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Introduction by William Glenn Gray, Purdue University

Can all modern history be construed as international history? There is hardly a consumer product or social movement or work of art that is not somehow tied to inputs and influences beyond the borders of a single nation-state. Pitched broadly, the concept of international society might encompass all manner of organizations and individuals, from inter-governmental to non-governmental to pen-pals. Given their claims of scientific universality, modern research universities are themselves hallmarks of international society, and thus ripe for consideration as sites of diplomatic, international, or transnational entanglement. ¹ Emily Levine is not the first scholar to approach higher education as international history, but as the contributors to this forum establish, *Allies and Rivals* breaks new ground in highlighting the mutual interplay between German and US university models.

“[A]lmost all scholars in institutions of higher education in the US and Germany would benefit from reading this book,” writes Brian Vick. They might well start by perusing this forum. Each of the four reviews offers a distinctive perspective on Levine’s sophisticated and well-written monograph, and Levine closes with a lively rejoinder to the points of critique. All that this introduction can add is a fleeting overview of the highlights.

As the author of *Atlantic Crossings*—one of the key inspirations for the early twenty-first century boom in transnational history—Daniel Rodgers shows particular interest in Levine’s methodology.² He finds the concept of “competitive emulation” (4) to be especially helpful as a model that avoids the inflexible one-way connotations of “cultural transfer.” What Levine is depicting, he maintains, is a kind of “entangled history” or *histoire croisée* as the university systems observed and responded to each other’s innovations. Rodgers also stresses the limits of the entanglement: for example, research universities in the US and Germany remained quite distinct in their approaches to undergraduate education. In a substantial discussion of the exclusionary policies of both countries’ universities, Rodgers notes how this, too, prompted emulation—as when German scholars in the 1930s visited their US counterparts to study institutional practices of racial discrimination.

In different ways, the reviews by Elisabeth Piller and Erik Grimmer-Solem open up the contents of the book more systematically. Piller lays out the structure of Levine’s “ten tightly argued chapters” in a remarkably compact fashion before exploring two core conceptual frameworks—“competitive emulation” and the “academic social contract.” The latter involved a trade-off: universities performed valuable social functions and engaged in knowledge creation while enjoying visibility and special privileges in return. Piller expresses satisfaction with Levine’s treatment of individual academic entrepreneurs, and she likewise approves of the author’s emphasis on “selective adaptation and hybridization.” Universities in the US may boast of endowed chairs, somewhat akin to a German *Lehrstuhl*, but otherwise they have organized disciplines into horizontal academic departments rather than isolated and highly stratified research groups.

Grimmer-Solem helpfully charts out the main shifts in direction in Levine’s book, from the origins of the Humboldt model in Berlin to the founding of Johns Hopkins in Baltimore to the German embrace of technical universities and the philanthropic funding model—at least for the freestanding Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes. Grimmer-Solem expresses reservations about some aspects of the argument, especially what he sees as an over-emphasis on the Humboldt myth and the lack of attention to German federalism. He also expresses disappointment with Levine’s choice of W.E.B. Du Bois as a case study, judging this to be a “well-

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trod den path.” Brian Vick’s review is more generous on this count: as he observes, Levine shows how study in Germany’s elitist universities led Du Bois to over-emphasize the “talented tenth.”

Some of the most insightful critiques below can be found in Vick’s review. He laments the author’s foregrounding of natural science at the expense of humanistic research: after all, archaeology and multi-volume philological projects might also be considered “big science.” He also takes issue with Levine’s argument that the professionalization of academia yielded a certain readiness to abstain from politics. “Scientific authority” and the claim of “objective” expertise was also a kind of political stance, he notes. Like the other reviewers, though, Vick considers *Allies and Rivals* to be a “major scholarly achievement” that is “perceptive and deeply researched”; moreover, its “coverage seems equally strong and well-grounded on the US history side as on the German.”

