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Introduction: Medieval and Early Modern Swiss-British Relations

By studying medieval and early modern Swiss-British relations, we aim to expand and to deepen our understanding of pre-modern networks of knowledge and transnational cultural exchange. The Swiss contribution to such networks and exchanges is often overlooked, partly because Switzerland was not a large, powerful historical player like France, Great Britain or the Holy Roman Empire. The Old Swiss Confederacy that existed between the late thirteenth century and the French invasion in 1798 was a loose but growing confederation of independent small states and related territories that formed multiple alliances in order to safeguard their interests and their independence. These territories were very diverse in terms of language, religion and culture, but there is nonetheless a distinctive Swiss element in early modern Europe: Swiss influence tends to be interstitial, involving individual people, mercenary troops, merchants, scholars, institutions, cities or cantons. Because 'Switzerland' as a modern nation state did not exist, the importance of Swiss actors in European cultural exchange as well as networks of influence and knowledge has been systematically underrated.

Cultural relations between Britain and Switzerland, particularly the Protestant Swiss cantons, are long-standing and were especially intense in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when the shared commitment to the Reformed faith mattered most. In the early modern period, students, scholars, translators, clerics, aristocrats and diplomats corresponded and travelled between Switzerland and the British Isles, conducting research, advancing the Protestant cause, making careers and forming friendships which were often lasting and reached across generations. Evidence of such exchanges is hidden in thousands of unpublished manuscripts and obscure print items. Such materials have become more accessible in recent years thanks to digital humanities initiatives that enable the large-scale collection, visualization and analysis of data illuminating early modern transnational relations in Europe: these improve our understanding of knowledge networks and the Republic of Letters. The bi-annual meeting of the Swiss Association of Medieval and Early Modern

Studies in 2024 was devoted to this topic, drawing in part on the research project SwissBritNet: Swiss-British Cultural Exchange and Knowledge Networks, 1600-1780 (2023-2027), conducted at the University of Basel and funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (PIs Ina Habermann and Lukas Rosenthaler, University of Basel).

Although the fullest flourishing of both continental Anglophilia and the British enthusiasm for Switzerland may be late-eighteenth century phenomena, our 2024 conference at Basel aimed to show that they have a long and intricate history. In early, part mythical, histories of Britain under King Arthur, Switzerland—or to be more precise the Swiss Alps—feature as the imaginative limit of civilisation: Layamon's *Brut* (c.1200) records that no knight in any land "a theos halfe Mungiu stondeth" ("on this side of Mungiu," Layamon 114, line 11480) could be held a good knight if he did not know about King Arthur's exploits. "Mongiu" is a corruption of the name "Mons Jovis" given for a temple that once stood there in classical times. Around 980 St Bernard of Menthon founded an Augustinian hospital there, and the area is now known as the Great St Bernard Pass (Layamon 270, n.115). There are further Arthurian connections: *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (c.1400) recounts that King Arthur visited Lucerne on Lammas Day, before achieving a great military victory over the Roman Emperor at St Gotthard (Benson 224, line 3094). Around 1195 Ulrich von Zatzikhofen of Thurgau wrote his poem "Lanzelot," the first poem in German to treat the English King Arthur and his knights.

But there were also less mythologised, more historically verifiable connections. From the seventh century Irish monks who established the monastery of St Gallen, and the Bishop of Sion who helped found Westminster Abbey, to the English envoys stationed in the Swiss confederacy in the seventeenth century; from the Genevan teacher Antoine-Rodolphe Chevalier, who was Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge in the reign of Edward VI, to the Anglo-Swiss knowledge networks in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; from the Marian exiles in Basel and Geneva in the 1550s to English regicides in Geneva and Lausanne—to name only a very few examples—there has been constant movement and cultural exchange between Switzerland and Britain, and considerable resulting mutual influence. The documents recording the earlier stages of this exchange are more often of historical interest than of literary significance; perhaps for this reason fewer literary scholars engage directly with medieval Swiss-British relations. The most frequently mentioned medieval Swiss writer is Otto III de Grandson, a Savoyard knight who served the English kings Edward III and Richard II, and was renowned throughout

