

# H-Diplo ROUNDTABLE XXI-51

**Kristin L. Hoganson.** *The Heartland: An American History*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2019.  
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## INTRODUCTION BY MARK PHILIP BRADLEY, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

When you grow up as I did in flyover country, end up on one of the coasts for school and then return to the heartland for your professional career, you get used to a lot of baffled looks. “Michigan. That’s near Idaho, right?” “You know in London we don’t have a firm sense of where Chicago is actually.” Or my favorite, “you seem reasonably cosmopolitan and yet you grew up where?” It is not always so much better back in the heartland itself. There is, as Kristin Hoganson argues in her wonderful *The Heartland: An American History*, more than a touch of willed insularity. Given the complex histories she traces, it should also come as no surprise that the region remains a hotspot of white fragility.

Throughout her distinguished career, Hoganson has been a master at helping us see something in the past that was always there but somehow had been just out of view. In her 1998 *Fighting for American Manhood*, she put gender at the center of how Americans imagined their imperial project at the close of the nineteenth century. Her 2009 *Consumer’s Imperium* showed how practices of empire were deeply embedded in the domestic sphere and everyday practice. As co-editor of the nineteenth century volume of the forthcoming *Cambridge History of America and World*, she traces and amplifies the new political, economic, social and cultural histories that are remaking the ways in which we understand American empire at home and abroad.<sup>1</sup>

With *The Heartland* Hoganson takes on the white picket fence narrative that shapes so much of the history of the midwestern United States, narratives infused by white innocence, plucky pioneers who settled a virtual *tabula rasa*, and the myth of isolationism. She reveals the global interconnections that gave the region shape and form and at the same time recasts those histories in the larger frames of settler colonialism and the dispossession of native peoples. It is a big, ambitious book and one that aims to reach beyond the academy to a broader reading public. *The Heartland* succeeds in its conceptual ambitions, as the reviewers here unanimously agree. My own ethnography of its reception, largely enthusiastic reviews in the popular press and sightings of the book’s ubiquitous presence in airport bookshops in the United States and around the world before the pandemic came down, suggest it is deservedly finding a wide audience too.

The reviewers help us see the multiple interventions Hoganson makes in *The Heartland*. Settler colonialism, as both Ian Tyrrell and Michael Thompson discuss, is in many ways the central frame for the book, one that nicely situates the American Midwest alongside other similar colonial spaces to both deprovincialize the American experience and bring the United States into what is a far more developed historiography on settler colonialism in Australia, Canada, and Africa. In part, as April Merleaux and Courtney Fullilove suggest, it also operates as global agricultural and environmental history in its concerns with bioprospecting and Berkshire hogs. For me the most powerful dimension of the book is its extended discussion of the Kickapoo people. Hoganson skillfully locates still too often ignored indigenous histories at the center of the story she tells, and at the same time lifts up the limited utility of geographical descriptors like the Midwest for writing these more capacious regional histories.

Some of the reviewers wished Hoganson had talked more about the ways in which the myth of the heartland can be weaponized for a particular kind of conservative or populist politics, perhaps an inevitable response in our current age of Trump. But ultimately, Hoganson offers something more in her very subtle rendering of power. *The Heartland* dives into the complexities of how power is constituted and deployed at multiple scalar levels. In this way, it is an invitation to think more broadly, and smartly, about the exercise of American power in the world. Talk of the entanglements between the local

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<sup>1</sup> Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Hoganson, *Consumer’s Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Hoganson, *Cambridge History of America and the World, Vol. 3*, co-edited with Jay Sexton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2021).

and the global can sometimes be just that. In *The Heartland*, however, Hoganson helps us see how they operate on the ground. In doing so, she pushes readers to confront a more layered, and at times more disturbing, American past.

**Participants:**

**Kristin Hoganson** is the Stanley S. Stroup Professor of United States History at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her previous books include *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippines American Wars* (1998) and *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (2007). She recently co-edited (with Jay Sexton) *Crossing Empires: Taking U.S. History into Transimperial Terrain* (2020). She is now fishing around for leads for a book on the Great Lakes.

**Mark Philip Bradley** is Bernadotte E. Schmidt Distinguished Service Professor of History at the University of Chicago. His current research explores how the global South has become a central presence in the making of our times. He is the author of *The World Reimagined: Americans and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (2016), *Vietnam at War* (2009) and *Imagining Vietnam and America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam* (2000). His work has been supported by fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**Courtney Fullilove** is an Associate Professor of History and affiliated faculty in Science in Society and Environmental Studies at Wesleyan University. She is author of *The Profit of the Earth: The Global Seeds of American Agriculture* (University of Chicago Press, 2017) and is currently working on a book about the history of biodiversity preservation.

**April Merleaux** is a Visiting Assistant Professor in Environmental Studies at Williams College. She is the author of *Sugar and Civilization: American Empire and the Cultural Politics of Sweetness* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), which won the 2016 Myrna Bernath prize from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations. She earned her Ph.D. in American Studies from Yale University, and has taught at Hampshire College and Florida International University. Her current research considers the agrarian and environmental histories of the War on Drugs.

**Michael G. Thompson** is Lecturer in History at the Australian Catholic University. He is author of *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States between the Great War and the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015) and other works on religion and U.S. foreign relations published in journals such as *American Quarterly* and *Modern Intellectual History*. At present he is at work on two research projects—one on agricultural missions, soil conservation and New Deal environmental internationalism, the other on evangelical cultures of leadership and authority in post-1980s America.

**Ian Tyrrell** is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. His books include *Woman's World/Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930* (University of North Carolina Press, 1991); *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2010); and *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective since 1789* (Palgrave Macmillan; rev. ed., 2015). He is working on a history of American Exceptionalism as an idea.

## REVIEW BY COURTNEY FULLILOVE, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

Kristin Hoganson dubs Champaign County, Illinois the “middle of everywhere” (viii), a rebuke to history and myth that make the American Midwest into “the isolationist capital of America” (132). She assembles a series of object lessons on this theme, from shorthorn cattle (Chapter 2) to Berkshire hogs (Chapter 3), taking initial inspiration from the cosmopolitan assemblage of plants in her backyard (xxiv). “Having set off in search of a heart,” Hoganson writes, “I had found settler colonialism, borderlands, empire building, agrarian solidarity, global consciousness, and a displaced people’s struggle for the right to return. . . . Having dug down to the core of the nation, I had unearthed a mesh of global entanglements, stemming from searches for security and power (xxvi). This book is full of quotidian histories that prove to be something more: a proof that the mythical core of the country was in fact always intertwined with global interests.

In many ways, Hoganson’s is a recasting of familiar histories: Thomas Jefferson’s old “empire for liberty,” Fredrick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis, William Cronon’s environmental history, and William Appleman’s characterization national expansion through farmer export markets in Asia and Latin America.<sup>2</sup> Each of these rebuffs the presumption that American empire was restricted to the aftermath of the Spanish-American War and the formal extension of government in the Philippines in 1898. Hoganson offers thoughtful glosses on these historiographical benchmarks by way of introduction and conclusion to her chapters, arguing, for example, that although William Appleman’s thesis explains “midwestern farmers’ interests in overseas empire building, it does not fully account for their entanglements with the global imperial system of their day” (81). That is, Hoganson insists that the final vestiges of American exceptionalism should be banished from national self-fashionings, replaced by a story of the United States as embedded in international politics. “The United States did not become imperial by expanding its markets in Latin America and Asia, as Williams claimed,” she insists, “because the United States had been imperial all along” (127-128).