All of the reviewers welcome Levine’s book for its timely reflections on the role of universities in society. The motif of the “academic social contract” offers an apt framework for analyzing how universities constantly redefined their social and scientific functions from the early nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. This included, of course, support for nationalist goals during World War I as well as the thwarting of educational achievement for women, Jews, and people of color. Even the relatively positive closing chapter tells an ambivalent story: Jews fleeing the Third Reich generally had to seek out or invent new institutional frameworks in the United States, given the unwelcoming stance of traditional East Coast universities. The book’s coverage ends there, but Rodgers finds himself wishing that the conclusion had spoken more directly about the contemporary university landscape. Happily, Levine’s response below contains numerous citations to recent or forthcoming essays where she has done just that.³

No bilateral relationship exists in a vacuum, and this is where the reviewers identify the boundaries of Levine’s approach. Vick wonders about international academic associations as avenues for interchange; Piller brings up British and French institutions (such as the London School of Economics) that shaped US research thinking. Grimmer-Solem mentions Japan as another country that was in dialogue with Germany. But, of course, expanding in all these directions would have exploded the framework of a single-authored study. All told, this forum suggests that Levine’s story of US-German “competitive emulation” succeeds in its own right. It also provides much-needed chronological and thematic depth to the recent spate of books exploring transnational Cold War intellectual history.⁴ Nearly forty years after the publication of *America and the Germans*, a landmark two-volume compilation on US-German cultural exchange, Levine has reminded us how a finely honed understanding of one national context can still inform historical understandings of the other.⁵ Meanwhile, as Levine concludes in her author’s response, *Allies and Rivals* also offers “more universal lessons about how ideas spread and where innovation comes from.” One could hardly ask for more from a text spanning 254 pages (not counting the extensive endnotes). Readers of this forum would do well to dive into the book immediately after reading these comments.

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³ Levine cites single- or co-authored contributions to *Daedalus, Made by History*, the *Los Angeles Times, Inside Higher Ed*, and *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*; see her author’s reply for details.


Contributors:

Emily J. Levine is Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Education and (by courtesy) in History at Stanford University. Prior to Stanford, Levine was Associate Professor of Modern European History at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Levine received her PhD in History and the Humanities at Stanford and her BA from Yale, where she later returned as an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow. She is the author of *Dreamland of Humanists: Warburg, Cassirer, Panofsky, and the Hamburg School* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), which was awarded the Herbert Baxter Adams Prize by the American Historical Association for the best book in European history from 1815 through the 20th Century. Levine has published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Foreign Policy*, among other media outlets, as well as in top scholarly journals. Her second book, *Allies and Rivals: German-American Exchange and the Rise of the Modern Research University*, which was supported by fellowships from the National Humanities Center and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, was published by the University of Chicago Press in fall 2021. She is currently working on a new book, tentatively titled *Inventing the Liberal Arts: An Intellectual History*.

William Glenn Gray is an Associate Professor of History at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. He is the author most recently of *Trading Power: West Germany’s Rise to Global Influence, 1963-1975* (Cambridge, 2023). He has published numerous articles and book chapters on various aspects of German foreign relations history, including monetary policy, European integration, human rights, Ostpolitik, and the export of weapons and nuclear technology. In 2022 he co-edited volume 6 of the *German Yearbook for Contemporary European History* (University of Nebraska Press), which is dedicated to “Secret Services and the International Arms Trade.” His current book project involves a study of West German capitalism and Brazil’s development dictatorship during the Cold War.

Erik Grimmer-Solem is the Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Professor in the College of Social Studies and Professor of History at Wesleyan University. He received his D.Phil. from Nuffield College, Oxford University, and was a postdoctoral Harper Fellow at the University of Chicago before joining Wesleyan’s history department in 2002. He is the author of *The Rise of Historical Economics and Social Reform in Germany 1864-1894* (Oxford University Press, 2003) and *Learning Empire: Globalization and the German Quest for World Status, 1875-1919* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), along with many articles that have appeared in such journals as *German History, History and Theory, Journal of World History, Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, and *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift*. He has received awards from the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and Leverhulme Trust, as well as two distinguished teaching prizes from Wesleyan University. His research on the Wehrmacht’s involvement in the Holocaust was discussed widely in the German news media, including in the national newswEEKLY Der Spiegel, and its subsequent discussion in German parliament culminated in the renaming of a military base in 2015. He is currently writing a book entitled *Ukrainian Barbarossa: The Crimes of the Wehrmacht and the Politics of Remembrance in Contemporary Germany*.

Elisabeth Piller is Assistant Professor of Transatlantic and North American History at Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg in Germany. She works on U.S. and German foreign policy and transatlantic relations in the nineteenth and twentieth century. She is the author of the award-winning *Selling Weimar: German Public Diplomacy and the United States, 1918-1933*, which was published by Franz Steiner in 2021. She has also published articles in *Diplomatic History*, the *Journal of Contemporary History*, the *International History Review*, among others. She is currently working on her second book, which examines U.S. humanitarian aid to Europe and the difficult renegotiation of transatlantic power during the early Cold War.