Europe both for his perfect chivalry and for his lyrical poetry and ballads. De Grandson has drawn the attention of medieval English scholars because of his friendship with Geoffrey Chaucer, whom he appears to have come to know while in the employ of John of Gaunt. Chaucer's poem "The Compleynt of Venus" (c. 1385) is an English translation of three French ballades by de Grandson: in Chaucer's version, the male speaker is replaced by a female one, but the poem remains close to the French and many lines are translated literally. Chaucer comments on the relative difficulty of finding rhymes in English compared to French, perhaps thus suggesting that his skill has had to be superior to that of his source poet, whom he nonetheless calls "flour of hem that make in Fraunce," the flower of French poets (Chaucer 649, line 82).

De Grandson the poet is however only one in a line of de Grandsons of Neuchâtel who had links to the English court. Among his predecessors was William of Grandson, who married into the family of Peter of Savoy—ruler of most of the Vaud and an advisor at the English royal court: Henry III of England made Peter Earl of Richmond in 1241 (Wraight 95). Through their Savoyard connections the de Grandsons also built links with the English crown: William's son Otto accompanied Prince Edward to the Holy Land and reputedly saved his life by sucking poison from a stab wound. When Edward became King, Otto served as his secretary before retiring to Switzerland and endowing the Cathedral of Lausanne where his tomb can now be seen (Wraight 97). Otto's brother, also called William, fought with the English King against the Scots, and in 1326 was made prior of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in London (Wraight 98). This William's son, John, became Bishop of Exeter and transformed the cathedral there into its present Gothic style, and William's sister, Catherine, is said to be the lady who dropped her garter and inspired Edward III to create the Order of the Garter (Wraight 99–100). It is clear that the Grandsons' contribution to the history and cultural heritage of England across more than a century is substantial, and the poetry of Otto III is simply its late medieval literary culmination.

Although a variety of aspects and instances of Swiss-British relations have been studied (Lätt, 1931, 1946, Beer 1951, Maag, 1957, Welti 1964, Teuteberg 1982, Stoye 1989, Cossy et al. 2009, Stähli 2009, Norman 2017, Kümin et al. 2018, Erne 2022, Karpossy and Lovis 2022), there has, to date, been no sustained inquiry into the subject. The challenge is now, with the help of digital humanities, to transform a fragmentary approach into a more holistic inquiry informed by network studies (Ahnert et al. 2020), actor-network theory (Latour 2005), and mobility studies

(Clavin 2010, Cresswell 2010, Greenblatt 2010, Netzloff 2020, Nelles/ Salzberg 2022, Salzberg 2023), as seen in historical investigations of transnational early modern networks of knowledge sustained through travel and correspondence (Van Miert 2015, Davidson 2019, Hotson/ Wallnig 2019, Blair et al. 2021). Research into Switzerland's seventeenth- and eighteenth-century cultural relations has focused on politics, diplomacy, science and literature. André Holenstein's pioneering work on Swiss transnational relations (Holenstein 2014, 2018) engaged mainly with the European continent. Other researchers have investigated devotional writing and Protestant diplomacy in the seventeenth century (Sträter 1987, Kingdon 1998, Storrs 2010, Rindlisbacher 2016 and 2021, Rindlisbacher Thomi 2024), Basel's connections to the Church of England (Stone 2016), pan-Protestantism (Staehelin 1940, Gehring 2013), English republican exiles in Europe (Maag 1957, Mahlberg 2020), Huguenot networks (Vola 2001, Larminie 2019, Schmid 2024), John Dury's Protestant mission on the continent (Gordon 2004), the dissemination of physio-theology around 1700 (Blair/Greyerz 2020, Greyerz 2022), networks of natural philosophy (Kempe 2003, Boscani Leoni 2012, Boscani Leoni 2020a, 2020b), aspects of scholarly exchange (Holenstein et al. 2013, Schmid 2023) and travel and diplomacy (Goeing 2007, Crousaz 2020, Netzloff 2020) as well as literary exchange and individual authors including Shakespeare (Bircher 1971, Norman 2002, Mahlmann-Bauer 2008, Willenberg 2008, Reddick 2009, Lütteken/Mahlmann-Bauer 2009, Leu 2011, Erne/Singh 2018, Engler 2021). The current challenge is to situate Swiss-British networks more adequately within the wider confessional Republic of Letters (Hardy 2017, Hardy/Levitin 2020).

