



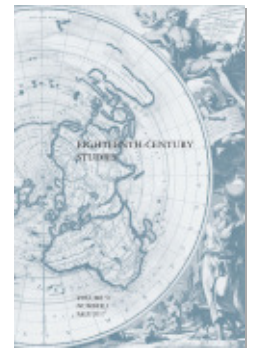
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*Bluestocking Feminism and British-German Cultural Transfer,  
1750–1837* by Alessa Johns (review)

Andrea Speltz

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(Review)



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ushered in by the age of Trump and so-called fake news. This shift itself is not novel, but can be understood through theories of ideology, disinformation, propaganda, and mass delusion. This more pessimistic mood of 2017, with respect to the legacy of the Enlightenment, represents a profound challenge that von Mücke's relatively optimistic reading must face. She is, however, far from alone in this regard. She is in the company of everyone for whom the term "Enlightenment" still has meaning.

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**Alessa Johns, *Bluestocking Feminism and British-German Cultural Transfer, 1750–1837* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014). Pp. xiv + 242. \$30.00.**

This volume comprises a series of four studies exploring the impact of transnationalism on proto-feminist thought from the mid-eighteenth century to the early Victorian period. Its methodological framework draws on Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, which author Alessa Johns extends with her own geographic metaphor, *terrains vastes*. For Johns, Latour's actor-network theory offers "a more heterogeneous and inclusive model of connections and activity" (14). It opens up *terrains vastes* by decentering historiography away from the canonical authors of national traditions and encouraging an exploration of actors on the peripheries of historical change, particularly women and transnational intellectuals.

Chapter 1 focuses on the efforts of two learned women, so-called blue-stockings, to promote cultural transfer between Britain and German-speaking lands through the eighteenth-century book trade. The first, Anna Vandenhoeck, was an Englishwoman who owned and operated a publishing house serving the University of Göttingen, a major center of German Enlightenment thought. Vandenhoeck "supported the translation of significant British publications, encouraged British journals through a reading circle, and offered great numbers of British volumes, in the original and in translation, for sale at her shop" (37). The second woman, Duchess Philippine Charlotte of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, amassed a 4,000-volume library that was "wide-ranging, cosmopolitan, and women-oriented" (31). For Johns, the activities and intellectual preoccupations of these women demonstrate a "quotidian rather than transcendent cosmopolitanism," in which "gender position can trump rigid national and social identities" (38). The case studies are intriguing, and Johns's attempt to highlight the depth of women's gender identification in the eighteenth century provides an important impulse for further research on proto-feminist solidarity and political engagement.

Chapter 2 examines the role of translation in the transfer of proto-feminist thought between Britain and German-speaking Europe. Johns focuses on four works in particular: Johann David Michaelis's translation of Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), Meta Forkel's of Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791), Mary Wollstonecraft's of Salzmann's *Moralisches Elementarbuch* (1795), and Joseph Johnson's of GutsMuths's *Gymnastik für die Jugend* (1793). For Johns, Michaelis and Forkel demonstrate how English-German translations successfully furthered the cultural, social, and political advancement of women, whereas Wollstonecraft actually serves as a negative foil. Johns convincingly argues that the latter's "Englishing" of Salzmann's

educational tract “undermines her own revolutionary aims” by giving the practical German text a metaphysical, Romantic expression (67). With her discussion of Johnson, Johns tests the limits of the Latourian method. She acknowledges that GutsMuths’s text, which outlines a program of physical education for use in schools, does not actively promote a feminist agenda, but argues that it “theoretically left a space for the development of women and people of all classes” (86). Regardless of whether one accepts or rejects this particular argument, the chapter as a whole constitutes a highlight of the book. Brimming with interesting information and insightful analysis, Johns’s discussion shows how the choices of translators have “very real implications for transnational understanding and gender politics” (40).

Chapter 3 examines the impact of the French Revolution on intra-European travel writing, using gendered descriptions of Mount Vesuvius as a case in point. Johns argues that Vesuvius, a symbolic representation of the social and political turmoil caused by the Revolution, “became a natural locus for debating the concatenation of politics and sexual politics” (97). While men engaged with Vesuvius as an example of the sublime for the purpose of self-fashioning, women travelers contextualized the grandeur of the volcano within “life’s eternal landscape” (109), thereby constructing a “feminine sublime” that promoted social connection rather than masculine isolation (112). The argument of this chapter strays from issues of cultural transfer, claiming instead that British and German women travel writers shared the common goal of exposing Vesuvius as a threat.

Chapter 4 returns to the theme of British-German cultural transfer as a catalyst for proto-feminist thought with a discussion of Anne Jameson. Johns follows Jameson on her travels through German-speaking lands, Upper Canada, and Italian Naples, demonstrating how she leveraged her transnational experiences in order to advocate for social reform. As a case study, Jameson perfectly illustrates Johns’s thesis that transnationalism contributed to the proto-feminist cause. However, most of Jameson’s writings fall outside the time period of the book’s title, calling into question the appropriateness of the Personal Union as a historical frame. Indeed, it remains unclear how the political ties between Britain and the Kingdom of Hanover enhanced the examples of cultural transfer discussed in this book.

*Bluestocking Feminism and British-German Cultural Transfer, 1750–1837* is above all a call to expand our notions of what constitutes a “bluestocking.” By examining three modes of cultural transfer between Britain and German-speaking Europe—the book trade, the translation industry, and travel writing—Johns convincingly argues for viewing male and female German intellectuals as an important part of the bluestocking network.

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STEVE NEWMAN, *Temple University*

Mike Hill and Warren Montag, *The Other Adam Smith* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014). Pp. 416. \$29.95.

*The Other Adam Smith* is a wide-ranging, subtle, and daring book. Authors Mike Hill and Warren Montag have set themselves an ambitious goal: to engage with Smith’s multifarious oeuvre in a way that acknowledges both its pursuit of