Daniel T. Rodgers is the Henry Charles Lea Professor of History Emeritus at Princeton University. His works in American intellectual and cultural history include a pioneering study of transnational social policy formation, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Harvard University Press, 1998). Among his
graduate student advisees in transnational and global history are Brooke Blower, Christopher Florio, Nicholas Guyatt, Paul Kramer, Carl Nightingale, Nicole Sackley, and Henry Yu.

**Brian Vick** is Professor of History at Emory University. His major publications include *Defining Germany: The 1848 Frankfurt Parliamentarians and National Identity* (Harvard University Press, 2002), and *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics after Napoleon* (Harvard University Press, 2014). He is also co-editor with Beatrice de Graaf and Ido de Haan of the collection *Securing Europe after Napoleon: 1815 and the New European Security Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).
Emily Levine’s fascinating and beautifully written book analyzes the deep entanglements of the United States and Germany in the sphere of higher education from the mid-nineteenth century until the beginning of the Cold War. Her work makes a valuable contribution to a large historical literature on German influences on American universities, as well as to a growing newer literature on German-American relations and imperial/colonial influences and interactions. Levine’s book is notable not only for offering a rich institutional history of German and American universities that were deeply interconnected since the mid-nineteenth century, but also for showing that they were part of a process of nation-building and “competitive emulation” at a time of heightened global economic and imperial competition. Far from the mostly one-way traffic from East to West traced out by previous research, Levine shows that American innovations in applied science and engineering, and the role played by private philanthropists in higher education, had a significant and lasting impact on the contours of German higher education. At the heart of her book are questions about who exactly benefits from research universities and the nature of the social contract that allows research universities a degree of autonomy in exchange for certain benefits to the societies and polities in which they are embedded. As she argues, rather than being fixed, these contracts required continual renegotiation over the tumultuous history of both Germany and the United States, a process that continues to the present day.

The book is divided into ten chapters that follow chronologically and unpack specific themes centered around certain personalities and institutions that created the modern research university. The first chapter focuses on the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810 by Wilhelm von Humboldt (then head of education affairs in the Prussian Interior Ministry) during an era of emergency reform in Prussia following its shattering defeats by Napoleon in 1806. Building upon Enlightenment-era reforms that had broken with religious orthodoxy and encouraged uncensored scholarship at the University of Göttingen (founded in 1737), Levine argues that it was in Berlin that the first discernible features of the modern research university and its social contract came into being. This had the following components: “the freedom of teaching and learning (Lehr und Lernfreiheit); the unity of teaching and research (Einheit von Lehre und Forschung); the devotion to ‘pure’ research as connected to character formation (Bildung durch Wissenschaft); and the unity of the natural sciences and humanities (Einheit der Wissenschaft)” (19). Levine argues that the new university was permitted a degree of autonomy to pursue these lofty goals so long as it also prepared students to pass state examinations, produced competent civil servants and military officers, and generated applicable (practical) knowledge that benefitted the Prussian state and society. This compromise, according to Levine, was the social contract of the world’s first research university, which over the course of the following fifty years would gain many American admirers who studied in Germany and witnessed the flowering of science and scholarship there.

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These included, among many others, George Ticknor, Theodore Woolsey, George Bancroft, James Angell, and Daniel Coit Gilman, men who later served as influential American university presidents and public servants implementing college and university reforms along Berlin’s lines. As Levine shows deftly, it was an acute sense of American backwardness, and a nationalist desire to catch up with Germany, that drove this process.

The first chapter is the weakest in the book. For one, it perpetuates a “Humboldt myth” that has now been debunked by a great deal of scholarship showing the wide gulf that existed between the ideals articulated by Humboldt, and the rather more prosaic realities of Berlin University until the 1860s. Apart from its larger size, the University of Berlin boasted little that made it distinctive in terms of the quality of its faculty, research, or instruction before the middle of the century. It was located in a garrison town surrounded by government ministries under the watchful eye of the Prussian police, without the usual student diversions of more alluring places like Heidelberg. There was little do there but study, and so Berlin gained a reputation as a second-tier university where students could focus on completing their studies after stints at other German universities. Indeed, more often than not (and as Levine seems to concede) the “Humboldtian ideals” of the research university were observed by Americans not in Berlin (or Prussia, for that matter), but rather in Göttingen (Hannover), Giessen (Hesse), and Leipzig (Saxony) (20–21, 26–27). The educational ideals expressed by Humboldt were Neohumanistic and Romantic, invented by and in wide currency among the German educated bourgeoisie of western and central Germany.

