recourse to its allies and neighbours. France was undoubtedly Geneva's most important ally in this period. Geneva's banking interests were bound up with the French state and it can also be said that the Genevan oligarchy shared a political and cultural affinity with the French nobility.⁸ Furthermore, the political association between the two states was of critical significance. France formally took on the role of Geneva's protector in the 1579 Treaty of Soleure.⁹ Relations were fortified in 1738 when France, along with the Swiss cantons of Berne and Zürich, agreed to act as a guarantor of Genevan stability.¹⁰ This guarantee was an important consideration as political tensions mounted in late eighteenth-century Geneva. Political and economic rights were restricted to a minority of Genevans who were either *citoyens* or who occupied the second-order status of *bourgeois*. Most people living in Geneva were disenfranchised and assigned the status of either *natifs* (for those born in Geneva) or *habitants* (for those who had immigrated into the area). The disgruntlement of this sector of Genevan society was channelled into a swelling oppositional movement which came to be known as the *représentants*. Agitation from this movement destabilised Geneva during the 1730s, the late 1760s and most seriously during the nascent revolution of April 1782. France's guarantee to Geneva was dramatically realised when French troops were sent into the region to crush the *représentant* rebellion and restore the Genevan oligarchy to power.¹¹ The relationship between France and Geneva was finally transformed into one of outright domination in 1798 when French revolutionary armies annexed the republic. Any study of eighteenth-century Geneva must thus take account of the extent of French influence. Two recent works have offered differing assessments of the balance of power in this relationship. Richard Whatmore has

⁸ Herbert Lüthy, *La Banque protestante en France: de la révocation de l'Edit de Nantes à la révolution*, vol. 1 (Paris: S. E. V. P. E. N, 1961), pp. 37-49.

⁹ Richard Whatmore, *Against War and Empire: Geneva, Britain, and France in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. xii.

¹⁰ Frances Acomb, *Mallet du Pan (1749-1800): A Career in Political Journalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1973), pp. 10, 87.

¹¹ Whatmore, *Against War and Empire*, Chapter 1.

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argued that France was undeniably the pre-eminent element in this alliance, pointing in particular to the part played by French occupying troops in the pacification of the 1782 revolution.¹² Although he does accept that French influence was intensified in 1782, Fabrice Brandli has cautioned against representing Geneva purely as a French protectorate.¹³ Brandli contends that interaction between the two states was reciprocal, based on a recognition of the legal equality of states regardless of their size and strength.

This examination of censorship across borders lends some support to Brandli's line of argument. It would be easy to assume that this was a straightforward story of a great power dominating a weaker state. The evidence presented here will suggest that censorship across borders was more akin to an intricate negotiation. Some awareness of the political context of censorship has been evident in scholarship outside Geneva. In her study of the French *parlements'* role in controlling literature, Barbara de Negroni has argued that sending a political message was a crucial component of censorship.¹⁴ Robert Darnton's latest comparative work on *ancien régime* France, British colonial India and Communist East Germany illustrates how far censorship is specific to particular political systems.¹⁵ Jason Peacey's research on seventeenth-century Britain has shown that the question of controlling speech and print was intimately connected to the struggles of the English Civil War period.¹⁶ The scope of such research can be expanded with an exploration of the way in which internal politics and international relations affected censorship.

¹² Whatmore, *Against War and Empire*, p. 21; Richard Whatmore, 'Introduction: Geneva, an English Enclave? A Contextual Introduction', in *Genève, lieu d'Angleterre 1725-1814*, ed. by Valérie Cossy, Béla Kapossy and Richard Whatmore (Geneva: Slatkine, 2009), pp. 11-35 (p. 12).

¹³ Fabrice Brandli, *Le Nain et le géant: la république de Genève et la France au XVIIIe siècle: cultures politiques et diplomatie* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012), pp. 20-3.

¹⁴ Barbara de Negroni, *Lectures interdites: le travail des censeurs au XVIIIe siècle, 1723-1774* (Paris: A. Michel, 1995).

¹⁵ Robert Darnton, *Censors at Work: How States Shaped Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014).

¹⁶ Jason Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

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This study is centred on censorship in Geneva in the years between 1750 and 1798, a significant interval which concludes with the French annexation of the republic. It analyses the Genevan government's investigation of printed texts which were critical of the French state. The most comprehensive study of censorship in Geneva in this period is to be found within Michel Porret's wider research on crime and punishment.¹⁷ Porret categorised the subject matter of the texts which were suppressed by the Genevan authorities in these years and was able to uncover 13 occasions when measures were taken against texts which insulted a foreign state.¹⁸ These works attacked France, the Swiss canton of Berne and the duchy of Savoy. This article is concentrated on the three most intensive criminal cases surrounding material which was critical of France. These events took place in 1759, 1772 and 1782.

Before examining the three cases of suppression, we first need to explain the systems of censorship that were in place in Geneva and France. Regulations concerning the printed word were originally outlined in Geneva in the mid-sixteenth century. This code remained largely unchanged over the following years and was confirmed by a number of edicts issued in the later 1700s.¹⁹ Booksellers and publishers were required to register their activities with the government and anyone wanting to print a new book was supposed to seek permission from the *Petit Conseil*, Geneva's primary governing body.²⁰ The Genevan authorities also endeavoured to extend control over texts once they appeared in print. In exceptional cases, contentious works were publicly shredded and burnt. Books composed by one of Geneva's most famous residents received such treatment in 1762. Copies of *Emile* and *Du Contrat social*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's influential treatises on education and politics, both went up in flames in front of Geneva's *hôtel de ville*.²¹ The fact that these titles were also denounced by the Paris *parlement* already points to connections between censorship in France and Geneva. Ordinarily post-

¹⁷ Michel Porret, *Sur la scène du crime*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁹ For an overview of regulations governing the Genevan print trade see, Kleinschmidt, pp. 27-51.

²⁰ Porret, *Sur la scène du crime*, p. 97.

²¹ Louis Binz, *Brève histoire de Genève*, 3rd edn. (Geneva: Chancellerie d'Etat, 2000), p. 43.

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publication censorship in Geneva took the form of inspections, confiscations and punishments.²²

Public prosecutors or *auditeurs* quizzed traders and other locals and searched the premises of businesses and homes. If incriminating manuscripts, documents or printed texts were uncovered, they were seized. Publishers and booksellers who were suspected of trading in provocative literature could be reprimanded, fined, imprisoned or exiled.

The French state had its own arrangements for managing the print trade. Pre-publication censorship was more rigorous in France since every manuscript was supposed to be submitted to French censors for approval.²³ French officials monitored and policed printed texts using similar methods of search, seizure and punishment to those employed in Geneva. Managing the production and circulation of print beyond the borders of the French kingdom was another important task. Unlike its Genevan counterpart, the French government had a dedicated system for extending censorship abroad. This was a priority for France because there was a strong international trade in Francophone works. This was partly due to the international reach of the French language but it was also a consequence of the constraints of censorship within France. Publishers and booksellers within France welcomed the opportunity to do business with Francophone external traders who potentially had more flexibility and freedom. The French foreign minister was in charge of external censorship. He instructed his team of diplomats to keep an eye on what was being published and sold locally. French interests in Geneva were primarily served by a series of residents, diplomatic representatives who did not possess full ambassadorial status. But as delegates of a European great power and Geneva's major foreign ally, French residents were well-respected locally. Indeed, France was the only state to have official representation in Geneva for much of this period. A second embassy for the House of

²² Porret, *Sur la scène du crime*, pp. 109-10.

²³ For more on censorship within France see, Raymond F. Birn, *Royal Censorship of Books in Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); De Negroni, *Lectures interdites*; Geoffrey Turnovsky, *The Literary Market: Authorship and Modernity in the Old Regime* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Françoise Weil, *Livres interdits, livres persécutés, 1720-1770* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1999).

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Savoy was only installed in 1782.²⁴ During most of these years the post of resident was occupied by three men: Étienne-Jean Guimard de Montpérroux (1750-1765), Pierre-Michel Hennin (1765-1779), Jean-Baptiste-Géréon de Curières, baron de Castelnau (1781-1791). Dominique Gabard de Vaux, Hennin's secretary and later *chargé d'affaires* also helped to serve France's interests in the republic. Representative duties shifted relatively quickly between five other men during the remaining years of the French Revolution.²⁵ These diplomats were the ones who urged Genevan magistrates to take measures to contain controversial texts.

