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## Un Homme, Deux Cultures: Charles de Villers entre France et Allemagne (1765–1815) (book review)

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BRUCKER, NICOLAS, et FRANZISKA MEIER, éd. *Un homme, deux cultures: Charles de Villers entre France et Allemagne (1765–1815)*. Garnier, 2019. ISBN 978-2-406-08209-5. Pp. 336.

This collection of seventeen essays unites French and German scholars offering fresh insights into the Lorraine native Charles de Villers (1765–1815), a central figure in the exchange of ideas between France and Germany at the turn of the nineteenth century. Until now, scholarship on this emigrant, essayist, translator, and professor at Göttingen has been scattered, due largely to his disparate range of influence. Among other things, he is credited with introducing Kantian philosophy in France, pioneering the field of comparative literature, exercising a significant influence on Madame de Staël, penning an important history of the Reformation, and popularizing homeopathic medicine and mesmerism. After Brucker's informative introduction, four essays treat Villers as cultural mediator. Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink analyses the relations between his works and translation processes, Marie-Claire Hooch-Demarle studies the correspondence between Staël and Villers, Franziska Meier reconstructs the complicated circumstances under which his *Coup d'œil sur les universités* (1808) was written, and Friedemann Pestel places his trajectory in the context of French emigration in the Holy Roman Empire. Three essays examine Villers in the Republic

of Letters, Freya Baur looking at his private correspondence, Fabian Schmitz treating his activity during the French occupation of Lübeck in 1806, and Hans-Ulrich Seifert studying his correspondence with the German librarian and scholar Johann Wyttenbach. Three essays treat Villers's encounters, Monique Bernard analyzing his meeting with Staël in Metz in 1803, Kurt Kloocke studying his friendship with Benjamin Constant, and Nicolas Brucker offering insights on his notions of homeopathic medicine, animal magnetism, and the philosophy of nature through the prism of his correspondence with the German physician Samuel Hahnemann. Four essays examine Villers as a writer and journalist. Marie-Emmanuelle Plagnol-Diéval demonstrates how his literary and social débuts are accompanied by specific social practices in his native town of Boulay. Catriona Seth shows how his *Érotique comparée* (1806) anticipates French Romanticism by applying the idea of nationality to the comparative study of literature. Philippe Hoch offers a new understanding of his personality by examining his correspondence with his main publisher in Metz, Christophe-Gabriel Collignon. Éric Francalanza analyses the surviving letters between Villers and fellow writer and kindred spirit Jean-Baptiste Suard. The last three essays treat Villers and the Reformation. Martin Keßler and Catherine Julliard examine his most famous work, the *Essai sur l'esprit et l'influence de la Réformation de Luther* (1804), the former treating its reception and distribution in Europe and North America, and the latter demonstrating its indebtedness to Kant. Susanne Ardisson shows how the idealized conception of German love, as explained by Villers, is centered on the soul and virtue, contrasting with the French conception of love, centered on pleasure and the body. This volume provides an invaluable contribution to research on this little-known but important figure. It is highly recommended to all interested in intellectual exchanges between France and Germany during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.