The education reforms that made the Gymnasium a university preparatory school and the Abitur exam a universal qualification for entry into German-speaking universities, the multiplicity of universities and their funding and control by the sovereign German states as prestige objects, and not least, the free movement of students and professors between them (and the competition between the states for them), incentivized research and teaching excellence. While attentive to American federalism, Levine does not discuss these parallel federal dynamics working between the German states to foster excellence, other than mentioning a “German model,” which she uses interchangeably with “Prussian model” and associates with Humboldt and Berlin (29, 30, 31). There are other passages in this chapter that contain errors regarding German history and geography: the narrative refers to the “Kaiser” in 1809, long before the Prussian king was German emperor; Jena is not “nearby” Königsberg; and the Prussian ministry charged with overseeing churches, education, and hospitals (what the author terms the “Education Ministry”) was not known officially as the “Ministry of Intellectual, Educational and Medical Affairs” (14, 17, 19, 20). Later in the book we read the claim that Germany had a system of unemployment insurance before 1918 (101), which was in fact not created until 1927.

The narrative is on much firmer ground in the rest of the book. In the second chapter Levine tells the fascinating story of the founding of Johns Hopkins University, where the German university evangelism and higher education entrepreneurship of Daniel Coit Gilman, and traditions of American philanthropy, intersected productively to create a new American research university headed by a powerful president and overseen by a board of trustees. As she shows, what was created was no “Göttingen at Baltimore,” but rather...
a hybrid of the Anglo-American college and German university, a new institution which proved to be both remarkably influential and durable. Gilman’s innovations also extended to the creation of American scholarly scientific journals and graduate student fellowships. Similarly, German excellence in such subjects as organic chemistry (Justus Liebig) and its application to industry and agriculture proved an important motivator for the system of state universities enabled by the Morrill Act of 1862.

As Levine discusses in subsequent chapters, the American technological innovation on display at the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in turn led to great anxiety among German observers that Germany was falling far behind the United States in technical education, engineering, and other applied sciences. In turn this led to major reforms in technical higher education in Germany, such as the creation of the Royal Technical University at Berlin-Charlottenburg in 1879. German scholars such as the noted German Jewish mathematician Felix Klein, whom Johns Hopkins sought to lure to Baltimore, were also deeply impressed with the American system of private benefaction of scientific scholarship, which on Klein’s return to Göttingen he worked to emulate. As Levine shows, the growth of American higher education by 1910 though such philanthropy was breathtaking, with the United States now no longer an emulator, but increasingly on par with and even overtaking the German Empire both in scientific output and in funding higher education. The St. Louis Exhibition of 1904, which featured extensive educational exhibits and brought many prominent German scholars to the United States, was a watershed of sorts for this realization, in turn sparking professor exchanges between the United States and Germany (Theodore Roosevelt and Kaiser Wilhelm Professorships). These were initially between Harvard and the University of Berlin, but were then extended to Columbia, Yale and other German universities. It is a shame that Levine did not avail herself here of the literature on Japanese-German scholarly exchanges in these years, which, while less formal, were thriving and would have given the German-American exchanges a global comparative perspective. Indeed, Japan was developing its own system of German-inspired research universities in these very years. One other omission in this context is the city of Hamburg, which Levine mentions as harboring institutional experiments in higher education but does not discuss (173, 221). This was the University of Hamburg, which was founded in 1919 and grew out of the Hamburg Colonial Institute, itself founded in 1908 with the assistance of a large German Jewish bequest to train colonial administrators and planters in “scientific colonialism.”

Levine excels at showing other important networks of American and German Jewish philanthropy in funding scholarship, creating new institutions, and building bridges between the two countries, despite growing bilateral tensions from fierce economic and imperial competition in these years. Notable here is her extensive discussion of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, founded in 1909 as a German response to both the extraordinary wealth showered on American research by such philanthropic titans as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, and the perception that the Humboldtian ideal of combining teaching with research was a hindrance to cutting-edge fields of science. The new Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes (KWI), which were privately funded and involved the gifts of prominent German Jewish donors to a disproportionate degree, were viewed as ways not only to assure Germany’s continued dominance in key branches of science like chemistry and physics, but also as ways to overcome the discrimination that Jews faced in German university appointments. Indeed, many KWI were directed and staffed by prominent Jewish scientists, such as the Nobel Prize-winning chemist Fritz Haber. As Levine argues, this was nevertheless a significant departure from the Humboldtian ideal, and worked over the longer term to hollow out German universities of many of their very best scientists. With a few notable exceptions like the Institute for Advanced Study, this path was not taken in