Hoganson asserts that the global history in which the United States is embedded is primarily a European imperial one. As such, we should regard Euro-American settlers as agents of empire, and the United States itself as a settler colony. Inasmuch as I have made the same argument, I have little to quibble with here.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, I wonder what is lost by retaining this classical narrative of empire formation. As a result, we inherit histories of loss, dispossession, and expropriation: of native lands, livelihoods, and ways of knowing. What would an inversion or recasting of this story look like? What is at stake in making this a “history of foreign relations,” and does this framing inhibit more radical reconceptions of nation-building? By emphasizing the European imperial framework for American development, do we run the risk of reifying other myths of center/metropole/periphery? Scholars of the Atlantic world have wrestled with this problem, refashioning histories to demonstrate the ways Europe was made by its colonies rather than the reverse.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Drew R McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA by The University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921), 293; William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991); Margaret W. Rossiter, *The Emergence of Agricultural Science: Justus Liebig and the Americans, 1840-1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); William Appleman Williams, *The Roots of the Modern American Empire: A Study of the Growth and Shaping of Social Consciousness in a Marketplace Society* (New York: Random House, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> Courtney Fullilove, *The Profit of the Earth: The Global Seeds of American Agriculture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), chapter 4.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Drayton, “Knowledge and Empire,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume II: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 231; Thomas Benjamin, Timothy Hall, and David Rutherford, eds., *The Atlantic World in the Age of Empire* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001); Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours* (Cambridge:

Hoganson and I share an interest in the politics of plant introduction, which has been speciously positioned as free exchange and masking expropriation of indigenous plants and knowledge shaped over millennia of agricultural practice. Hoganson documents the reliance of these exercises of “bioprospecting” [please add a parenthetical page citation for her use of this word] on European imperial networks, including missionaries, businessmen, and consular offices (189-90). She looks to primarily to the period after the formalization of bioprospecting in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Office of Plant Introduction and the travels of Midwestern agricultural exports from land grant colleges. Notably, this entanglement emerges as clearly in the earlier plant introduction and soil research programs of the US Patent Office Agricultural Department, which formed the basis of the nascent USDA that was legislated into being by a wartime congress in 1861.<sup>5</sup>

The wartime origins of the USDA suggest one further path of development for this history. Hoganson devotes extensive attention to the dispossession of Kickapoo lands and livelihoods but says comparatively little about the rift over the future of slavery that precipitated the Civil War. How did the history of free and unfree labor constitute the European imperial history of which the United States was an artifact?

As Hoganson hints in her prologue, the plants themselves provide other ways of thinking about this history; for while they cross borders at human behest, they frequently precede human histories and attempts to control them. How might this longer history of biological exchange recast the comparatively young imperial narratives used to organize this book?

If we start instead from the stories told about plants, or cattle, or hogs, things start to sound wearily familiar: an emphasis on purity and pedigree that lays bare the biases of agrarian practice. However global they may have been in terms of their orientation, farmers and breeders aimed to domesticate nature in the manner of the Europeans. Chapter 4 has an especially fascinating discussion of scientific agriculture, focused on the international students hosted by College of Agriculture Dean Eugene Davenport at University of Illinois. These included the Indian agronomist Rathindranath Tagore, among others (175-194). Hoganson’s analysis suggests the ways in which racist dogma of civilizational uplift ruled the day while nevertheless producing a variety of colonial and anticolonial politics.

Hoganson makes a compelling case that the “local” was a category devised by settlers to supersede Kickapoo land claims. Antiquarian pioneer histories shored up these myths. This analysis provides the book’s central irony: “Those who disdain the rural Midwest as a last holdout of locality misread its history. Since the beginning, the seeming locality of the Midwest has served colonialist politics, having originated in colonial denial” (31). Here and elsewhere, there is a tension between the critical project of dismantling the myth of American exceptionalism and the constructive attempt to shape alternative narratives of global connection. If the history that emerges is largely European, this is perhaps a byproduct of this tension.

Hoganson frames her narrative with several asides that warrant further exploration: chiefly, the contention that the vocabulary of the “heartland” was popularized in reference to the battle for Europe in World War II. I wanted more clarity about who uses and abuses the heartland myth, especially in light of several barbed and productive provocations stitched through the text: for example, that “we might call the comforting promise of a national safe space in the midst of a fearsome and dangerous world a little white lie—a little white nationalist lie—except its politics are far from harmless and its magnitude is far too large” (260) This book does the essential work of breaking up these nationalist fetishes, which continue to wreak so much havoc on the world beyond and inside.

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Harvard University Press, 2005); Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (eds.), *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Fullilove, *Profit of the Earth*, Chapter 2.

## REVIEW BY APRIL MERLEAUX, WILLIAMS COLLEGE

I have a distantly related great aunt who lived most of her adult life on a corn and soybean farm in Illinois. She and her husband were both social workers in a nearby city, and they managed the farm as a secondary occupation. They liked the scenery, and the migrating birds they would see visiting the farm pond from their living room window. They certainly did not suffer a life of brutal stoop labor and poverty born of unpredictable crop prices, and they were not hopelessly parochial or “static and inward-looking” (xiv), as the received wisdom about the rural Midwest might have us believe. The farm was a solid investment that afforded her the ability to eventually retire to a nonagricultural life outside of the Midwest. I like to imagine this great aunt reading Kristin Hoganson’s *The Heartland: An American History* (she is, alas, too unwell to read now) and recognizing in its capacious story her own sense of self and place. Much as Hoganson portrays, for her the farm and the Midwest were crossroads for diverse interests, travels, professions, and people. She was quite a cosmopolitan lady.

Even as I imagine my cosmopolitan farmer aunt reading *The Heartland*, I note that one of Hoganson’s signature accomplishments here is to challenge the very notion of cosmopolitanism, hinging as it does on an overdrawn dichotomy with the parochial. The word ‘cosmopolitan’ has a snobbish, elitist ring, an attitude Hoganson is trying to overcome with this book. The Midwest’s histories cannot be contained by the parochialism of local booster tales, as the region has long been integrally connected to the rest of the nation, continent, and planet. But neither does cosmopolitan really do justice to the herculean efforts to mythologize the place as quaintly uncontaminated. The Midwest’s localness, Hoganson tells us, may be a figment, but it is a powerful one. It is a “last local place thoroughly riddled with histories of foreign relations” (300). The Midwest as Heartland, she argues, is a national myth. As such, it can hardly be pinned down to a specific geography, cultural group, or political bent. “Its boundaries,” she suggests, “are a matter of dispute” (xiii).