Having established how censorship was supposed to function, we will now move on to explore how it was applied across borders in three particular instances. The investigations which unfolded in 1759, 1772 and 1782 indicate how far pressure from France led to an intensification of censorship in Geneva. In July 1759, the French resident Montpérroux contacted the Genevan government after a set of papers was found in his courtyard attached to the wheels of the coach of a visiting marquise. These documents, which included handwritten notes and a 'horrible peinture', slandered the French King Louis XV.²⁶ The Genevan *auditeur* Sarasin questioned the coach driver, who testified that he had seen a teenage boy acting strangely in the courtyard on the evening before the notes were found.²⁷ Another *auditeur* called Baraban was given the task of finding this assumed culprit. Baraban circulated the neighbourhood and quizzed at least 30 locals to find out if anyone had noticed the boy leaving Montpérroux's residence.²⁸ The *auditeur* interviewed servants of the resident who admitted to seeing the notes and also asked local writers and artists whether they recognised anything about the incriminating sheets of paper. This line of questioning was not particularly fruitful. The guilty party was apprehended however when he returned to Montpérroux's courtyard to deposit a

²⁴ Michel Porret, 'Préface', in Brandli, pp. 13-8 (p. 15).

²⁵ Brandli, p. 346.

²⁶ Geneva, AEG, PC 10668, Montpérroux to M. le Syndic de la Garde, 14 July 1759, fols. 2-3.

²⁷ Geneva, AEG, PC 10668, Report of *auditeur* Sarasin, 14 July 1759, fols. 4-5; Geneva, AEG, PC 10668, Statement of Thomas Tirand, 14 July 1759, fols. 10-1.

²⁸ Geneva, AEG, PC 10668, Report of *auditeur* Baraban, 18 July 1759, fols. 12-3.

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second similar note in September 1759.²⁹ Jean Louis Damoiseil, a seventeen-year-old apprentice, confessed both to Montpérourx and to Genevan officials. He offered no malicious motive for his actions and instead claimed that he had been overwhelmed by demonic thoughts.³⁰ The *Petit Conseil* proposed capital punishment for Damoiseil but eventually moderated this to long-term confinement after Montpérourx pointed out that a public execution would produce too much publicity.³¹ Damoiseil was taken to prison after a session of whipping and he remained there until at least 1772.³² The offending documents produced by Damoiseil were burnt on Montpérourx's request.³³

The Genevan government was forced to respond to French demands again in January 1772. The text which alarmed the French authorities was *Le Gazetier cuirassé: ou anecdotes scandaleuses de la cour de France* by Charles Théveneau de Morande.³⁴ Likely to have first been published in London in 1771, the notoriety of this work has been emphasised most heavily in Simon Burrows' and Robert Darnton's work on the illicit print trade.³⁵ What the work lacked in plot, it made up for in potency. It maligned a swathe of individuals from within the French court and government, including Louis XV's mistress Madame du Barry and the French foreign minister the duc d'Aiguillon. *Le Gazetier cuirassé* was also problematic because it appeared at a moment of particular vulnerability for the French state. It formed part of a wave of printed pamphlets

²⁹ Geneva, AEG, R[egistres] des C[onseils] 259, 14 September 1759, fols. 401-5 (fol. 401).

³⁰ Geneva, AEG, PC 10668, *Réponses personnelles* of Damoiseil, 12 September 1759, fols. 18-9; Geneva, AEG, PC 10668, *Réponses personnelles* of Damoiseil, 14 September 1759, fols. 20-3; Geneva, AEG, RC 259, 14 September 1759, fols. 401-5.

³¹ Geneva, AEG, RC 259, 14 September 1759, fol. 401-5 (fol. 404); La Courneuve, C[entre] des A[rchives] D[iplomatiques], C[orrespondence] P[olitique] Genève 80, Report on Damoiseil, 23 September 1772, fol. 270.

³² La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Damoiseil to the French government, 25 September 1772, fol. 269.

³³ Geneva, AEG, RC 259, Report, undated, unnumbered folio.

³⁴ Charles-Claude Théveneau de Morande, *Le Gazetier cuirassé: ou, anecdotes scandaleuses de la cour de France* (London(?): [n. pub.], 1771).

³⁵ For more on *Le Gazetier cuirassé* see, Paul Agnani, 'Libelles et diplomatie à la fin du dix-huitième siècle d'après la Correspondance Politique, Angleterre conservé aux Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, 1771-1783' (unpublished *mémoire de maîtrise*, University of Besançon, 2004), pp. 14-24; Burrows, *Blackmail, Scandal and Revolution*; Darnton, *The Devil in the Holy Water*, Chapter 1; Porret, *Sur la scène du crime*, pp. 129-33; Louise Seaward, 'Censorship through Cooperation: The *Société typographique de Neuchâtel* (STN) and the French Government, 1769-89', *French History*, 28 (2014), 23-42; Louise Seaward, 'The French Government and the Policing of the Extra-Territorial Print Trade, 1770-1789' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2013).

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which offered opposition to Chancellor Maupeou's programme of reform for the *parlements*. It was in this context that d'Aiguillon sought to stop the sale of a second edition of *Le Gazetier cuirassé* in Geneva.³⁶ After the French resident Hennin passed on the foreign minister's complaints, four Genevan *auditeurs* went around the town conducting searches of the premises of nine booksellers and printers.³⁷ When the *auditeur* Bandol visited the shop of the bookseller Jacques-Benjamin Téron, the latter's wife confessed that she had seen her husband with a copy of the offending work.³⁸ Téron initially denied any knowledge of *Le Gazetier cuirassé* but was ultimately worn down by the official line of questioning.³⁹ Facing Genevan officials in his store on 9 January Téron gradually accepted that he was guilty of selling the text. The full extent of his involvement was revealed in the two lengthy interrogations which took place after his arrest.⁴⁰ The bookseller alleged that he had sold around 40 copies to the Genevan bookseller Barthélemy Chirol and Chirol accepted this under questioning.⁴¹ Téron denied printing *Le Gazetier cuirassé* however and instead asserted that he had an invoice proving receipt of 100 copies from Marc-Michel Rey, the Genevan publisher who traded from Amsterdam.⁴² In the hope of confirming this claim, the Genevan government consulted four local printers and book traders.⁴³ They were asked to examine the typeface of Téron's copies and in one case, compare them with a Rey edition of Rousseau's collected works. These men agreed that Téron's

³⁶ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Hennin to d'Aiguillon, 11 January 1772, fols. 183-6.

³⁷ Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Report of *auditeur* de Candolle, 10 January 1772, fols. 3-6; Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Report of *auditeur* Bandol, 9 January 1772, fols. 21-8; Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Report of *auditeur* Jolivet, 9 January 1772, fols. 31-2; Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Report of *auditeur* Pictet, 9 January 1772, fols. 33-34; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Lullin to d'Aiguillon, 15 January 1772, fol. 190; Porret, *Sur la scène du crime*, pp. 129-33.

³⁸ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Hennin to d'Aiguillon, 11 January 1772, fols. 183-4 (fol. 184).

³⁹ Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Report of *auditeur* Bandol, 9 January 1772, fols. 21-8.

⁴⁰ Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, *Réponses personnelles* of Téron, 10 January 1772, fols. 10-5; Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, *Réponses personnelles* of Téron, 12 January 1772, fols. 16-9.

⁴¹ Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Statement of Chirol, 10 January 1772, fols. 7-8.

⁴² Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, *Réponses personnelles* of Téron, 10 January 1772, fols. 10-5 (fol. 10); Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, *Réponses personnelles* of Téron, 12 January 1772, fols. 16-9 (fol. 16); La Courneuve, CAD, Genève 80, Hennin to d'Aiguillon, 11 January 1772, fols. 183-4 (fol. 183); La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Hennin to d'Aiguillon, 11 January 1772, fols. 187-8 (fol. 187); La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Lullin to d'Aiguillon, 15 January 1772, fol. 190.