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6 See, for example, Hoi-Eun Kim, *Doctors of Empire: Medical and Cultural Encounters between Imperial Germany and Meiji Japan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).
the United States. Even so, well-endowed private American research universities like Columbia, Harvard, and Yale became increasingly selective and professionalized, with degrees becoming coveted commodities which reinforced the power of an entrenched white male Protestant elite. Jewish discrimination increased in these institutions, and over time credentialed professionals developed a stranglehold on occupational opportunities in such fields as law, medicine, and business, a process that private foundations like Carnegie had encouraged by pushing for higher common standards and harmonization between universities.

The exclusion of Jews, as well as women and Blacks, from elite higher education in both Germany and the United States in these years is a theme running through a number of the book’s chapters and is given special attention in Chapter 4. Here Levine analyzes how W.E.B. Du Bois and Martha Carey Thomas (later president of Bryn Mawr College) sought to parlay the prestige bestowed by study in Germany and the German PhD credential to open doors otherwise firmly closed to Blacks and women in the white male world of American elite academia. In telling the familiar story of Du Bois’s time in Berlin and subsequent career, Levine follows a well-trodden path known to most readers. It might have been a better choice to discuss lesser known black scientists like Percy Lavon Julian, who obtained a PhD in chemistry from the University of Vienna and went on to a pathbreaking career and eventual induction (as only the second black man) into the National Academy of Sciences. Likewise, other notable German-trained American women beside the well-known Thomas might have been chosen, such as the economist Emily Greene Balch, who studied in Berlin and later won the Nobel Peace Prize. While a very important topic, this chapter is derivative and felt somewhat tacked on. It would have benefitted from better integration into the rest of the book.

The First World War marks a point in Levine’s narrative when the social contract between the university and wider society broke down both in the United States and Germany. Apart from severing all academic ties between the two countries, the willing mobilization of German scholars on behalf of the war ceded what remaining autonomy the research university had from German society and politics. It also profoundly discredited German scholarship in American eyes. Similarly, heavy-handed university presidents in the United States like Columbia’s Nicholas Murray Butler routinely fired professors for expressing radical political views that fell afoul of university trustees. As Levine shows, this became particularly acute when the United States entered the war in 1917 and the pressure for patriotic conformity grew. Yet as in Germany, most American professors were lured into supporting the war and turning the university into a national resource. Some professors, like Charles Beard and James Harvey Robinson, were deeply dismayed by this process and resigned from Columbia to found the New School for Social Research in 1919, an independent institution not beholden to donors, presidents, or trustees. In Weimar Germany, meanwhile, postwar disillusionment with German universities led to the creation of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt in 1923, which was enabled by a large German Jewish bequest.

As Levine discusses in her final two chapters, the disaster that befell the German university under Nazism turned out to be a boon to American universities. Indeed, in important respects it marked the transfer of what remained of the German research university tradition to the United States. The Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations, together with the support of American Jewish agencies, worked to place German refugee scholars in American universities, despite having to work against highly restrictive immigration policies and largely frosty public attitudes to admitting Jewish immigrants. In the end many prominent, mostly Jewish scholars were placed in American higher education. Not only did many of them contribute profoundly to the war effort (e.g., Hans Bethe, James Franck, and others in the Manhattan Project), they also forever changed American university sciences, arts, and humanities. Indeed, Levine argues by way of the example of short-lived Black Mountain College in North Carolina (which became an important sanctuary for members of the Bauhaus) that important features of American postwar modernism were shaped by the influx of these refugees.
Levine concludes her study by reflecting on what the German-American university entanglement over more than a century reveals about the changing nature of the social contract between the university and society. The penetration of research universities by governments on both sides of the Atlantic was very significant—in Germany with the political purge after 1933 and the Nazi focus on war-related applied research, in the United States beginning especially with massive government funding of university research through such agencies as the National Science Foundation during the Cold War. Levine is wise to remind readers that even this public largess in the United States—which many view nostalgically in our age of scarce public funding, rising tuition, and student debt—was exchanged for significant loss of independence and autonomy. Undoubtedly, the contract will shift in the future and new institutions will take form.