Hoganson weaves together copious anecdotes, mostly anchored in Champaign, where she has lived and worked for twenty years. She asks whether Champaign is as isolated a town as the heartland myth would have us believe. As we might expect from such a major figure in the history of U.S. empire, Hoganson finds that Champaign is rooted as much in the prairie as in settler colonialism and imperial expansion. Its university and the nearby farms (and their various fruitful collaborations) were hubs for international crossings. People there have long sought “cross-border alliances, and were deeply committed to empire, meaning both to a European dominated global system and to their own nation’s increasing influence and power” (194). What William Cronon’s *Nature’s Metropolis* did for Chicago, Hoganson does for Champaign. Champaign may be a smaller city, but the scale of the story is even bigger as she tracks the foreign relations and imperial entanglements embedded in daily life.<sup>6</sup>

Hoganson begins and ends with the Kickapoos, a diverse indigenous group that used the Midwest as part of an expansive place of belonging. They were removed from Illinois for Missouri in the 1820s; we pick up their story again in the last chapter on the U.S.-Mexico border. The decision to narrate the story in this way is laudable. She argues that “since the beginning, the seeming locality of the Midwest has served colonialist politics, having originated in colonial denial” (31). “So-called pioneers” invented “the Midwest” as a geography to describe their own experience as settlers (6). For the Kickapoo, the Midwest was not a meaningful geographic descriptor.

One of the things that I love about this book is how effortlessly Hoganson centers agricultural history. Agriculture, which is rooted in the soil and thus quintessentially local, has too rarely been considered in international, imperial, and settler colonial historical context. Hoganson brilliantly de-provincializes Midwestern agriculture, showing that colonial influences stretched far beyond settler colonists’ land claims. Those fields of soybeans? The seeds and technical know-how originated in Asia. The cattle herded into stockyards? They were produced in what she calls “a transborder agricultural system” linking farmers in Illinois and Ontario (46). The hogs in confinement? Bred in England, with collaboration from Canadian and

<sup>6</sup> William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).

Mexican peers. The birds my aunt liked to watch from her living room? Migrated from Mexico on their way to Canada. The colonial agriculture officials promoting tropical agricultural improvement? Trained at the University of Illinois.

To give but one example, Hoganson sheds new light on the quintessential Midwestern hog farm. “The Berkshire hog,” she argues, “reveals interimperial solidarities” (129). In the late nineteenth century, she writes, “to buy into Berkshires was to buy into empire” (95). Illinois farmers strongly preferred Anglo-Saxon hogs, which, like so many other imperial goods, were racialized through a system of eugenic breeding. As Hoganson summarizes, U.S. exporters’ “ability to sell pork to the British market depended not only on British breeds, rails, bottoms, packing methods, merchants, and tastes, but also British tariff policies and public health measures (or lack thereof), and the British inability to purchase comparable products for lower amounts from other suppliers” (117). Eventually in the 1890s, the trade with England declined as the United States asserted new control over shipping and expanded trade in the Caribbean. Expansion in the Caribbean depended on Midwestern farmers, whose pork fed workers on the rapidly expanding sugar cane plantations in the region. Ultimately, she argues that the United States gained power on the world stage not despite its rivalry with the British empire, but through close collaboration with it.

This is a readable survey that makes an argument, one that is at once blunt—the Midwest has always been a globally interconnected place—and a little hard to pin down at times. The thematic chapters work well when she writes about meat and hogs, and are a little looser in other places. The chapter on the air was a playful way to dig at the ‘flyover’ stereotype, but this is a theme more than an argument. It is possible that a casual reader could miss the forest for the trees and come away with many fascinating stories and the main message that the Midwest is less insular than we imagine. Even such a modest outcome, though, would be an achievement. *The Heartland* is a needed panacea in our current political moment. As we enter the coming election cycle, we would all do well to banish simplistic renderings of mythical heartlands.

## REVIEW BY MICHAEL G. THOMPSON, AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

With her textured and monumental book, *The Heartland*, Kristin L. Hoganson continues her long and field-shaping trajectory: namely the undoing of heuristic divisions between ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ politics, public and private spheres, and elite and everyday actors. Here, the boundary-erosion happens by challenging not only conventional understandings of the places and spaces in which U.S. foreign relations ‘happened’, zeroing in on the so-called ‘Heartland’ of the Midwest of the United States, but also, by using a methodology that aligns her work with the emergent joining of agricultural and foreign relations history, with the modes by which foreign relations occurred taking the reader headlong into the ‘inter-imperial’ dynamics of cattle-breeding, pork-processing and bird-migration, to name a few.<sup>7</sup> Choosing what is often seen as the quintessentially most ‘inner’ part of the U.S, a place, as Hoganson argues, which is associated in contemporary politics with tradition, insularity from global life, and isolationist tendencies—and in contemporary nationalism with ‘pure’ American-ness—Hoganson ventures to show that this ‘heart’ of the nation has never been isolated from global life, but has in fact always been constituted by it. With a vast, imaginative, panoramic, and at times microscopic empirical weight of evidence, Hoganson shows that her particular selection of Midwest heartland, Champaign Illinois, was far from being “in the middle of nowhere” it “coalesced smack in the middle of everywhere,” a busy node on a buzzing, evolving set of trans-imperial agricultural, cultural, political and communications networks (256).

Nor was such a place solely in the ‘middle’ of East and West. Hoganson demonstrates compellingly via multiple lines of inquiry that the Midwest also needs to be seen in the middle of currents flowing from North and South—whether literal meteorological currents, agricultural stock movements, or the politics of indigenous sovereignty and spatial knowing. Tilting the conventional geographic imaginary of the mid-west on its side—ninety degrees, as it were—is in itself one of the book’s significant contributions, among many.

As a text that joins local history to imperial and global history, and agricultural history to foreign relations, I suspect it will make for a disciplinary touchstone for time to come. The many-sided contributions, wrought in sparkling narrative with a reticence to theorize in the abstract, will take time to be absorbed and worked out by scholars with cognate interests in settler colonial studies, environmental and agricultural history, and empire in the Gilded Age and beyond. Add to that its exceptional qualities as a *publication* and the book’s value increases. *The Heartland* is richly packed with primary source clippings both textual and visual, whether the brief textual “archival traces,” clippings of local press or other written sources arranged by theme between each chapter, or the many period maps, cartoons, advertisements, and photographs that populate the pages and add not only illustrative but historical value. Matching the production aesthetic, Hoganson’s prose is accessible, engaging, and marked by both warmth and humour (see the puns in the numerous subheads, such as “larding it over the British empire” or “piggybacked power”). I mention those qualities to highlight the usefulness of the book for teaching in a range of areas. I, for one, plan to set it as a text in the coming semester for students in a course on the global history of first nations and settler colonialism.