⁴³ Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Statement of Gando, 14 January 1772, fols. 35-6; Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Statement of Duvillard, 14 January 1772, fols. 37-8; Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Report of Gosse, 14 January 1772, fols. 39-40; Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Statement of Duvillard, 14 January 1772, fols. 41-2; Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Statement of Gando, 15 January 1772, fols. 43-4; Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Report of *auditeurs* de Candolle and Jolivet, 15 January 1772, fols. 45-6.

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pamphlets had not been printed in Geneva, with some proposing that they might have had a Dutch provenance. Two copies which Téron had hidden in a kitchen sideboard were seized but the Genevan authorities could not get hold of other pamphlets which had been sold on abroad.⁴⁴ In addition, the Genevan government sent word to the government in Berne since it was suspected that Téron's brother Jean Marc was likely to attempt to sell or even print another new edition in Lausanne.⁴⁵ Téron was eventually released from prison with d'Aiguillon's consent at the end of January 1772 and the *Petit Conseil* threatened the bookseller with harsh punishment should he reoffend.⁴⁶

Ten years later, the French government once again tried to influence Genevan censorship. After receiving a tip-off from the Paris police, the French foreign minister the comte de Vergennes protested that a Geneva publisher called Jean Abram Nouffer was advertising a number of provocative works for sale in the French capital.⁴⁷ The foreign minister was most concerned about the *Supplément à l'espion anglois*.⁴⁸ Written by Joseph Lanjuinais and first published in 1781, this text ostensibly centred its attention on the American War of Independence but dwelt heavily on the subject of French politics. It was one of the first printed texts to employ the now familiar image of the French Queen Marie-Antoinette as a frivolous spendthrift. Nouffer was also accused of promoting *La Vérité rendue sensible à Louis XVI*, a work which advocated tolerance for Protestants and the *Histoire d'un pou françois*, a satirical pamphlet narrated by a talking nit who jumped from head to head and recounted events from the American War of

⁴⁴ Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Report of *auditeur* Bandol, 9 January 1772, fols. 21-8 (fol. 26); Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Report of de *auditeur* de Candolle, 24 January 1772, fols. 47-8.

⁴⁵ Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Tschärner to Genevan government, 12 January 1772, unnumbered folio; Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Tschärner to Genevan government, 14 January 1772, unnumbered folio; La Courneuve, CAD, Genève 80, Hennin to d'Aiguillon, 11 January 1772, fols. 183-4 (fol. 184); La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Lullin to d'Aiguillon, 15 January 1772, fol. 190.

⁴⁶ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Hennin to d'Aiguillon, 31 January 1772, fols. 226-230 (fol. 227).

⁴⁷ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Vergennes to Castelnau, 11 January 1782, fol. 51.

⁴⁸ Joseph Lanjuinais, *Supplément à l'espion anglois, ou, lettres intéressantes sur la retraite de M. Necker; sur le sort de la France et de l'Angleterre; & sur la détention de M. Linguet à la Bastille. Adressées à Mylord All'Eye. Par l'auteur de l'Espion anglois* (London: John Adamson, 1781).

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Independence as he went.⁴⁹ The French resident Castelnau requested that the Genevan authorities arrest Nouffer immediately and search his premises for evidence relating to these titles.⁵⁰ After an initial inspection uncovered little, Castelnau pressed for a second, more exacting examination. This time two copies of the *Supplément à l'espion anglois* were unearthed.⁵¹ A few copies of *Histoire d'un pou françois* were also found, along with a larger quantity of the infamous literary chronicle, the *Mémoires secrets*.⁵² The *auditeurs* also seized and scrutinised over 20 crates of papers and books from Nouffer's shop.⁵³ No further compromising evidence was discovered. Nouffer was interrogated by Genevan officials on at least five occasions.⁵⁴ As was usual practice in Genevan criminal investigations, Nouffer was told to ask God to forgive the sins he had committed. Nouffer replied defiantly that he would not apologise for something he had not done.⁵⁵ Nouffer denied printing the three works that the French government had objected to but admitted that he had offered them for sale.⁵⁶ The publisher maintained that he had reprinted the *Mémoires secrets* after a Dutch edition.⁵⁷ In the case of the *Supplément à l'espion anglois*, Nouffer claimed that he advertised it for sale before buying copies himself.⁵⁸ As such, the two copies discovered by the *auditeurs* were the only ones in his possession. The Genevan authorities ultimately accepted Nouffer's explanations. After

⁴⁹ Anon., *La Vérité rendue sensible à Louis XVI. Par un admirateur de M. Necker*, 2 vols (London: John Peterson, 1782); Delauney, *Histoire d'un pou françois; ou, l'espion d'une nouvelle espèce, tant en France qu'en Angleterre. Contentant les portraits de personnages intéressans dans ces deux royaumes &c. &c.* (Paris: [n.pub.], 1781).

⁵⁰ Geneva, AEG, RC 283, 16 January 1782, fols. 32/a-32/c.

⁵¹ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, Report of *auditeur* Odier, 17 January 1782, fols. 1-2; Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, Report of *auditeur* Salard, 17 January 1782, fols. 22-3; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 18 January 1782, fols. 77-9.

⁵² Louis Petit de Bachaumont (attrib.), *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la république des lettres en France, depuis MDCCLXII jusqu'à nos jours*, vols. 1-36 (London: John Adamson, 1777-1789).

⁵³ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, Report of *auditeurs* Odier and Salard, 19 January 1782, fols. 17-8; Geneva, AEG, RC 283, 8 February 1782, fol. 103.

⁵⁴ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, *Réponses personnelles* of Nouffer, 17 January 1782, fols. 19-20; Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, *Réponses personnelles* of Nouffer, 18 January 1782, fols. 24-7; Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, *Réponses personnelles* of Nouffer, 19 January 1782, fols. 30-1; Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, *Réponses personnelles* of Nouffer, 27 January 1782, fols. 36-9; Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, *Réponses personnelles* of Nouffer, 7 February 1782, fols. 42-7.

⁵⁵ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, *Réponses personnelles* of Nouffer, 17 January 1782, fols. 19-20 (fol. 20).

⁵⁶ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, *Réponses personnelles* of Nouffer, 17 January 1782, fols. 19-20; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 14 February 1782, fols. 135-8 (fols. 137-8).

⁵⁷ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, *Réponses personnelles* of Nouffer, 19 January 1782, fols. 30-1 (fol. 30).

⁵⁸ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 14 February 1782, fols. 135-8 (fol. 137).

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nearly a month in prison, Nouffer was formally admonished, ordered to pay the costs associated with the investigation and set free.⁵⁹ A second inquiry on the publication and circulation of the *Supplément à l'espion anglois* was planned for April.⁶⁰

These three affairs were distinct when it came to the type of material which provoked governmental action and the people who were pursued for their involvement with this material. In 1759, the author of handwritten text was targeted in the hope of preventing slander from spreading further and making its way into print. In 1772, a bookseller was reprimanded for selling copies of one notorious pamphlet, whilst in 1782 a publisher was accused of printing and selling a range of provocative titles. These investigations offer the historian a variety of evidence which can help to explain how censorship across borders functioned. These proceedings generated clear results in the form of the confiscation of provocative material and the imprisonment of those who had been involved in its production and sale. But it is important that we consider how censorship was presented and perceived by contemporaries in the Genevan and French governments. The Genevan government went to great lengths to indicate that it was responding to French requests in a thorough manner. Officials in Geneva were in regular contact with the French residents, in writing and in person. The register of this communication was obsequious and emphasised a desire to please the French King, foreign minister and his diplomatic representatives.⁶¹ The Genevan government acknowledged the seriousness of the offences committed and stressed that investigations had been swiftly and comprehensively executed. In September 1759, two Genevan officials visited Montpérour to testify to the 'l'indignation et la douleur' of the *Petit Conseil* and insist that a thorough investigation would be undertaken.⁶² Similar visits were paid to the French residents in 1772

⁵⁹ Geneva, AEG, RC 283, 13 February 1782, fols. 114-5; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 14 February 1782, fols. 135-8 (fols. 137-8).

⁶⁰ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 14 February 1782, fols. 135-8 (fol. 138).