Following the fruitful friendship between Erasmus of Rotterdam and Thomas More, humanists, academics and theologians at Basel, Zurich and Geneva, and their printing offices, maintained close contact with colleagues and institutions in the British Isles, not least through the help of exiles (Garrett 2010, Ranson 2015, Goeing 2021). The early seventeenth century and the Restoration saw new collaborations between Anglican and Reformed theologians. To name just a few examples, Johann Heinrich Hottinger from Zurich met archbishops Laud and Ussher, and scholars Edward Pococke and John Selden, while visiting England (Loop 2013). In the early eighteenth century, Johann Ludwig Frey, grandson of the Anglophile Johann Jacob Frey, compiled an impressive library of English books which now form part of the core collection of the Frey-Grynaeisches Institut at Basel. His student Johann Jakob Wettstein collated biblical manuscripts in Paris for the classical scholar Richard Bentley at Cam-

bridge (Castelli 2020, Haugen 2011) while the Basel theologian Samuel Werenfels travelled through Switzerland with Bishop Gilbert Burnet, and Jean-Alphonse Turrettini (Pitassi 2009) met Isaac Newton. Traces of these lively exchanges, found in extensive documents held in Swiss and British libraries, merit a detailed study that will contribute to the bigger picture of transcultural exchange as well as the Swiss contribution to it. As Vivienne Larminie states in her field-defining article, Anglo-Swiss networks played a central role in the early modern confessional Republic of Letters, constituting a "significant strand of intertwined Protestant networks across Europe, previously obscured, for instance, by more obvious Anglo-Dutch links" (Larminie 2021, 169). Our edited collection seeks to contribute to this bigger picture, addressing key areas of connection: literary exchanges including translation, networks, scholars and brokers of information, religious exchanges, and travel writing.[1]

1. Literary Exchanges

Laurie Atkinson's essay "Early Modern Swiss-British Relations in the Barclay-Pynson *Ship of Fools*" discusses the trans-channel voyage of Sebastian Brant's *Das Narrenschiff*, an important text by a German working at the University of Basel. Atkinson explores the relationships among the many early editions of Alexander Barclay's English adaptation of Jakob Locher's hugely influential Latin version of Brant's work. The texts of both Brant and Locher were published in Basel, in 1494 and 1497 respectively, and, as Atkinson demonstrates, the Basel editions strikingly influenced Barclay's text printed by Richard Pynson in London in 1509. The influence can be traced in codicological features such as the choice of type and woodcut illustrations. Considering Barclay's creative translations of prefatory material, which foreground his role in the making of the book, Atkinson argues that this influence should be read as "a significant example of early modern Swiss-British relations," an argument he places in the context of current scholarly interest in authorship as collaboration. Given the proliferation of *Narrenschiff* adaptations in European vernaculars, this collaborative authorship also positions the English *Shyp of Folys* within a "pan-European bibliographical endeavour" that runs counter to narrow notions of national literary tradition.

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[1] The editors wish to thank the copy-editor Léa Gbeassor for her great and diligent work on this volume.