One of the most audacious, and ultimately successful efforts of the book, though with caveats and implications to be worked through, is the long-overdue attempt to dive deep into local history and local historiography and to link it to foreign relations and global history. For too long academic and not least diplomatic historians’ instincts have been to eschew local history as amateur, dusty and unconnected to the stuff of international politics or to phenomena that is more obviously branded foreign relations, “the kinds of books that make you sneeze from so many years on the shelf” (13). Hoganson’s work to bring the historiography of local history into dialogue with foreign relations (apart from works linking local history to settler colonialism) is a welcome, novel contribution, and an incitement to further fresh interrogations of local history the world over. Hoganson reads the local history works produced in the late nineteenth century to critically garner their

<sup>7</sup> Two notable works at the intersection of U.S. foreign relations and agricultural history and environmental history, respectively are Tore C. Olsson, *Agrarian Crossings: Reformers and the Remaking of the US and Mexican Countryside* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), and Ian Tyrrell, *Crisis of the Wasteful Nation: Empire and Conservation in Theodore Roosevelt’s America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).



contributions to the making of the heartland myth (a point I come back to below), but also to use their own evidence against their conclusions, recovering the border-straddling lives of otherwise unknown families whose ‘pioneer’ generations are catalogued in their pages, or noting the circulation of horticultural and agricultural knowledge between Mexico, Canada and Europe. The latter is helped by imaginative and extensive use of other archives, including heavy use of local press and periodical literature and the records of agricultural organizations.

For Hoganson, ‘antiquarian’ local history works are in large part to blame for making plausible the myth of the heartland. They “appear, in sum, to be the heartland myth writ small—or, to get the sequence right, the archetype that makes the heartland myth seem plausible...preventing us from seeing it as bunk” (xviii-xix). As with other settler colonial settings, they naturalized in both readers’ and producers’ minds the process of settlement and dispossession of the Kickapoos, depoliticizing the process, legitimizing it, and reifying it, projecting their own ‘locality’ on the space ironically from the vantage point of a mobility that afforded their “rootedness” in the locale. Pioneer local histories of first things and last things (first churches, buildings, streets, mills, and ‘last’ Indians seen in the area) helped establish the links between settlers, Midwest locales, and the heart of the nation. One of the book’s most profound insights, significant partly for its transferability, is the way such pioneer narratives, and the later heartland myths with which they resonate, violated the actual sequence of historical time in order to place the local before the global. The pioneers’ heartland existed, in this imagining in a place before global time—a place ostensibly free from and *prior to* the incursion of fearful global influences from without. In that rendering, persons or phenomena that were from the outside—whether globalist, imperialist or immigrant—were conceived as *latecomers*, and as such as threats to the nation’s heart, which by definition was a pure core from which the nation in its purity emanates. Local histories cast “the pioneer experience as fundamentally different from that of later immigration streams,” for example (13). Such an account of the way that heartland mythology distorted historical time is of immense value not only to field but also to the present political moment, which has been characterized in some quarters by weaponized versions of the heartland myth’s xenophobic implications. Hoganson’s devastating empirical undoing of such mythology, and its putting places such as the Midwest back in global historical time, is worth the price of admission alone.

*The Heartland* is perhaps stronger when myth-busting than when myth-historicizing. The weight of evidence from chapters one through six serves to *undo* the Heartland myth more than to understand the production of that myth on a national, and indeed global scale, whether conceived comparatively or transnationally. That is not necessarily a shortcoming of the work so much as a delineation of what the work does and does not attempt. However, some of the book’s own strengths raise further questions about the broader contextualization of heartland mythologies beyond the U.S.

I take it as unstated but consistent with the axiomatic thrust of the book that the mythology of the U.S. heartland is not to be understood in exceptionalist terms. Exceptionalism’ is part of the cluster of mythological associations like isolationism and insularity that the book seeks to disentangle from the history of the Midwest (xiv). A brief discussion in the introduction of the twentieth century etymology of the term ‘heartland’ under Nazis and others (xv) gestures in the direction of global contextualization, but on the whole such analysis is not integrated into the fabric of the book. As such, I believe more could be done to address the question of how the U.S. form of ‘heartland’ myth relates to others, that is, whether it is exceptional in having such a myth. If we do not press this point explicitly, the danger of inadvertent but implicit exceptionalism remains in view. Even if the nomenclature is different, the question arises as to whether we can find elsewhere national mythologies that prize the agriculturally cultivated interior as the repository of a truly national essence. Reading Hoganson’s work alongside say, the more explicitly trans-colonial work of James Belich, who proposes multiple, simultaneous anglophone ‘wests’ expanding in a rhythm of settler colonial booms and busts, from Melbourne into West Victoria, or from New Zealand urban centres into the interior, in parallel with the more well-known case of nineteenth century U.S. westward expansion, leads one to wonder whether there are also parallel imaginings of the settler colonial agricultural spaces as places founded before the threatening later intrusion of global time.<sup>8</sup> Belich’s work shares Hoganson’s attention to the material causality of agricultural development in settler colonial expansion and indigenous dispossession,

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<sup>8</sup> James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

shares its focus on ‘urban carnivores’ (a chapter title in Belich’s book) and Londoners’ trans-imperial meat consumption, and does so across multiple regions, but it does not to my knowledge engage with this question of heartland mythology. Drawing Belich’s wider trans-colonial perspective alongside Hoganson’s U.S.-focussed work heightens the question as to whether heartland mythologies were endemic to anglophone settler colonial societies generally, or whether the U.S. is a special case.

One of the great strengths of Hoganson’s methodology in the body of the book is her tracing out of trans-imperial networks with fascinating attention to the flow of agricultural knowledge, tastes, and products across borders. To name just two examples, I think of the marvellous way the book in chapter 2 brings out the cultural affinity Illinois farmers had with Canadian shorthorn cattle farmers, in contrast to their wariness of allegedly inferior and diseased Mexican longhorn cattle, relating agricultural market preferences (and even, in a brilliant use of quantitative sources, agricultural market metrics and record-keeping policies) to more well-known racial anxieties in the debates over potential annexation of Canada or Mexico. Or, take the fascinating particularity in chapter 3 in which the eugenically appealing breed of ‘Berkshire’ pigs were adopted from England amid a craze of agricultural Anglophilia, only to be slaughtered, packed, salted, and sent back to England and retailed to unsuspecting English customers as ‘Irish’ ham—or tinned and fed to British naval seamen manning the empire. The subtlety and mutually supporting nature of trans-imperial relations are well documented through passages that are as memorable as they are surprising. I wonder, then, whether the creation of heartland mythologies in themselves could warrant similar embedding in global, and trans-imperial, networks of production and circulation. This would clearly be material for another work but help from Hoganson in theorizing the scaffolding outwards from the particular instance of the U.S. to other cases would be welcome.

One contribution toward this wider scaffolding might lie in another signal contribution of the book: its attention to local history writing. How was it that in places far afield from Champaign Illinois, say the south coast of New South Wales, local historians began producing local histories with the same characteristic tropes, and in the same decades, as that uncovered by Hoganson in Champaign? The Australian historian Mark McKenna’s evocative *Looking for Blackfella’s Point* makes a fascinating companion to Hoganson’s work on this point.<sup>9</sup> For, in taking a similar deep dive into a specific locale and reading its early local histories (as well as its local heritage signage) McKenna came into contact with almost identical absences, silences, and euphemisms about the dispossession of indigenous Australians as those found in Hoganson’s excavation of local historical treatments of the Kickapoo. Two tropes, one of the ‘vanishing’ Indian population, a set of stories that naturalized, reified, and legitimized the myth of nineteenth century indigenous ‘disappearance,’ and another of ‘pioneer’ family veneration permeate both local history corpuses. Such parallels seem more than incidental and suggest a wider political need that settler societies may have for heartland mythologies and their local-historical correlates.