⁶¹ For examples of this mode of communication see, Geneva, AEG, RC 259, 5 October 1759, fols. 444-6; Geneva, AEG, RC 283, 18 January 1782, fols. 39-40; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Lullin to d'Aiguillon, 15 January 1772, fol. 190.

⁶² Geneva, AEG, RC 259, 14 September 1759, fols. 401-5 (fol. 402).

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and 1782.⁶³ In January 1772, the Genevan *secrétaire d'état* wrote to the French foreign minister d'Aiguillon to assure him of the Genevan government's 'profonde vénération pour la Personne Sacrée de Sa Majesté' and promised that any material similar to *Le Gaztier cuirassé* would be suppressed.⁶⁴ In 1782 the Genevan government requested further information from French diplomats about the circulation of the objectionable titles in question.⁶⁵ It was claimed that such intelligence would help the Genevans to conduct a more accurate inquiry. This was also a way for the Genevans to confirm that their activities had the approval of the French state. Eager to maintain a close relationship with the French government and wary of France's strength, the Genevan government presented an image of censorship as responsive and well-organised.

This was not just empty posturing on the part of the Genevan authorities. These three case studies do indicate that officials endeavoured to follow French wishes in the management of texts. French directions to arrest Damoiseil, Nouffer and the bookseller guilty of trading in *Le Gazetier cuirassé* were followed. Both Montpérroux and Hennin were able to consult copies of official documents as the investigations progressed.⁶⁶ The Genevan government also accepted French appeals to search for offensive material in the locality. Officials kept meticulous records of the areas which had been searched. As an example, on 10 January 1772, the *auditeur* de Candolle described his hunt for copies of *Le Gazetier cuirassé* at the residence of the bookseller Barthélemy Chirol. De Candolle searched through attics, wardrobes, cupboards and the servants' quarters.⁶⁷ The furore over *Le Gazetier cuirassé* was kept quiet on the request of the French government, as was the earlier investigation of Damoiseil's writings in 1759.⁶⁸ The investigation was conducted discreetly, Damoiseil was transferred to prison by a group of

⁶³ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Hennin to d'Aiguillon, 11 January 1772, fol. 187; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 18 January 1782, fol. 77-9.

⁶⁴ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Lullin to d'Aiguillon, 15 January 1772, fol. 190.

⁶⁵ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 20 January 1782, fols. 88-9 (fol. 89).

⁶⁶ Geneva, AEG, RC 259, 15 September 1759, fols. 407-8; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Hennin to d'Aiguillon, 11 January 1772, fols. 183-6.

⁶⁷ Geneva, AEG, PC 12265, Report of *auditeur* de Candolle, 10 January 1772, fols. 3-6 (fols. 3-4).

⁶⁸ Geneva, AEG, RC 259, 15 September 1759, fols. 407-8; Geneva, AEG, RC 259, undated, unnumbered folio; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Report on Damoiseil, 23 September 1772, fol. 270.

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soldiers under cover of darkness, without being subject to formal criminal proceedings and the notes he had sketched were burnt in the presence of an official from the Genevan government. Damoiseil was also subjected to a much harsher punishment than that originally desired by the French authorities. The Genevan remained in prison for at least 13 years, despite the French government repeatedly consenting to his release.⁶⁹ In September 1772 Damoiseil wrote a sorrowful letter to the French government pleading for his freedom. He stressed that he now deeply regretted the actions he had taken as a youthful fanatic and begged, 'Grand Monarque ! Image de la bonté Divine ! Daignez jeter un œil de compassion sur mes misères'.⁷⁰ The French foreign minister d'Aiguillon took pity on Damoiseil but it is unclear if this show of sympathy led to the prisoner's liberation. In 1782, not only were Genevan *auditeurs* willing to use the French government's list of questions to interrogate Nouffer but they also re-examined the publisher's property and papers to see whether they could find any information about additional titles mentioned in this list.⁷¹ This note referenced, amongst other texts, Mathieu-François Pidansat de Mairobert's salacious work on Louis XV's mistress, *Anecdotes sur Me. la comtesse du Barri* and the adventures of a debauched monk as recounted in the *Histoire de Dom B... portier des chartreux*.⁷² There was no evidence to link Nouffer with any of these titles but the *auditeurs* did make note of other texts which the French might view with suspicion such as Barthélemy François Joseph Mouffle d'Angerville's biography of the French King, *Vie privée de Louis XV*.⁷³ At the end of the investigation, Lullin, the Genevan *secrétaire d'état* asked Castelnau for guidance about what exactly Nouffer should be charged with and agreed to probe into the case of the

⁶⁹ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Report on Damoiseil, 23 September 1772, fol. 270.

⁷⁰ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Damoiseil to the French government, 25 September 1772, fol. 269.

⁷¹ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, Report of *auditeur* Odier, 18 January 1782, fols. 3-4; Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, Report of *auditeur* Odier, 18 January 1782, fols. 5-6; Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, Questions for Nouffer, undated, fols. 51-2; Geneva, AEG, RC 283, 2 February 1782, fol. 88; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Lenoir to Vergennes, 20 January 1782, fols. 85-7 (fol. 87).

⁷² Mathieu-François Pidansat de Mairobert, *Anecdotes sur Me. la comtesse du Barri* (London, [n. pub.], 1775); Jean-Charles Gervaise de Latouche, *Histoire de Dom B... portier des chartreux. Ecrite par lui-même* (Rome : Philotanus, [1745(?)]).

⁷³ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, Report of *auditeur* Odier, 18 January 1782, fols. 3-4; Barthélemy François Joseph Mouffle d'Angerville, *Vie privée de Louis XV; ou principaux événements, particularités et anecdotes de son règne*, 4 vols (London: John Peter Lyton, 1781).

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Supplément à l'espion anglais again in two months time.⁷⁴ This evidence indicates just how far the Genevan authorities went to comply with the instructions issued by the French state.

Records kept by the Genevan government, along with French diplomatic correspondence do seem to confirm this impression of Genevan efficiency. In each case, French diplomats thanked Genevan officials for their attention.⁷⁵ In 1759, the French foreign minister the duc de Choiseul, sent a missive to inform the Genevan authorities that the French King was gratified by their actions. The foreign minister Vergennes communicated the same sentiments in 1782. French diplomats also expressed their faith in Genevan officials. Montpérourx stated that the Genevans would no doubt be zealous in their pursuit of the author of the offensive papers.⁷⁶ Hennin assured d'Aiguillon that the Genevan government would be prepared to ban booksellers from offering *Le Gazetier cuirassé* should he ask them to do so.⁷⁷ Once the decision was made to set Nouffer free in 1782, Castelnau described officials as 'honnêtes' men, who had reacted quickly and competently during the affair.⁷⁸

Acknowledging the uneven balance of power between France and Geneva, this evidence seems to be exactly what we might expect. Yet this impression of harmony does not fully represent the extension of censorship across borders. There is compelling documentation to suggest that cooperation between Genevan and French officials was not easily realised. French diplomats were repeatedly frustrated by what they saw as the obstructionism of the Genevan government. The French government's attempts to exercise surveillance and censorship were not unique to Geneva. Yet there seems to have been a particular pessimism about the possibility of working

⁷⁴ Geneva, AEG, RC 283, 19 January 1782, fols. 41-2; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 14 February 1782, fol. 135-8 (fol. 138).

⁷⁵ Geneva, AEG, RC 259, 5 October 1759, fols. 444-6; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, d'Aiguillon to Genevan government, 26 January 1772, fol. 223; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Vergennes to Castelnau, 24 February 1782, fols. 170-73 (fol. 172).

⁷⁶ Geneva, AEG, PC 10668, Montpérourx to the Syndic de la Garde, 14 July 1759, fols. 2-3.

⁷⁷ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Hennin to d'Aiguillon, 11 January 1772, fols. 183-6 (fol. 183).

⁷⁸ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 18 January 1782, fols. 77-9; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 14 February 1782, fols. 135-8 (fols. 135-6).