One of many interesting insights that emerge from the book is that American preeminence in higher education was far from preordained. It was a creature of fortuitous structures, conjunctures, and contingencies, as much as deliberate planning and investment. The forces of competitive emulation between “allies and rivals” are likely as alive today as they were in the mid-nineteenth century, suggesting that American university preeminence is unlikely to last forever. One merit of the book is to invite deeper reflection on this important historical process, one which is bound up inextricably with questions of national status and power. Despite some errors and omissions, Allies and Rivals is a valuable and original addition to the history of higher education, German-American relations, globalization, and German Jewish history that deserves a very wide readership.
Emily Levine’s *Allies and Rivals* offers a deeply learned and wide-ranging study of the long nineteenth century of transatlantic academic exchange. In particular, Levine traces the intertwined development of German and US universities from the early 1800s to the mid-1930s, illustrating how the modern research university emerged from an intense transatlantic dialogue.

Levine’s study unfolds in ten tightly argued chapters, each one of which focuses on parallel and entangled German and American developments. The first chapter begins with the founding of the University of Berlin (1810) as the “ur-modern research university” (5). The new university reflected the German desire for national renewal after the defeats of the Napoleonic era, and was based on a new balance (or, in Levine’s words, a new “academic social contract”) between cultural cosmopolitanism and German nationalism (17). The first three chapters trace the transatlantic institutionalization and adaptation of the research university through the Morrill Land Grant Act (1862), when the United States was itself seeking national renewal during the Civil War, the founding of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore as a self-proclaimed German-style research university, and the transatlantic intellectual exchange at the St. Louis World’s Fair (1904). As Levine shows, academic reform flowed freely across the Atlantic, facilitated in no small part by the 10,000 or so Americans who studied at German universities in the nineteenth century and then rose quickly through the ranks of the United States’ budding university system.

Innovations on both sides of the Atlantic were closely watched and, in turn, imitated: the introduction of medical and law schools spurred US professionalization (chapter 5), while the introduction of US-inspired philanthropy provided a new funding model for the Kaiser Wilhelm Society (chapter 6). Even as German and American academics parted ways during World War I, German-influenced concepts informed US debates about academic freedom (chapter 7). The 1920s saw the parallel development of new experimental institutions such as the New School in New York or the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt (chapter 8). Levine concludes with two chapters on 1933, which was both an *annus horribilis* (chapter 9), with the Naziification of German universities and scholars, and an *annus mirabilis* (chapter 10) for US university innovators who founded new institutions such as the Institute for Advanced Research in Princeton and thus profited greatly from the academic exodus from Germany. For Levine, 1933 thus marks “the final chapter in the ‘long nineteenth century’ of scholarly exchanges (and…) also marked the beginning of an era, fully realized after World War II, in which the American version of the German university would spread worldwide” (218).

Levine's wide-ranging study is admirably held together by two central concepts. The first is the concept of “competitive emulation,” or how the mutual observation of rival institutions and individuals led to the adaptation and imitation of academic practices across the Atlantic. As Levine shows, competitive emulation was a key driving force in the development of the modern research landscape. The concept works particularly well because the modern university is founded on the tension between a commitment to national service and the universalism of scientific inquiry. Even the most nationalist university system (like the Nazi one) requires some outside input and validation, while international scholarly cooperation relies on national(ist) institutions and individuals. The transatlantic academic relationship was thus “an energetic dance of cooperation and competition that fueled innovation and, in turn, raised the stakes of that exchange” (4). Importantly, domestic competition and emulation were often as critical to the development of the modern research university as international competition. Innovations were jealously observed between Göttingen and Berlin, for example, or Johns Hopkins and Columbia. The fact that both Germany and the United States were federal systems partly explains the dynamic nature of the process, as does the fact that the terms of competition shifted from time to time. After 1914, for example, the temporary exclusion of Germany from the academic world intensified international competition for the now vacant seat of academic leadership (172).
Allies and Rivals also hinges on a second concept, that of an “academic social contract” between the university on the one hand and the state and society on the other. Beginning with the University of Berlin, the modern research university was shaped by a new academic social contract that gave it an elevated position in exchange for satisfying the state's desire for useful knowledge and an educated workforce (19/20). However, the role of the university in society was continuously renegotiated, most notably in times of crisis. During World War I, for example, universities were quick to articulate and fulfill a new ideal of national service (163). Overall, the contractual approach serves as a “framework for understanding the relationship between university and society” (246). Its specific utility becomes apparent over the longue durée that is described in the monograph. As Levine is able to observe, the mobilization of German universities in the service of the Nazi state after 1933 was less a break with German university traditions than the result of the longstanding social contract between state and university. As she notes, Nazi leader Adolf “Hitler’s politicization of the university (…) reveals the uncomfortable fact that the Nazis’ “coordination” could be included within the bounds of university service as defined by the academic social contract. Rather than a rupture, the Nazification of the German universities highlighted the malleability of the preexisting relationship” (217).