As seen in Hoganson’s work, the conventions of local historiography resonate with national mythology, and vice versa; local history and national mythology matter to one another.

And just as there are parallels between the local-historical archives in Champaign and other settler locales, so too there would seem to be corresponding parallels at the level of national mythology. Scaling up from Champaign Ill and the South Coast of New South Wales to the United States and Australia as twentieth century national polities there seem to be striking connections that might be extrapolated for other places, too. In both the U.S. heartland myth as Hoganson describes it, and in the ‘The Australian Legend’—the title of a famous book written in the 1950s by Russell Ward—the true spirit or core of the nation is identified with the agricultural settler, the ‘pioneer,’ and with the agricultural interior they settled, which still feeds urban centres.<sup>10</sup> Just as strikingly, both the U.S. heartland and the Australian ‘bush’ (which rather than referring to forest, encompasses a blended rural agricultural and grazing landscape ideal), both of which were built in

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<sup>9</sup> Mark McKenna, *Looking for Blackfella’s Point: An Australian History of Place* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Russell Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1958); Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia* (Fremantle: Curtin University Books, 2005).

nineteenth century agricultural booms, are venerated in contemporary nationalisms as places existing in a pure historical time *before* the encroachments of global entanglements.

Such international and transnational contextualization of heartland mythologies would also be aided (paradoxically) by attention to *national* historiography, which is a notable, and perhaps intentional, absence in *The Heartland* taken as a whole. Apart from the Wisconsin luminaries of Frederick Jackson Turner, William Appleman Williams and William Cronon, each of whose work Hoganson offers deft and apt treatment in chapter 3, especially Williams' own inverted 'exceptionalism' (127), *The Heartland* does not investigate to a great extent national historiography as a formative factor in the creation of the heartland myth.<sup>11</sup> (Chapter 4's helpful historiographical survey of the isolationist myth stands in contrast to this). There seems to be opportunity, then, to match the book's splendid work on European-American agricultural crossings by looking at the possible cultural and intellectual crossings of national mythological forms on the same circuits. Just as inter-imperial agricultural circuits raise questions about common settler colonial needs for heartland myths, so too does Hoganson's wonderful explication of the crossing of seed varieties, tariff politics, and pork products between the Continent and the United States. Chapters 4 and 5 are particularly nuanced and evocative in the attention they pay to the influence of Continental Europe on Midwestern agriculture, whether via the individual journeys of U.S. diplomatic representatives such as H.J. Dunlap in Germany (151ff), via the many Continental farmers who emigrated to the Midwest and drained the wetlands into croplands (202ff), or via the circulation of agricultural scientific knowledge and the means of knowledge production itself in academic networks (169ff).

Given such a buzzing network of scientific and agricultural crossings that tied Illinois to Europe, is it likely that the Heartland myth that venerated such agricultural forms of settlement arose autochthonously and domestically? Or were there cross-pollinations of European ideological and historical forms also? In the neighbouring fields of intellectual and religious history, the influence of Germany on U.S. higher learning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is of course well established.<sup>12</sup> And German influences on the idea of national history, in particular, may be dated even earlier, if the education and career of seminal nineteenth century U.S. historian George Bancroft is any guide.<sup>13</sup> U.S. national historiography's indebtedness to continental notions of national essences and rural heartlands would likely repay further analysis. In the twentieth century, as is well known, fascisms and their blood and *soil* nationalisms drew explicitly on Romantic philosophical heritages of 'national essence,' and did so by propagating myths that often promoted the rural agricultural workers and their home regions as the pure core from which national essence emanated (even if the geographic imaginaries may not be constructed as neatly around 'middle' spaces). Especially given the recent apparent resonances between U.S. nationalism and the far-right nationalisms of Europe, this topic seems all the more important in itself and a way to contextualize the U.S. heartland myth further.

The relative absence of national historiography in the book corresponded with a few other omissions at the national level, layers which at times might be seen as mediating frames between the local and global. One such absence is that of the Progressive rural reformers who operated at a national level in the U.S. and who arguably helped create the image of the 'country' as a space of both unique nobility and vulnerability in the early twentieth century. An exemplar institution of this

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<sup>11</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." Paper delivered at the 1893 meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago, published in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1893, accessible at <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/historical-archives/the-significance-of-the-frontier-in-american-history>; William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991).

<sup>12</sup> Works are too many to name, but for a classic work on German theological crossings at the turn of the twentieth century see, William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009 [1976]).

<sup>13</sup> See for example Bancroft's early July 4<sup>th</sup> orations, such as that of 1826, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008587016>. I am indebted to Professor Neville Meaney of the University of Sydney on this point.

movement was the Theodore Roosevelt administration's Commission on Country Life (1908-1909), which stated its rationale in terms that both stressed the dependence of the nation on its rural heart and lamented its need for modernization and uplift.<sup>14</sup> Commission members such as Liberty Hyde Bailey venerated agricultural life and propagated a Romantic, religiously tinged conservationism that sought to cherish *The Holy Earth* (the title of his 1915 book) and elevate those who tilled it, even while arguing for modernizing reform remedies.<sup>15</sup> Bailey and the networks of those whom Kevin Lowe calls 'Christian agrarians' in his recent *Baptized with the Soil: Christian Agrarians and the Crusade for Rural America* seem relevant to the making of agricultural ideologies that were likely cognates and conduits of heartland myths in the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup>

Nation-wide and international networks of Christian agrarians, agricultural missionaries, and Rural Reconstruction proponents still bear further investigation in the fields of both agricultural history and U.S. foreign relations, and the connections that such networks may have had to the worlds of agricultural societies that Hoganson so evocatively depicts represent yet another opportunity for further work. Agricultural missionaries, for example, were an active presence in Midwest agricultural scientific and extension education, with particularly strong presences at Michigan Agricultural College (now Michigan State University) under Kenyon L. Butterfield's leadership, as well as at Cornell University, a long-time hub for exchange with agricultural missionaries, scientists and economists based at The College of Agriculture and Forestry at the University of Nanking, China, which was later absorbed into the re-named Nanjing University.