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productively with the authorities in this republic. Instructions issued to Hennin and Castelnau when they commenced their postings in Geneva, in 1765 and 1781 respectively, both contained a passage explaining that they would find it difficult to deal with the Genevan print trade.⁷⁹ In the early stages of the Nouffer investigation in 1782, the French foreign minister Vergennes bolstered these instructions still further. He directed Castelnau to accompany Genevan officials during their initial enquiries to ensure that Nouffer would be arrested before he managed to escape town.⁸⁰ These warnings seem to have been substantiated by the experience of the French residents. Their diplomatic dispatches frequently communicated a sense of exasperation with the Genevan authorities. On 11 January 1772, Hennin grumbled that *Le Gazetier cuirassé* had already been openly on sale for three weeks in Geneva.⁸¹ Local magistrates had read the pamphlet and still neglected to prevent its distribution. The diplomats also aired their grievances directly to the Genevan authorities. Montpérroux was at first unhappy with the pace of the investigation into the reprehensible notes and stressed that the culprit should be found as speedily as possible.⁸² In 1782 Castelnau kept a close watch over the manner in which Nouffer was treated, suggesting certain courses of action and criticising others.⁸³ We have already seen how the diplomat insisted that a more exacting search of Nouffer's property be undertaken under his supervision.

From the perspective of the French government, investigations in Geneva could seem lethargic and imprecise. But was this a fair assessment? It seems obvious that French diplomats might have been inclined to exaggerate the obstacles that were placed in the way of effective censorship. This enabled them to diminish their own responsibility for any failings. Yet the events of 1782 do seem to suggest that Castelnau at least was somewhat justified in his

⁷⁹ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 70, Mémoire pour servir d'instruction, 9 December 1765, fols. 431-58; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 88, Mémoire pour servir d'instruction, 10 May 1781, fols. 24-33.

⁸⁰ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Vergennes to Castelnau, 11 January 1782, fol. 51.

⁸¹ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Hennin to d'Aiguillon, 11 January 1772, fol. 183-6 (fol. 185).

⁸² Geneva, AEG, PC 10668, Montpérroux to Genevan government, 18 August 1759, fols. 14-15.

⁸³ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, Report of *auditeur* Odier, 18 January 1782, fols. 3-4; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 18 January 1782, fols. 77-9; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 14 February 1782, fols. 135-6.

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frustrations. Nouffer's business partner and brother-in-law David de Rodon could presumably have provided some additional intelligence about their firm's activities but he was never questioned. The first search of Nouffer's property was delayed and Genevan officials initially failed to inform Castelnau when they began inspecting other local traders. These moves conceivably presented the opportunity for evidence to be concealed or destroyed. This possibility is significant because the authorities were only able to seize Nouffer's outgoing correspondence from the years prior to 1781.⁸⁴ This meant that there was no way of ascertaining whether Nouffer had in fact been printing and selling the *Supplément à l'espion anglois* and other works. Evidence surrounding the publication of the *Mémoires secrets* also suggests that there was some dissimulation on the part of the Genevan government. Officials recorded that Nouffer was probably printing an edition of this work in the summer of 1781 but had failed to put a stop to his enterprise.⁸⁵ The precise publishing history of the *Mémoires secrets* has proved difficult to trace since many of its 36 volumes were published or reprinted with misleading imprints on the title page. The latest research suggests that Nouffer's version of the work was actually first produced in 1780, probably in the form of a reprint of an original Dutch edition.⁸⁶ Nouffer himself claimed that the Genevan government was ambivalent about disturbing his enterprise because he was printing the last sheets of the sixteenth volume of the *Mémoires secrets*.⁸⁷ Yet there is evidence to indicate that the Genevan edition eventually ran to at least 24 volumes.⁸⁸ The Genevan government thus seems to have concealed its knowledge of the *Mémoires secrets* from the French authorities. Nouffer's edition was tolerated in Geneva, even after protests were received from France.

⁸⁴ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, Report of *auditeur* Odier, 4 February 1782, fols. 40-41.

⁸⁵ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, Extrait des registres du Conseil, 25 June 1781, fol. 16.

⁸⁶ Suzanne Cornand, 'Histoire éditoriale', in Louis Petit de Bachaumont (attrib.), *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la république des lettres en France, depuis MDCCLXII jusqu'à nos jours*, ed. by Christophe Cave and Suzanne Cornand, vol.1 (Paris: H. Champion, 2009). pp. xlv-lxx (pp. xlvii, lvii).

⁸⁷ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, *Réponses personnelles* of Nouffer, 19 January 1782, fols. 30-31 (fol. 30).

⁸⁸ Cornand, p. l.

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The Genevan government's ability to be disruptive in 1782 is remarkable because French influence was seemingly on the rise in the republic in the early 1780s. The authorities in Geneva could not help but be mindful of France's position as a guarantor of Genevan stability. Political volatility increased the likelihood that the French government would pressurise, criticise and possibly even invade Geneva. The outpouring of pamphlets which ruminated upon Geneva's political divisions in the early 1780s could also be interpreted as an unfavourable commentary on France's efficacy as a pacifying force. In 1780 Jacques-Antoine Du Roveray, one of the leaders of the *représentant* movement, was ousted from his position as Geneva's *procureur général* after he publicly criticised France's leverage over the republic.⁸⁹ In June 1781, the *Petit Conseil* issued a decree reminding local printers that they were not to print works about Genevan politics without permission.⁹⁰ This edict also outlined that texts published in Geneva should not discuss the political affairs of the allies of the republic. In September 1781, the French government broke away from Berne and Zürich, its former partners in alliance with Geneva. This move made it clear that France would be acting alone in any attempts to secure peace in Geneva.

It seems that censorship across borders became more difficult in 1782 both because and in spite of the intensification of relations between France and Geneva. The French government itself attributed the obstacles in the Nouffer affair to political unrest in the republic. Castelnau argued that Genevan officials had behaved sympathetically towards Nouffer because he was a member of the *représentant* opposition movement.⁹¹ It was even suggested that two of the magistrates working on the case were themselves *représentants*. The Genevan government did not of course support the demands of the *représentants* but officials perhaps feared that aggressively targeting such an individual could trigger a popular reaction. The foreign minister Vergennes was inclined to agree, stating that the inquiry into Nouffer's activities would have been more

⁸⁹ Brandli, pp. 70-72; Whatmore, *Against War and Empire*, p. 6.

⁹⁰ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, Extrait des registres du Conseil, 25 June 1781, fol. 16.

⁹¹ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 5 February 1782, fol. 117-8.

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fruitful at a more placid political juncture.⁹² France's mounting power over Geneva also provided an obvious motive for some deception. In such a context, it would have been unwise for the Genevan government to draw any further attention to the production and sale of material which was critical of France. It also seems fair to say that political developments in Geneva simply hindered the implementation of post-publication censorship. Preoccupied with the urgent task of stabilising the republic, officials had less time to survey and censor print. This hypothesis can be supported with information from a bibliography compiled by Emile Rivoire.⁹³ It is not a comprehensive list of everything which was circulating in Geneva during the 1700s since it omits many of the titles discussed in this essay and has some duplicate entries. In spite of this, it can give us a good impression of the vitality of the Genevan print market. For most of the later eighteenth century, fewer than 100 pamphlets were printed in any given year. But the number of texts available in Geneva rose sharply during the late 1760s, the early 1780s and the early 1790s. Publishing peaked in 1782 when Rivoire records that a total of 309 pamphlets were released into the market. These were the moments when the political stability of the republic was under threat, from internal agitation in the 1760s and 1780s and from the potential extension of the French Revolution in the 1790s. This suggests that an uncertain political context bolstered demand for literature and also prevented the Genevan government from exercising sufficient control over the print trade.

The mounting political crisis of 1782 may thus have made obstructionism on the part of the Genevan government both a possibility and a necessity. But it remains to be seen whether the more general irritation expressed by French representatives was reasonable. There are some factors which suggest that the Genevan authorities had a solid appreciation of the operation of the print trade in their small republic, which they neglected to divulge to the French government. The clearest evidence for this is the way in which officials relied upon the testimony of Genevan publishers in cases of censorship. Traders were routinely asked to

⁹² La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Vergennes to Castelnaud, 24 February 1782, fols. 170-3 (fol. 172).

⁹³ Emile Rivoire, *Bibliographie historique de Genève au XVIII^e siècle* (Geneva: J. Jullien, 1897).