International academic relations, especially German-American relations, have received increasing scholarly attention over the past decades, and Allies and Rivals is a most welcome addition to this growing literature.¹ It is well written, tightly argued, and displays an enormous familiarity with intellectual history on both sides of the Atlantic. In particular, it makes two important contributions to our understanding of transatlantic academic relations:

The first is the paramount role of individuals. Although Levine’s study focuses on academic entanglements through journals, conferences, and world’s fairs, the role of individuals, or “academic entrepreneurs” as she calls them, is at the heart of her study. It was these academic entrepreneurs who regularly renegotiated social contracts, creating and exploiting crucial moments of cooperation and competition to advance their own agendas, those of their respective universities, and those of their nations. This group includes famous reformers such as: Wilhelm Humboldt, the creator of the University of Berlin; Daniel Coit Gilman, the influential president of Johns Hopkins University; as well as lesser-known 'entrepreneurs' such as the German mathematician Felix Klein, who—after visits to the United States in the 1890s—introduced private sponsorship of applied sciences at his German university and thus initiated an “American-style revitalization of Göttingen” (57). Importantly, Levine also pays attention to innovators “from the margins,” including women and African Americans, who often used the academic prestige (a concept which is surprisingly absent from Levine’s account) acquired through study in Germany to improve their position in the United States (chapter 4).² These individuals actively made and remade the research university throughout the long nineteenth century of transatlantic academic exchange.

A second important contribution is Levine’s close attention to the fact that transatlantic reform was not simply a one-way transfer from Germany to the United States, as German contemporaries might have had it,


² On the paramount importance of prestige in German-American academic relations see Lerg, Universitätssdiplomatie.
but was reciprocal and often circular. Even in the late nineteenth century, when many Germans were still basking in their perceived academic superiority, German visitors to the United States found much to admire, including the private funding available to many institutions and the state of American surgery and dentistry. Levine emphasizes that transatlantic innovations were the product of selective adaptation and hybridization. Americans adopted some central tenets of the German research university, but also adapted them to their own needs. For example, Johns Hopkins, a self-proclaimed German-style university, was built on a departmental structure rather than the German Lehrstuhl system. Moreover, academic innovations were sometimes re-exported to Germany, creating a circular rather than linear process. “Rather than an asymmetrical colonial relationship,” Levine shows, “the Germans and Americans by the early twentieth century enjoyed a two-way diffusion of academic innovations”.

Future research, I believe, should draw heavily on the pioneering work of Levine and others on German-American academic entanglement to develop a broader transnational history of academic relations. Although US-German relations were extremely important to university reform in the long nineteenth century, German and American “academic entrepreneurs,” it seems, also overemphasized their “special relationship”—partly for reasons of prestige and politics. Germany was, of course, an important point of reference for many Americans, but never as exclusively as contemporaries liked to claim. Indeed, US ‘academic entrepreneurs’ were often in close conversation with French and British reformers as well and looked to the Pasteur Institute or the London School of Economics as alternative models for US research institutions, as Levine’s study briefly notes. For Germany, too, American universities were a notable point of reference, but clearly not the only one. Political and cultural rivalry ensured that France and Great Britain, for example, always were important objects of “competitive emulation.” Building on Levine’s work, scholars would do well to consider larger transnational histories of academic reform and to explore why some of these traditions were more readily forgotten than others.

Overall, Allies and Rivals is a major scholarly achievement. Levine demonstrates a grasp of intellectual and cultural history—on both sides of the Atlantic and over more than a century— that few can match, and she helps us develop a deeper understanding not only of the emergence of the modern research university but also of the processes of transatlantic cultural exchange. Moreover, Allies and Rivals illuminates the place of universities in society in the long nineteenth century as well as in the later twentieth and even twenty-first centuries. The emergence of the “Cold War University” and what US Senator J. William Fulbright called the “military-industrial-academic complex” as Levine notes in her conclusion, was yet another iteration of the academic social contract forged in the previous century. Moreover, as tenure comes under increasing

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attack in our own time, and as supposedly “useful” subjects are prioritized in an era of rising tuition costs, one cannot help but feel that we are witnessing yet another “academic social contract” being written.
Once a year universities pull from the closets their wardrobe of carefully preserved disguises. Dressing up in pseudo-medieval regalia, their faculty and administrators make a case for fictions they wish were true. At a time when universities in the United States are widely distrusted and politically under siege, they insist on higher education’s sacred status. In the face of buffeting change, their robes and hoods assert a timeless lineage to their search for truth and learning.