Deep in the heartland, for example, in the winter of 1919-1920, some 350 miles west of Champaign, in Des Moines Iowa, members of the Student Volunteer Movement, many of whom, via their common YMCA and YWCA linkage, were also connected to the Cosmopolitan Clubs Hoganson excavates, conferred on agricultural missions as part of the wider, then booming U.S. Protestant missionary enterprise. Two of the earliest agricultural missionaries, Sam Higginbottom and B. B. Hunnicutt reported on conditions and opportunities they had seen in India and Brazil, respectively. At the same meeting, Henry C. Wallace, a Roosevelt Country Life Commission member, later Secretary of Agriculture, and father of Henry A. Wallace, who went on to become not only Secretary of Agriculture but Vice President of the United States, exhorted listeners that, "The farmer, more than most men, comes near to God in his daily work. Before him always are the manifestations of God's power."<sup>17</sup> I for one, am curious still about how such Christian-Romantic-agrarian elevations of the farmer may have interacted with the rise of the heartland myth, even as the missionary enterprise formed part of the global circuitry that belies the myth of insularity. While such actors are absent from Hoganson's work, and while they make an uneasy fit with the implicit theorizations of imperial and racial relations that the work deploys, *The Heartland* opens space to reflect on how such figures and networks may have connected to the dynamics of trans-imperial agricultural science, trade and bio-prospecting that the book masterfully canvasses.

Giving attention to agricultural missions and Rural Reconstruction efforts in the U.S. might also paradoxically allow more attention to be given to *non*-U.S. based global Rural Reconstruction movements in China, Japan, and India in the early-mid twentieth century. Asian Rural Reconstruction proponents often engaged with U.S. agricultural missionaries and U.S. ideas in a way that did not neatly fit a simple picture of one-way imperial or colonial relations and often related more to anti-

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<sup>14</sup> Country Life Commission, L. H. Bailey, *Report of the Commission on Country Life with an Introduction by Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Sturgis & Walton Co., 1917).

<sup>15</sup> Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The Holy Earth* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1915).

<sup>16</sup> Kevin M. Lowe, *Baptized with the Soil: Christian Agrarians and the Crusade for Rural America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> H. C. Wallace "The Scriptural Basis for Agricultural Missions," in Burton St. John, ed., *North American Students and World Advance: Addresses delivered at the Eighth International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, Des Moines, Iowa, December 31, 1919 to January 4, 1920*. New York: SVM, 567-568, 567.

colonial nationalism and modernization. For example, according to Kate Merkel-Hess, Rabindranath Tagore's Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Shriniketan, which he founded in 1922 with Leonard Knight Elmhirst (whom he met in a US Cosmopolitan Club), was highly influential not only in India but also in China among Chinese Rural modernizers. Merkel-Hess notes that on a tour of China in 1924, Tagore met with and offered advice to leading Chinese rural reformer, Liang Shuming.<sup>18</sup> Tagore, who, with his son, appears in Hoganson's book as a visitor to Urbana Illinois, had an influence in Asian thought that alerts us to other kinds of circuits than simply white on non-white colonial relations as exemplified in Hoganson's treatment of USDA bio-prospectors like David Fairchild (162-165). Hoganson's idea of 'trans-imperial' comes close to fitting complex contemporaneous developments in imperial Japan. In the 1930s, Christian agrarian utopians had a disproportionate influence among the Manchurian colonial apparatus and sought to develop in the Japanese colony the kind of Christian agrarianism they saw as having been envisioned yet not achieved in the United States, while drawing also on the globally influential Danish folk school movement.<sup>19</sup> If the terms transnational or internationalist are to be set aside for their weaknesses, and they can indeed obscure power relations, as Hoganson argues, then it is not clear that 'alliance politics' offers an easy alternative (174). Despite the appropriateness of the term 'trans-imperial' at times, the search for a positive theorization of the non-static, non-insular, non-autochthonous is still ongoing. A phrase that captures movements that may have used imperial networks but in ways that opposed or operated at odds with imperial ends—especially between colonial peripheries—is especially needed.

Such an extraordinary monograph as *The Heartland* does many things at once and in a depth that warrants multiple reviews. But one central aim it sets out to achieve, and does so successfully, is demolish the heartland myth by means of writing better history. It fulfils that goal by means of methodological innovation and imagination, blazing new trails at the junctures of settler colonial, foreign relations, and agricultural and environmental histories. New work that extends the force of *The Heartland's* myth-busting into myth-contextualization by means of similar attention to mobility and connection would allow historians to contextualize the heartland myth in ways that are important not only at a disciplinary but at a political level. The presence of similar myth-forms in other Anglophone settler colonial contexts as well as in European nationalist thought warrants that, alongside the sustenance extracted from the soil, the ideas surrounding the soil itself be set in border-crossing motion.

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<sup>18</sup> Kate Merkel-Hess, *The Rural Modern: Reconstructing the Self and State in Republican China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Emily Anderson, *Christianity and Imperialism in Modern Japan: Empire for God* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016).

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 REVIEW BY IAN TYRRELL, UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
 

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*Spaces of the Heart: On The Heartland: An American History*

The heartland is a metaphor that is hard to pin down or translate into a stable geographical category. A recent study has concluded that there are, floating about in the minds of Americans, many conceptions of what the heartland is (or was).<sup>20</sup> Recent attempts to define the area list parts of nineteen states as heartland. Illinois is fairly close to the centre in many estimations, but considerable dispute exists over regional variation and the extent of the land to which the concept can be applied.<sup>21</sup> Should parts of the South be ‘in,’ for instance? In her immensely stimulating *The Heartland: An American History*, Kristin Hoganson attempts to get around this problem by treating the heartland as a transnational space; she is writing, in effect, on Champaign County, Illinois, not as a place but a site through which ideas and material realities flow. Space is constituted by transnational relationships, and space trumps place in this analysis. This approach makes for a very good example of how transnational history can throw light on American history.

As part of her conception of the Heartland, Hoganson is quite dismissive of local history. Antiquarian historians document “the heartland writ small”; they stress “the importance of place” but reinforce a myopic sense of it (xviii). Hoganson notes the irony that there was no ‘local’ at all when Europeans arrived. The Kickapoo roamed; they did not carve up or fence off space in the way Europeans did in taking possession of and transforming the land. Ironically, the ‘local’ as a concept was a product of the (European-American) pioneers who violated the indigenous sense of place. Settlers, she states, had “little respect for the Kickapoos, much less their attachment to place” (264).

Hoganson does not give us a history of the ‘Heartland’ as an *idea*, though that is a worthy topic for others to consider. Even the ‘Heartland’ as a concept is only briefly sketched; it derived from the strategic and geopolitical language of the British geographer Halford Mackinder, who used the term as early as 1904. Adapted to convey the deep material strengths of the United States in the geopolitical struggles of World War II and after, the concept morphed during the Cold War into an idea of a world unto itself. Paradoxically it became a shelter from geopolitics—a moral, and even ethnic or racial center of stability—not an empire, malevolent or otherwise. In this discursive development, we are left with a heartland implicated in the global ‘empire’ of the modern United States, yet an attempted refuge from the sorrows of empire. Hoganson’s book is essentially a critique of that heartland sensibility, understood as the cosy and even “stodgy” interior space of the United States distinguished by orderly family farms and suburbs with “picket fences and clapboard houses” (xvi, 34).