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examine the typeface and paper of a particular text and prompted to make a suggestion as to the provenance of the edition.⁹⁴ The Genevan government thus possessed a small network of trusted publishers, who kept them informed about the activities in the rest of the industry. Moreover, it must be underlined that the Genevan authorities had a clear incentive to obscure information about the production of works which were critical of France. It made sense not to invite the indignation of their greatest ally. The difficulties of cross-border cooperation belied the façade of complete loyalty that both sides projected. The Genevan government may not always have been overtly obstructive but it seems sensible to suggest that officials were likely to refrain from being totally transparent about the books and pamphlets that were being produced in their republic.

The three inquiries of 1759, 1772 and 1782 represent the moments between 1750 and 1798 when the French government became most involved in the Genevan print trade. But it is important to appreciate that there were other occasions when censorship was on the agenda in this relationship. The Genevan government sometimes acted on its own initiative in anticipation of a negative reaction from France. In 1753, Genevan officials attempted to curb the dissemination of a *pro-parlement* pamphlet which had been condemned by the French government.⁹⁵ In July 1766, Geneva pursued the vendors of a text which attacked the French government's efforts to mediate political tensions in the republic.⁹⁶ The pamphlet directed criticism towards Pierre de Buisson, chevalier de Beauteville, the French ambassador for the Swiss states who had been drafted in to help with the mediation. In 1781, the Genevan authorities targeted Nouffer for printing copies of the baron de Bohan's *Examen critique du militaire françois* and the infamous literary chronicle, the *Mémoires secrets*.⁹⁷ The Genevan

⁹⁴ Porret, *Sur la scène du crime*, pp. 113-5.

⁹⁵ Geneva, AEG, PC 10010, *Réponses personnelles* of Pelet, 30 October 1753, fols. 3-5.

⁹⁶ Annecy, Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie, I C 14, Genevan government to comte de Sollieres, 22 July 1766, fol. 48.

⁹⁷ François Philippe Loubat baron de Bohan, *Examen critique du militaire françois. Suivi des principes qui doivent déterminer sa constitution, sa discipline et son instruction* (3 vols.) (Geneva: [n. pub.], 1781).

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government expressed concern that these texts criticised French naval forces, as well as making disparaging remarks about Louis XVI's brother the comte d'Artois and Jacques Necker, the Swiss financier who had just lost his position as France's finance minister.⁹⁸ Despite these misgivings, the Genevan authorities did not insist that the printing of the *Mémoires secrets* be halted.

There were also other moments when the French government took offence to material emanating from Geneva. In 1771 the French foreign ministry expressed concern that a Genevan edition of the *Encyclopédie* was undercutting potential profits for French publishers and booksellers.⁹⁹ The French government also articulated unease about the Genevan print trade in the early stages of the French Revolution.¹⁰⁰ The *Petit Conseil* investigated the appearance of two pamphlets, the first being a copy of the oath of loyalty that the Princes of the Blood had sworn to the French National Assembly, whilst the second was *Victoire des auvergnats sur les aristocrates*.¹⁰¹ This took the form of an alleged letter written by a peasant leader involved in the rural unrest of the summer of 1789. Genevan officials patrolled the streets and rounded up around 300 copies of these pamphlets from various street-sellers. The French government also paid close attention to works which dealt with the vicissitudes of Genevan politics, particularly during the years of high tension in the early 1780s. French diplomats surveyed the political pamphlets available in Geneva and reported titles and content summaries back to the foreign ministry.¹⁰² These works of political protest threatened to destabilise the rule of the Genevan oligarchy, and by extension the French government's influence over the republic. Although the French government exercised a continual vigilance over the Genevan print trade, these other examples make it clear that intensive investigations were relatively rare. It is thus makes sense

⁹⁸ Geneva, AEG, PC 13840, Extrait des registres du Conseil, 25 June 1781, fol. 16.

⁹⁹ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Hennin to d'Aiguillon, 5 August 1771, fols. 83-5.

¹⁰⁰ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 96, Montmorin to Castelnau, 31 October 1789, fols. 390-1 (fol. 390).

¹⁰¹ Geneva, AEG, PC 15818, Report of *auditeur* Mallet, 7 and 9 September 1789, fols. 2-3; Anon., *Victoire des auvergnats sur les aristocrates* ([Paris]; Imprimerie L. Jorry, [1789]).

¹⁰² For some examples see, La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 83, Gabard de Vaux to Vergennes, 6 January 1777, fols. 5-6 (fol. 6); La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 83, Hennin to Vergennes, 26 April 1777, fols. 123-6 (fol. 124); La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 10 January 1782, fols. 39-40; La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 90, Castelnau to Vergennes, 24 January 1782, fols. 100-3.

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to consider how and why such intensive censorship was put into place in 1759, 1772 and 1782.

Active post-publication censorship was undertaken in response to the content of works themselves but it was also a product of political context, both inside and outside Geneva.

The events discussed here have showcased some of the practical difficulties which accompanied attempts to negotiate censorship across international borders. Aware of these problems, the French government only undertook such efforts in a minority of cases which were deemed sufficiently serious. This method of reactive and occasional censorship was echoed by the Genevan authorities. Porret's study of Genevan censorship suggests that literary offences constituted less than 2% of the 7000 crimes which were investigated in Geneva across the second half of the eighteenth century.¹⁰³ Censorship across borders was thus a distinctly pragmatic undertaking. The French and Genevan governments both exercised surveillance from a distance and only became actively engaged at moments of particular crisis.

It is thus worth thinking about the kind of material which motivated governments to take this extraordinary action. France and Geneva both lacked a set of clear guidelines about what constituted illicit literature and neither state had anything approaching the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* compiled by the Catholic Church since the sixteenth century. Officials developed a sense of the topics which were not fit for public discussion as they censored manuscripts, condemned titles and confiscated texts. Reading government documents can only give us a rather crude understanding of contentious literature. They do not go into much depth about subject matter and never reference particular sections of a text. The pressures of official duties meant that government officials probably did not have time to read and analyse the texts under investigation. The presumed difficulty of obtaining copies of works which were circulating clandestinely probably also contributed to a kind of superficial appreciation of literature. The French government did repeatedly outline that they were opposed to works which threatened

¹⁰³ Porret, *Sur la scène du crime*, p. 98.

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to undermine religion, the government and contemporary standards of morality.¹⁰⁴ This definition allowed old regime elites to defend the values which supported their superior status. Yet these themes were referenced as a kind of catchphrase which enabled officials to express the concept of offensive literature without going into much detail. Hence, we need to shed more light on the kinds of texts which engendered cooperation on censorship between France and Geneva. The content of the texts which were suppressed in 1759, 1772 and 1782 suggests a concern about works with a political element. Damoiseil's incriminating drawing and papers were burnt in 1759 but we know that they were critical of the French King. Damoiseil himself claimed that he saw the French King as a persecutor of those who subscribed to the Protestant faith.¹⁰⁵ *Le Gazetier cuirassé* and the *Mémoires secrets* provided some intimate details about life at the French court whilst the other texts that Nouffer was involved with in 1782 condemned the French government's management of the American War of Independence.

This emphasis on the political chimes with Porret's broader work on Genevan censorship. He found that nearly 80% of the texts suppressed by the Genevan authorities dealt with shifts in domestic politics.¹⁰⁶ This preoccupation reflects the political instability which plagued Geneva in this period. Censorship was fundamentally driven by a desire to curb discussion of issues which might challenge oligarchic rule. The French government also concentrated on the production of political literature beyond France's borders.¹⁰⁷ The extent to which political information was tightly controlled within old regime France arguably intensified the urgency of this task. It had long been an established principle that the French public should only be able to access a minimum of information about internal state affairs. The topic of French politics was scarcely covered by the French news media, which heightened the appeal of foreign gazettes,

¹⁰⁴ For examples see, Paris, B[ibliothèque] N[ationale] de F[rance], M[anuscripts] F[rançais] 22063, June 1783, fols. 278-89, June 1783; Paris, BNF, MF 22070, 13 June 1777, fols. 99-100; Paris, BNF, MF 22180, 26 August 1777, fols. 112-9.