Emma Depledge's essay "Looking Beneath the Surface: The Long-Briquets' Contribution to Material Bibliography and Shakespeare Studies" discusses a Genevan couple's undervalued contribution to the study of Shakespeare. Together with Caroline Long, Charles Moise-Briquet compiled a four-volume compendium of paper watermarks, *Les Filigranes* (1907), which allowed scholars to expose forgeries and to re-attribute or re-date publications, including some quarto editions of Shakespeare's works. As Depledge shows, the usual attribution of these discoveries about Shakespeare's so-called "Pavier Quartos" to W.W. Greg effects a double erasure through a failure properly to acknowledge not only the Genevan scholar's work, but also that of his wife and collaborator. Depledge explains the process of paper making and the importance of watermarks, showing the relevance of such seemingly mundane details for an understanding of the early modern world of print, and for our knowledge of the print history of Shakespeare's works. Depledge's essay is also a plea for the acknowledgement of cross-Channel collaboration and the contributions of Continental—in this case Swiss—scholars to the study of Anglophone literature and culture.

Honor Jackson's essay "Melancholy, Maternity, and Self-Fashioning: The Swiss Doctor and the English Duchess" takes us to the mid-seventeenth century and the life and work of Margaret Cavendish. Jackson argues that the views on melancholy, fertility and maternity that emerge from Cavendish's work were probably influenced by the ideas of Théodore de Mayerne, the Genevan Huguenot physician who lived in England and treated King James I, Anne of Denmark, Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria as well as numerous other members of the English aristocracy.[2] As Jackson suggests, while Cavendish often disregarded his advice, Mayerne's views helped her to fashion herself as a melancholy author, leading her to "see a connection between her health, her creative pursuits, and her childlessness." Eschewing the customary connection of female melancholy with the womb, Mayerne focusses on her sedentary lifestyle as an author, allowing Cavendish to see her writing both as a symptom and a possible cure for her afflictions. Creating imaginary worlds becomes a form of self-care, and as Cavendish stopped seeking fertility advice, guided by her Swiss doctor's compassionate counselling, she began writing for publication.

While the first three essays in this section discuss examples of Swiss influence on British culture, the final two treat instances of the English

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[2]   For Mayerne's involvement with heterodox views and debates, see David McOmish's essay in this volume.

influence on continental culture that became ever more pronounced throughout the eighteenth century. Kilian Schindler traces the significance of Johann Jakob Bodmer's prose translation of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which was published in Zurich in 1732. Schindler focusses on the controversy about religious heterodoxy that this translation sparked as critics, among them Johann Christoph Gottsched, accused Bodmer of promoting pietist views, via Milton, which provided "a model for their rejection of Saxon hegemony in Germanophone literature." Schindler shows how aesthetics became entangled with debates about religious heterodoxy in this transcultural exchange, even as literary aesthetics came to be conceived as a secularized form of religious enthusiasm. In preferring inspired subjectivity and intuition to neoclassicism, the Swiss literary scene took its cue from religiously inspired English authors to promote their language and ideals with increasing confidence.

In his essay "'C'est ainsi que s'envole une âme vertueuse': the 1747 Lausanne translation of Addison's *Cato* as an Allegorical Representation of Major Davel," Andy Reilly explores another potentially incendiary translation of a work of English literature. While it is well-known that *Cato* was often used allegorically in an Anglophone context, its non-English reception remains underexplored. Reilly argues that the Lausanne edition, allegedly published in Paris but traceable to the Lausanne printer Jean Zimmerli, was published clandestinely to commemorate Major Jean Daniel Abraham Davel and the Vaudois resistance to Bernese rule in 1723. As Reilly argues, "the Lausanne translation's modifications to Addison's text and its covert distribution contributed to an allegorical discourse of commemoration and resistance." The Lausanne edition offers a fascinating example of transnational literary exchange and the political application of literature, showing that supporters of the Vaudois struggle against their Bernese overlords looked to English literature for inspiration, tapping into an established English tradition of political allegory.