Using this apparatus, the book makes several key claims. First, the heartland was not inward-looking and parochial but deeply involved in transnational exchanges, as in trade, capital, communications, and science. This point is beyond doubt, and it is well documented in *Heartland*. Second, the heartland was not uniformly isolationist either; international connection and solidarity of purpose was sought not only in agricultural improvement and other elements of science, but also in international understanding through various kinds of ‘alliances.’ The concept of ‘alliance politics’ covers a wide area of activity, some of it mediated through the institutions of the state, and is not particularly focused on Champaign, Illinois or the heartland. Thus, there is the “alliance against bad weather” that increased international and national metrological cooperation and benefited Illinois farmers (159). Certainly, one hopes for an analytical assessment of the interaction between the regional, the national, and the transnational or international dynamics of these processes, but the range of activities trawled and the application of spatial and transnational analysis is formidable. Third, the heartland was an environmentally transformed area, turned into a globally produced space through the introduction of foreign biota, such as

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<sup>20</sup> Mark Muro, Ross DeVol, Jacob Whiton, and Robert Maxim, “The American Heartland is doing better than prevailing narratives, but serious challenges remain,” *Brookings*, 25 October 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/10/25/trends-in-the-heartland/>, accessed 1 July 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Ross DeVol, “How Do We Define the Heartland Region?” *Brookings*.

corn, cross-breeding in pigs and cattle, and other aspects of scientific manipulation. The physical appearance of the heartland as farms and fields was a product of this transformation. On one level, this is clearly true, but one wants to know more about how and even whether a singular and distinctively heartland landscape emerged. Charting how the heartland was embodied in a physical space is not central to the aims of this book. To do so would require tracing the transnational influences through the physical manifestations of space in the land. While the pre-Columbian biota was duly subordinated, it seems that the result was most likely a landscape of adaptation, and even a hybrid landscape of the introduced and the endemic. If so, its precise configuration and variation deserves to be sketched. Perhaps that is yet another topic for another book, one which is more environmentally focused.

Over time, the heartland's material condition has undergone dramatic changes towards urbanization. Today it seems as much suburban or what is sometimes called 'rurban' as rural, though it is true that, for the most part, during much of the time period considered the rural divisions into farmland under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 remained a characteristic landscape feature. But I wondered about the impact of suburbanization on the development of the heartland in the twentieth century, and the extent to which the idea of heartland departed from or reinforced the lived experience of suburbia as heartland.

The fourth and most important claim is that the heartland was deeply involved in the creation of a settler colonialism that became the foundation for American empire. The Midwest is or was undoubtedly a case of settler colonialism, and the discussion of how the Kickapoo were subject to the forces of globalization and colonial settler expansion, studied especially in chapter 6, is one of the most moving, original and compelling parts of the book. The story of Kickapoo mobility, including in Mexico, provides an important contribution to our understanding of the American empire as grounded in settler colonialism. The ironies of a people fleeing from being caged in, but dragged back to supervisory reservations from their Mexican refuge is also truly illuminating for the complexities of the local, national, and transnational as forces or sensibilities.

Informed though the book is by the concepts of transnational history, Hoganson prefers the language of trans-imperialism because global connections were made in and powerfully influenced by the British informal empire of trade and investment. In Hoganson's view, the heartland was a product of international capitalism and, especially, British economic supremacy in the nineteenth century, but the region registered the changing role of the United States, as the nation became the dominant world power in the mid-twentieth century. This interpretation follows some of the best scholarship on British and modern world imperialism.<sup>22</sup> Hoganson considers the role of the heartland as central to this process of the American empire's development, but whether the heartland is the source of this power, a motor force, or a sieve for power is unclear.

American Midwest farming involved much international engagement, not only news about trade and prices, but also the patterns of investment and advances in communication systems, in rail but also canals and telegraph wires. Those and related internal improvements were experienced by or centred on Champaign County. Illinois produced beef, corn, and hogs, all of them items in international trade. These and various financial connections did link Champaign in steadfast ways to the expansion of global capitalism in the nineteenth century and to the power of Great Britain as an economic centre of gravity for Victorian-era globalization.

Empire is an exceedingly common and capacious term in U.S. historiography today, and often loose and quite generic in the way that it is deployed. Hoganson rightly treats empire as more than territorial possessions, though it is less than all exertions of American power, and still less of all transnational connections. The demarcation line between these categories is difficult to draw. This is because the boundaries of empire are themselves permeable. Hoganson seems to find it so, since she depicts Champaign County as having been suspended between the hard-core empire of conquest and the soft-power 'empire' of economic, cultural, political and even scientific influence. Yet to assert that foreign students who studied

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<sup>22</sup> For the historiography, consult, especially, the footnotes to A. G. Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

agriculture in Illinois helped to put their teacher, Eugene Davenport, “at an imperial center” because students “hailed from the imperial periphery” of India or some other British colonial place seems a causal link that is at best only partly true (182).

Champaign is an excellent strategic choice on which centre a discussion of the heartland that seeks to undermine the crude stereotypes of the area as inward-looking. Champaign County as heartland gains a richer and more complex layer of analysis due to the location of the state university at Urbana, which was to grow in importance during the twentieth century. Its presence lends to the county an air of cosmopolitanism that would otherwise be lacking to the same extent. The university, for example, underlines the exchange of scientific knowledge in the story. It also meant exchanges of students who introduced cosmopolitan issues of international politics, nationalism, and imperialism into down-home political discussions in Champaign and Urbana. But while the presence of the university town makes clear that the heartland was not impervious to the great political questions of the time, Champaign County is for this reason not entirely typical of the wider heartland, since less than 0.5 percent of Americans gained an undergraduate university degree at the turn of the twentieth century. After all, even in Champaign, foreign students complained that the student body was “extremely narrow and parochial,” though apparently not isolationist (187).

A case could be made out for other places as equally representative of the Midwest or a heartland, whatever the latter is. Perhaps it is Oklahoma, as one modern commentator has suggested, though that would better serve the twentieth than the nineteenth century, and Hoganson does give space to the settlement and expropriation of Kickapoo occupation there.<sup>23</sup> Missouri might do as well for the nineteenth, but that would raise awkward sectional questions. Given Missouri’s connections with the great national struggles over slavery the choice is judicious, though in some ways the questions of North versus South apply in Illinois too.

California is not considered heartland—ever—and naturally plays no part in Hoganson’s case. Still, similarities and differences may be noted. No region was riven with such decidedly international or transnational connections as a primary producing state, and none was more remote from the American metropole in 1860, but it still ended up in the cosmopolitan category. In the mid-nineteenth century, Californians had a strong sense of themselves as distinctive, even exceptional, and certainly peripheral to the main centre of American action, whereas Illinois was not peripheral at that time. Geography rather than transnational influences account for how Illinois became heartland, whereas California moved from transnational periphery to economic centrality as a cosmopolitan place, not only in the American imagination, but also in terms of economic reality and the estimates of non-Americans. That is to say, there is no necessary connection between the intensity of transnational activity in economics and the status of an area as peripheral or central to a national identity, or to the boundaries between borderland and heartland. (Indeed, Hoganson’s interesting treatment of the southern border would indicate as much.) That question would require more attention to the history of attachments to a regional concept as a central rather than peripheral space in American identity. Looking at the changing status of the Old Northwest as heartland may provide the answer.