¹⁰⁵ La Courneuve, CAD, CP Genève 80, Damoiseil to the French government, 25 September 1772, fol. 269.

¹⁰⁶ Porret, *Sur la scène du crime*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁷ This point about the French government concentrating external censorship on political material was one of the major arguments of my thesis: Seaward, 'The French Government and the Policing of the Extra-Territorial Print Trade'.

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books and pamphlets which did discuss these developments. Political material was also an important consideration for both powers because of its potential to denigrate the reputations of important figures, including the French King himself. Slanderous *libelles* which maligned elite figures from the aristocracy, government, court and royal family spread sensitive political information and constituted an affront to the traditions of honour and deference upon which *ancien régime* Europe was grounded.¹⁰⁸ Censorship in France and Geneva thus constituted a conscious choice to pursue the political. Less emphasis was placed on other controversial subjects like religion, sex or philosophy. The lack of religious motivations for censorship is particularly striking given the opposition between French Catholicism and Genevan Protestantism. This was arguably the result of an atmosphere of greater tolerance fostered by the confessional settlement of the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia and the critical spirit of Enlightenment discourse.¹⁰⁹ The sheer difficulty of managing every single text that was printed abroad necessitated a flexible approach. The French government was compelled to tolerate most of the literary market but chose to intervene on a limited number of occasions when political matters were at the fore. Hence, French and Genevan officials were able to work together on censorship because both sides saw it as a primarily political act. Nevertheless, we should not go as far as to argue that Genevan officials could accurately predict which works would cause the French government to take umbrage. There were presumably many other texts circulating in Geneva which could be interpreted as being critical of the French state, aside from those mentioned here.

¹⁰⁸ Burrows, *Blackmail, Scandal, and Revolution*; Emily Butterworth, *Poisoned Words: Slander and Satire in Early Modern France* (London: Legenda, 2006); Darnton, *The Devil in the Holy Water*; Olivier Ferret, Anne-Marie Mercier-Faivre and Chantal Thomas, eds., *Dictionnaire des vies privées (1722-1842)* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2011); William M. Reddy, *The Invisible Code: Honor and Sentiment in Postrevolutionary France, 1814-1848* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Charles Walton, *Policing Public Opinion in the French Revolution: The Culture of Calumny and the Problem of Free Speech* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁹ Raymond Birn, 'Religious Toleration and Freedom of Expression' in *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789*, ed. by Dale Van Kley (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 265-99; Maria-Cristina Pitassi, *De l'Orthodoxie aux lumières: Genève, 1670-1737* (Geneva: Labor et fides, 1992).

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Scholars have underscored the obvious practical difficulties which impeded governmental attempts to police print across the eighteenth century. An appreciation of these problems has led some to conclude that censorship could be quite ineffectual in Geneva.¹¹⁰ We have seen that extending censorship across borders was a complex and at times, frustrating process. It was also a political endeavour, both in relation to the international cooperation which it necessitated and the type of material which was kept in check. The diverging expectations and perspectives of French and Genevan officials served to muddle matters still further. Attempts at collaboration could result in resentment on both sides. However, this should be understood as a likely consequence of extending censorship across borders and not as something which inevitably soured international partnerships. Moreover, we should not derive the conclusion that French attempts to suppress undesirable material were ultimately ineffective.

Investigations were launched quickly and perpetrators were pursued, reprimanded and punished (severely in Damoiseil's case). The Genevan government endeavoured to ensure that copies of the offending texts were pinpointed and confiscated. The fact that the French government only took exception to a handful of texts produced in Geneva suggests that these measures played a role in suppressing the dissemination of this sort of material.

However, there were shortcomings in this strategy of censorship that cannot be ignored. The Genevan government was not able to unearth every guilty party, nor was every text withdrawn from circulation. The French government repeatedly requested increased vigilance over the print trade in Geneva but traders continued to deal in controversial material nonetheless. The French and Genevan governments may both have simply have turned a blind eye to other illicit titles that they did not have the resources or inclination to suppress. Moreover, it seems that cooperative censorship became especially difficult as political crisis mounted in Geneva in the initial months of 1782. This was a moment when the Genevan government was distracted but also disruptive. It is also important to query whether short-term imprisonment or mere

¹¹⁰ Jostock, p. 22; Kleinschmidt, pp. 32-40; Porret, *Sur la scène du crime*, pp. 104-5.

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reprimands acted to deter Genevan traders from becoming involved with works which were critical of France. Nouffer was repeatedly admonished by the Genevan authorities and we know that he offered contentious pamphlets for sale in Prussia, as well as in France.¹¹¹ Yet he only ceased trading in 1784 as a result of bankruptcy.¹¹² Nouffer's continued courting of controversy illustrates that some traders were simply more difficult to control.

The question of how much the Genevan government supported the print trade is also pertinent. The importance of governmental support for publishing has been underlined in the course of work on the *Société typographique de Neuchâtel* (known as the STN), the publishing house which traded from the Swiss town of Neuchâtel.¹¹³ Local officials appear to have appreciated the economic and cultural contribution made by the STN's publishing activities and also identified with the firm's directors, who were part of the same social and political circles. It seems fair to argue that similar considerations may have inclined Genevan officials to tolerate and even protect local publishers and booksellers. The *Répertoire des imprimeurs et éditeurs suisses actifs avant 1800* database lists 109 traders who were operating in eighteenth-century Geneva.¹¹⁴ Full biographical details have not been gathered for every individual but the database suggests that at least 38 printers enjoyed the political and civil rights conferred by the status of *citoyen* or *bourgeois*. 33 individuals occupied the disenfranchised categories of *natif* and *habitant*. The scant information about the remaining third of printers at work in Geneva could indicate that these men were likely to be of low status. Yet, it remains important that a sizeable proportion of publishers were *citoyens* or *bourgeois*, since this was actually a minority sector of the Genevan populace. Estimates for the later eighteenth century suggest that men

¹¹¹ Selwyn, p. 125.

¹¹² Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire de Lausanne (BCUL), *Répertoire des imprimeurs et éditeurs suisses actifs avant 1800 (R.I.E.C.H.)* <<http://dbserv1-bcu.unil.ch/riech/imprimeur.php?ImprID=-8520076&submit=Chercher>> [accessed 26 March 2016].

¹¹³ Simon Burrows, *Enlightenment Best-Sellers*, forthcoming; Mark Curran, *Selling Enlightenment*, forthcoming; Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775-1800* (Cambridge 1979); Louise Seaward, 'The Société typographique de Neuchâtel (STN) and the Politics of the Book Trade in late Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1769-1789', *European History Quarterly*, 44 (2014), 439-457.

¹¹⁴ BCUL, *R.I.E.C.H.*, <<http://dbserv1-bcu.unil.ch/riech/riech.php>> [accessed 26 March 2015]

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with the status of *citoyen* or *bourgeois* made up 27% of the population, whilst *natifs*, *habitants* and foreigners constituted the remaining 73%.¹¹⁵ Several Genevan publishers thus operated from a position of heightened political influence that could conceivably have sheltered them from the discipline of local magistrates. It is worth pointing out here that Jean Dassier and Emanuel Etienne Duvillard, publishers who formed associations with Téron and Nouffer respectively, were both citizens of Geneva.¹¹⁶ This question of status is important because, as Porret's research has illustrated, the Genevan government repeatedly denounced the publication of texts which detailed tensions over the unequal distribution of political rights in the republic. Yet Rivoire's bibliographical study illustrates that a swathe of such pamphlets were produced in Geneva throughout this period.¹¹⁷ The continuation of controversial publishing in Geneva indicates that traders enjoyed some level of official tolerance, despite proclamations about banned material. Political links between individuals of similar status thus seem to have played a notable role in supporting the Genevan print trade.

The evidence presented here suggests that censorship across borders could work, albeit in a limited form. The authorities in France and Geneva were not able to subdue the print trade under their complete control. But it can be argued that this was not their aim. The targets, actions and outcomes associated with censorship across borders were concentrated and should be assessed accordingly. Scholars working on censorship within eighteenth-century France have recognised that an inability to control everything inclined the French government to be flexible.¹¹⁸ But we still need to develop our understanding of how far outside influences affected the decision to censor. A pragmatic form of censorship enabled both France and Geneva to

¹¹⁵ Binz, p. 40.