2. Networks, Scholars and Brokers of Information

David McOmish's essay "Cosmopolitanism and Heterodoxy: British and Swiss Itinerant Scholars and British Medical Reformations, 1580-1630" analyses the production and policing of knowledge in early modern medicine. As McOmish argues, scholars and medical practitioners "moving between locations of heterodox knowledge reveal the extent to which scholars from non-conforming and ambiguous political backgrounds were

the main drivers of reform and innovation in medical practice in this period." Such locations included Basel, Paris, Montpellier and Edinburgh, where both Swiss and British scholars were key proponents of medical heterodoxy against a Galenic and Hippocratic medical establishment. Important Swiss figures include the pioneering Felix Platter at Basel, teacher of Thomas Moffat, who promoted Paracelsianism and chemical medicine at the Royal College of Physicians in London, and the Genevan Théodore de Mayerne, introduced earlier in this volume as the physician of Margaret Cavendish. Another Paracelsian and a member of the Royal College, Mayerne had also supported the foundation of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries in London. King James I's patronage of these medical men extended to an attempt to establish a Royal College of Physicians at Edinburgh, which was initially thwarted, however, by church figures critical of heterodoxy. The college was finally established in 1681.

Philippe Bernhard Schmid features a Swiss confessional agent in the early eighteenth century, who found success in England and occupied a key position at the intersection of confessional networks and colonial endeavours: Johann Heinrich Ott, naturalised in Britain as John Henry Ott. Schmid's essay "The Beneficed Broker: John Henry Ott and Anglo-Swiss Confessional Networks after the War of the Spanish Succession" highlights the increasing institutional establishment of Anglo-Swiss confessional agents in the early eighteenth century. Ott was a go-between and information broker who was secretary to the archbishop of Canterbury, but was also supported by the social networks of the newly-established English missionary societies. Schmid explores Ott's social networks and his "information labour" as secretary and librarian to the archbishop, arguing that "an institutional reframing of Anglo-Swiss confessional networks and their brokers took place between 1700 and 1720, influenced by the rise of the new missionary societies." This is a change from the seventeenth century, when "Swiss and English divines maintained close contacts based on the "Protestant International" and Swiss Huguenot networks" and acted as go-betweens on a more individual basis. In spite of his institutional role for the Church of England, Ott remained part of a significant network of Anglo-Swiss actors of transnational exchange, which continued to exist well into the eighteenth century.

3. Religious Exchanges

In "St Oswald of Northumbria's Head at Zug," Christiania Whitehead reveals a perhaps surprising Swiss-British connection: a devotion to the cult of the Northumbrian warrior king and saint whose head is allegedly buried in Durham Cathedral. Another alleged head of Oswald travelled via Bavaria to the Swiss city of Zug which, in the late fifteenth century, built its "Oswaldkirche" to celebrate a victory in the Burgundian wars—a victory partially attributed to the saint. The distinctive local development of the saint's cult in the Swiss city can be traced, as Whitehead demonstrates, in the church's interior and exterior iconography which assimilates devotion to Oswald with local devotion to Anna Selbdritt. Oswald's memory is re-appropriated and used in "fifteenth-century Zug to affirm and sanctify Swiss confederal resistance to the Burgundians and Habsburgs," and Oswald is included within a genealogy of exemplary saintly Holy Roman Emperors. After the Reformation, the malleable myth of Oswald undergoes another ideological transformation, interpreted at Zug in terms of the "preservation of a precious Catholic icon" that prefigures the ultimate defeat of Protestantism.

In "Johann Heinrich Hummel, Elizabeth Penington and the English 'godly': Further Thoughts on Religious Cross-currents in the Mid-seventeenth Century," Vivienne Larminie also engages with the traffic of religious and intellectual ideas in Europe, with an emphasis on Protestant England and Switzerland. Larminie focuses her discussion on the Swiss Johann Heinrich Hummel, who spent eighteen months in England in the 1630s and built a community of like-minded ministers and pious people with whom he corresponded for decades after his return to Switzerland. Hummel's letters from Elizabeth Penington, especially, reveal "the subtle complexity of the English religious news that reached Switzerland"—a complexity that was, as Larminie demonstrates, political as much as doctrinal. Ultimately, Hummel's intense contact with his English friends and their religious struggles fed "his enthusiasm for and dissemination of moderate, mainstream puritan piety in his native country."