I think more could be done to justify the importance, and to define the shape, of the older language of the ‘Midwest’ as precursor to the heartland, but would require a deeper study of the emergence of the idea than the brief characterization given in the book’s introduction. I wondered, for instance, how the Progressives and their idea of Midwestern conservation, which was centred on the concept of the Mississippi Valley as a unit, might have linked the region to a national purpose. This connection, in which ‘the Valley’ itself assumed almost mythical status, is striking in Progressive historiography before World War I. Hence the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, that was renamed the Organization of American Historians only in 1965. Though the idea is a fiction of spatial configuration, the ‘Valley’ may have been a midwife to the emergence of the capital ‘H’ ‘Heartland,’ linking the local to the nation, while at the same time recognizing how important the international and transnational were to what went on in the heartland. It is in any case significant that the Mississippi Valley was taken by professional historians of the early twentieth century to be an expansive study of regional and global

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<sup>23</sup> Rilla Askew, “Most American,” in Carolyn Anne Taylor et al., eds, *Voices from the Heartland* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 2007), 2-13.



connections, not a parochial vision of the past or a source of purely internal settlement eliding the content of empire. In this sense, the early Progressive historians could with a little modification be harnessed to Hoganson's purpose.<sup>24</sup>

I salute Hoganson for the way she has applied transnational methodology and perspective. It casts light on so many things. It is an implication of the evidence that the entire United States was exposed to transnational influences and global pressures. I also applaud how she has linked settler colonialism with the foundations of the American Midwest, and reminded Americans what they too often forget—that the structure of the American state as empire is the product of, and actually shaped by, a colonial dispossession. I only wish the illumination could have been complemented with an understanding of how a heartland as a space of attachment emerged. That would require more attention to the idea of place as 'practiced' space; that is, to the study of the intensity of human interaction *within* a given region that might bequeath it both a distinctive character, and an idea of place to which its residents could emotionally secure themselves.<sup>25</sup> Without knowing this field of human interactions and attachments, the capacity to contest the 'Heartland's' fictions may be limited.

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<sup>24</sup> Ian Tyrrell, "Public at the Creation: Place, Memory and Historical Practice in the Mississippi Valley Historical Association," *Journal of American History* 94:4 (June 2007): 19-47; cf. Kristin L. Hoganson, *The Heartland: An American History* (New York: Penguin, 2019), 80.

<sup>25</sup> For a summary of recent work on place attachment, see Maria Lewicka, "Place Attachment: How far have we come in the last 40 years?" *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 31:3 (September 2011): 207-230.

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RESPONSE BY KRISTIN HOGANSON, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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It is an honor to have my book featured in an H-Diplo roundtable review and all the more so to have it reviewed by historians whom I greatly esteem. I am fortunate that Mark Philip Bradley, Courtney Fullilove, April Merleaux, Michael G. Thompson, and Ian Tyrrell were willing to reflect on the book and the terrain it has opened up for them.

*The Heartland: An American History* may not appear an obvious choice for H-Diplo, for it is a history of a seeming redoubt of localism—a rural Midwestern county—in its seemingly most local of times. Thus I am delighted that the H-Diplo editors grasped the irony of the subtitle and that the reviewers too recognize the book’s contributions to the history of U.S. colonialism and foreign relations.

As the reviewers point out, the book illuminates how the U.S. heartland has been implicated in long histories of empire even as it appears to be a refuge from such histories. Taken together, they appreciate the arguments I make about the settler colonial politics of locality, the deep involvement of the rural Midwest in transnational exchanges (encompassing trade, capital, communications, and agricultural science); and the overblown character of the isolationist stereotype affixed to the region. They commend the book’s attentiveness to mobility, environmental change, and colonial dispossession; flag its efforts to widen our understandings of alliance politics; note its bearing on trans-imperialism, cosmopolitanism, and provincialism; applaud the ways it counters East-West narratives by tilting the axis North-South; and acknowledge the light it shines on rural nodes of encounter, such as the agricultural programs in land grant universities.

Being the kind of broad-visioned historians I admire, the reviewers also comment on paths not taken. They would like to know more about topics ranging from the agency of plants to the roles of agricultural missionaries, the lived experience of suburbia, and the wider array of agricultural circuitry. The most significant pattern that emerges from the comments is more on the idea of the heartland and its place in nationalist mythologies. Tyrrell wonders about the ways in which the heartland as a space of attachment emerged, Fullilove asks for more clarity on the use and abuse of the heartland myth, and Thompson calls for a more global contextualization of the word ‘heartland.’ I would be thrilled if my book helps precipitate more scholarship on these topics, for I share the reviewers’ sense that the answers to these questions have taken on greater urgency in recent years.

I believe that if a book does not make something clear, the fault typically lies with the author rather than the reader. So I am grateful for the opportunity afforded by this roundtable to clarify three points. The first is my position on local history, which Tyrrell characterizes as “quite dismissive.” An H-Diplo roundtable may not be the most likely place to defend local history, but I want to make clear that the intent of the book is not to dismiss local history. To the contrary, the book shows how local history methodology can deepen our understandings of foreign relations history. I do reflect critically on the politics of inward looking, wall-building local histories that draw misleading lines between ‘us’ and ‘them.’ Yet my intention is to denaturalize this way of seeing and thus to contribute to wider efforts to present a different way of seeing that looks outward as well as inward. My goal is to open local history out to the world, thereby connecting it to the concerns of H-Diplo readers, rather than to consign it to the dustbin.

The second thing I would like to clarify is the purpose of the chapter on flyover states, which Merleaux characterizes as more theme-centered than argument-driven. I may have started with a theme, but it led me to an argument: that airspace figured largely in rural Midwesterners’ world views well before the jet age or advent of ICBMs, adding to their sense of imminent long-distance connections. A wider implication of this argument is that three-dimensional mappings of spatial relationships may produce different geographies than two-dimensional mappings do. And if we take the idea of three-dimensional mappings more figuratively, so as to encompass how people have positioned themselves in social and political hierarchies, we find that rural Midwesterners as far back as the barnstorming age of early military aviation looked down as well as up, seeing the world from the promontory perspectives associated with power as well as from flown-over lines of sight.

This leads to the third matter I would like to clarify: the book’s overall take on the workings of power. Tyrrell asks whether the heartland is a source of power or a sieve. My answer? Yes and yes. It has been both a source of power and a sieve, if the

latter implies that power has flowed through it. By meshing stories of the United States as a colonizing power with stories of the United States as a developing nation that enhanced its global position through advantageous connections, the book suggests that power does not work in such either/or binaries—that a place-based approach can help us grasp how power has flowed in multiple directions.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank the reviewers for their careful readings, provocative riffs, and warm praise. Writing this book took me out of my comfort zone and into a range of new fields, including agricultural, environmental, and Indigenous history. I could not have followed the threads that I followed without colleagues to light the way, and I am delighted that these trailblazers and fellow travelers found my book to be a stimulating and worthwhile read.