¹¹⁶ BCUL, *R.I.E.C.H.*, < <http://dbserv1-bcu.unil.ch/riech/imprimeur.php?ImprID=-8520132&submit=Chercher> > and < <http://dbserv1-bcu.unil.ch/riech/imprimeur.php?ImprID=-8520117&submit=Chercher> > [accessed 26 March 2015].

¹¹⁷ Rivoire.

¹¹⁸ Birn, *Royal Censorship*; Gregory S. Brown, 'Reconsidering the Censorship of Writers in Eighteenth-Century France: Civility, State Power, and the Public Theatre in the Enlightenment', *Journal of Modern History*, 75 (2003), 235-68; Robert Darnton, 'Censorship, a Comparative View: France, 1789 - East Germany, 1989', *Representations*, 49, Special Issue: Identifying Histories: Eastern Europe Before and After 1989 (1995), 40-60; De Negroni, *Lectures interdites*.

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make their mark on the print trade. Collaborating on censorship was also a way for both parties to strengthen their political alliance, whilst also underlining their own independence. In this regard, the censorship dwelt upon here did go some way to achieving its aims. There is value in considering what exactly authorities were trying to achieve with censorship, rather than judging it in rigid terms of success or failure.

The complexity of establishing what was acceptable to say in print help to explain why censorship across borders was a relatively rare occurrence. But it also shows us that censorship was about something more than the content of the texts themselves. Censorship should be considered an important part of the history of international relations. It was a key facet of the alliance between France and Geneva. French support was important to Geneva because it was a small state whose internal politics underwent frequent periods of volatility. Cooperating in matters of censorship hence allowed the Genevans to show loyalty and the French government to exercise its dominance. Yet the weaker state was not without influence and Brandli is right to stress Geneva's statehood.¹¹⁹ Herbert Lüthy's work on the rising influence of Genevan financial dynasties also testifies to the republic's importance in the 1700s. By 1770, the Genevan banking house of Thellusson, Necker & Cie was one of the largest in Paris, with its influence significantly enhanced once Necker was made French finance minister in 1776.¹²⁰ As we have seen, the Genevan government did not completely acquiesce to French demands and in the case of the Nouffer investigation, even seemed to deliberately obstruct them. The French government's interventions across this period did not compel the Genevan authorities to take a more aggressive stance on all literature relating to France.

It would make sense to contextualise this uneasy cooperation through comparison. The French state's efforts to extend censorship across the rest of Europe and the Genevans' response to censorship requests from other powers of a similar status like the duchy of Savoy and the Swiss

¹¹⁹ Brandli, pp. 20-23.

¹²⁰ Lüthy, p. 142.

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cantons are both necessary avenues of further enquiry. More research is also needed to uncover how the attitudes and actions of specific individuals affected the intensity of censorship. My own research has thus far indicated that Vergennes, French foreign minister for much of the 1770s and 1780s, displayed an aptitude for policing print beyond France's borders.¹²¹ The hypothesis that the French government was more successful in influencing the Genevan print trade in this period therefore needs still to be confirmed. It would seem there is also more to find out about personal connections between members of Geneva's *Petit Conseil* and those within the French government.

It needs to be remembered that the texts discussed in this article were not among the most typical or popular of the period. Questions about censorship across borders therefore also need to be applied to the sizeable number of hugely successful books which were published in Geneva and other small states during the eighteenth century. As one example, the baron de Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des lois* was first published and sold in Geneva in 1748, with the active support of Pierre Champeaux, the French resident in Geneva.¹²² Combining government papers with details from the memoirs and correspondence of notable authors could thus bring us to a closer appreciation of the full extent of cross-border censorship and cooperation.

Ascertaining the extent of equilibrium in the relationship between France and Geneva could also be important in the historiographical discussion over the despotic tendencies of the French government. This debate is important because it encourages us to ponder how far the French authorities were responsible for provoking the resistance which coalesced into the French Revolution. There is a historiographical consensus on the importance of allegations of

¹²¹ Seaward, 'The French Government and the Policing of the Extra-Territorial Print Trade'.

¹²² Louis Desgraves, 'L'impression de l'Esprit des lois à Genève en 1747-1748. Achèvement de l'ouvrage et corrections', in *Le Temps de Montesquieu: colloque international 250 ans après l'Esprit des lois (1748)*, Genève, 28-31 Octobre 1998, Université de Genève, ed. by Michel Porret and Catherine Volpilhac-Augier (Geneva and Grenoble: Université de Genève and Société Montesquieu, 1998), pp. 33-41 (p. 39).

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despotism in the years before the French Revolution. Although elements of Louis XV and Louis XVI's regimes were liberalising (such as the attack on privilege contained within the finance minister Turgot's Six Edicts), there were also notable moments of repression. Accusations of despotism were put forward most vigorously by the French *parlements* and their associated pamphleteers as they attempted to defend their status and power.¹²³ Chancellor Maupeou's aggressive judicial reforms in the early 1770s and the intense political deliberation of the pre-revolutionary crisis both provided forums for the discourse of despotism to thrive. Recently Simon Burrows and Munro Price have both argued that the theme of despotism also had relevance to the way in which the French government extended its power beyond France's borders.¹²⁴ They have shown that the authorities planned to kidnap, and perhaps even to assassinate, unruly authors and the culprits involved in the staging of the scandal of the Diamond Necklace Affair. However, the evidence gathered here suggests that these kinds of mighty machinations were somewhat exceptional. The French government negotiated censorship in Geneva, rather than simply imposing it. This evidence lends support to the notion that the discourse of despotism was an unrealistic appraisal of the old regime government. It therefore indicates the importance of exploring how and why certain institutions and individuals adopted this interpretation of the actions of the French state in the years before the outbreak of revolution in 1789.

¹²³ John M. Burney, 'History, Despotism, Public Opinion and the Continuity of the Radical Attack on Monarchy in the French Revolution, 1787-1792', *History of European Ideas*, 17 (1993), 245-63; Peter R. Campbell, 'The Politics of Patriotism in France (1770-1788)', *French History*, 24 (2010), 550-75; Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt, *The Bastille: A History of a Symbol of Despotism and Freedom* (London: Duke University Press, 1997); Kenneth Margerison, *Pamphlets and Public Opinion: The Campaign for a Union of Orders in the Early French Revolution* (West Lafayette I.N.: Purdue University Press, 1998); Julian Swann, 'Silence, Respect, Obedience': Political Culture in Louis XV's France' in *Cultures of Power in Europe during the long Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 225-48; Dale Van Kley, 'New Wine in Old Wineskins: Continuity and Rupture in the Pamphlet Debate of the French Prerevolution, 1787-1789', *French Historical Studies*, 17 (1991), 447-65.

¹²⁴ Simon Burrows, 'Despotism without Bounds: The French Secret Police and the Silencing of Dissent in London, 1760-1790', *History*, 89 (2004), 525-48; Munro Price, *Preserving the Monarchy: The comte de Vergennes, 1774-1787* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 3, 42.

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The eighteenth century was a time when the print trade expanded rapidly but attention still needs to be paid to the restrictions which remained in place. This article has demonstrated that foreign pressure was limited and occasional but did nonetheless have a discernible impact on the texts which circulated in Geneva. Official concerns were centred on political material which could potentially disturb the stability of these respective states. The imposition of censorship across international borders was also intensely political. The strength of the French state enabled demands to be made but censorship was also the result of a careful blend of negotiation, coercion and defiance across international frontiers. The structures of censorship in both Geneva and France were too inadequate for complete control to ever be established but this partnership did manage to impose some workable limits on the print trade. Censorship should therefore be seen as something more than a visceral antipathy to the discussion of particular subjects. Examining the wider political context and the activities of the officials who were involved in its implementation is important in understanding why governments took the decision to censor. The question of perspective is also pivotal. The strains evident in relations between Geneva and France demonstrate the difficulty of judging the efficacy of censorship in absolute terms. Censorship across borders concentrated on what was most possible, practical and desirable and in this targeted mode, it could make clear progress.