4. Travellers and Travel Writing

Catherine Jenkinson's essay discusses "Swiss Encounters with the Tower of London" in the early modern period. The Tower was, according to Jenkinson, the city's most significant landmark; as an early site of "dark tour-

ism," its histories and myths exerted considerable power over the imaginations of Swiss visitors. The association of the Tower with "dark histories" of torture that are prominent in nineteenth-century writings can already be found in sixteenth-century Swiss consciousness, as Jenkinson shows, even though individual experiences are of course variable. The Tower appears to have been firmly on the itinerary, not least as a place where high and mighty figures had come to an untimely end. Swiss visitors included Rudolf Gwalther, Thomas Platter, Jakob Bernoulli, Rudolf Bucher and Béat de Muralt, and it appears that Platter was granted particularly extensive access, since he gives a detailed description of instruments of torture in the cellars. These visits, documented in many travel accounts, are evidence of early tourism and of a thriving Swiss-British exchange, often based on Protestant alliances, and testify to the prominent place that London and its sites held in the minds of Swiss travellers.

Platter's travel account is also an important source for Stefanie Heeg's essay "Anglo-Swiss Travel Networks at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century," which traces transcultural exchange through the movement of individuals, from Switzerland to England, and vice versa. Heeg's starting points are the travel accounts of Thomas Coryat and Thomas Platter, from which she reconstructs the intricate social network established by the encounters of the two men in Switzerland and Britain: she then analyses further travel accounts by people within that network. Heeg proceeds to map out a tightly interwoven network of travellers that is distinctively early modern and should not be conflated with the later practice of the Grand Tour. While the motivations for travel and social encounters were diverse, though often including educational mobility, Swiss-British networks offered travellers social prestige and access to exclusive institutions as well as more practical support and orientation, sorely needed at a time when infrastructures for travel were still in their infancy. Amusingly, earlier travellers sometimes had to find someone who spoke Latin if they had lost their way. Heeg's essay provides evidence of an intricate and trans-generational Swiss-British network of upwardly mobile men who took their travel memories and contacts with them as they occupied important positions at home.

5. Conclusion

The research of the SwissBritNet project at Basel continues, and at the moment any conclusions it offers about the "bigger picture" can only be

tentative: moreover, there are important aspects of political and military alliances as well as trade, commerce and banking which are not addressed by the project, nor discussed in this volume. Nonetheless, it is clear that Protestantism and religious and theological exchange are at the core of Swiss-British cultural relations: the doctrinal rigour of Swiss theologians and religious reformers such as Calvin and Zwingli was influential during the English Reformation and the development of puritanism, and Switzerland could also be a site of heterodoxy, and a haven for Protestant exiles, for example during the reign of Mary Tudor and after the Restoration. Also important to Swiss-British cultural exchange, in the later seventeenth- and early eighteenth- centuries, was the sizeable number of able Swiss medical men, natural philosophers, diplomats, craftsmen and artists who made their mark in the growing British empire. These Swiss were drawn by the prestigious seats of learning at Oxford and Cambridge, and overwhelmed by the infinite variety of London, its relatively open and mobile society and its confident women; they were charmed by English wit and the English language, by the theatre and by the rich literary culture epitomized by Shakespeare and Milton. It is intriguing to think how many sober Swiss professional men had a soft spot in their hearts for the England of their youthful memories, gathered suitably far away from home. During the heyday of continental Anglophilia, Emanuel Merian, chief minister of the Basel Münster and Antistes of Basel from 1766 to 1816, read Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* in his spare time, kept an English journal, and wrote to a correspondent that it was worth learning English in order to appreciate the beauty of Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* in the original (Merian 1792). Although the expanding British empire and the neutral, small-scale Old Swiss Confederacy could hardly be more different, the Swiss and the British found much to admire and value in each other, and their cultures were, in important ways, mutually resonant.

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