As Emily Levine’s account of cultural transfers between German and American universities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reminds us, neither claim, to unbroken institutional continuity or status, is true. In the United States, the modern research university was an unexpected—and in many quarters, sharply resented—graft onto a system of small, dispersed, denominational colleges. In Germany, the open-ended pursuit of learning and research was an equally abrupt departure for institutions which at the beginning of the nineteenth century had still been devoted to handing on ready-made truths to aspiring clerics, jurists, school teachers, and medical practitioners. The emergence of the research university out of these earlier forms was no simple result of need or modernization. It was shaped by contention, rivalry, bursts of innovative ambition, and creative competition. Educators in the United States and Germany kept a close eye on each other, both in envy and in concern. Economic primacy mattered intensely to higher education’s reformulation. And state power was never far from mind.

The institutional outcomes of these German and American transformations in higher education were distinct enough that historians have often downplayed the importance of transnational transfers between them, written them off as merely rhetorical window dressing, or denied their importance altogether. German universities by the late nineteenth century were thoroughly embedded in the state; in the United States, the leading contenders in the race for academic preeminence were private institutions. Academic entrepreneurship and philanthropic ambition mattered far more in the American case than in the German one. The social significance of a university degree differed markedly in both countries. Teaching methods and the distribution of faculty labor and status remained distinct. Relationships between university-sponsored research and the emerging, technology-driven economies in both nations differed. However strenuously an envious American educator might praise the model German university, the outcome of the universities’ transformations in this period was not sameness but, rather, nationally and institutionally imbedded variations on a set of reciprocally shared themes.

One of the great strengths of Emily Levine’s use of the “transfer” concept is that she fully acknowledges the force of these limitations. Whatever the object in motion may be—a legal statute, a political initiative, an artistic style, a fashion in self-presentation, a philosophical position—everything in “transit” from one setting to another is contingent and variable. The “model” object must be perceived; its importable features must be extracted from what is deemed to be its superfluous or undesirable elements; its form must be altered to make it fit rival institutions already on the ground. Hybridization and transformation are inextricable from transfer. The Fed Ex image in our minds, in which a parcel either arrives intact or else doesn’t effectively arrive at all, has to be erased from mind. To discount the power of transnational movement of institutions

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1 For a particularly articulate example: Gabriele Lingelbach, “Cultural Borrowing or Autonomous Development: American and German Universities in the Late Nineteenth Century,” in Thomas Adam and Ruth Gross, eds., Traveling between Worlds: German-American Encounters (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2006).
and ideas because the “packages” do not come through the process unaltered is to misunderstand the process and radically misestimate its power and ubiquity.2

The task of grasping the simultaneity of motion and change within the concept of “cultural transfer,” nonetheless, carries limitations. So do the notoriously vague categories of “influence.” The term that Levine’s narrative leans hardest on—“competitive emulation” (4)—is, to my mind, the more illuminating one. There is no doubt that by the end of the nineteenth century, figures on both sides of the German-American relationship saw themselves as increasingly locked in a competition that stretched across their economies, social policies, and geopolitical ambitions, to the boundaries of science and learning itself. The dazzling displays of electric-powered machinery at the St. Louis exposition of 1904 and the transnational gathering of intellectuals at the International Congress of Arts and Sciences assembled there were, to the contemporaries who arranged their juxtaposition, all of a piece. Science made wealth. How important university-produced knowledge actually was to the developing German and American economies at the end of the century, compared to the industrial laboratories of an Edison, Westinghouse, Krupp, or Siemens, was not a carefully articulated concern. Great economies needed great universities. Expanding knowledge enabled expansive world presence. The axioms traveled powerfully through the intra- and international channels of competitive emulation.

Allies and Rivals explores these themes across an array of settings that is remarkably broad for a relatively brief book. Levine’s much-celebrated earlier book, Dreamland of Humanists, centered its richly illuminating account of the flowering of attention to the symbol-making powers of human culture in one precisely defined setting: the German-Jewish elite of early-twentieth-century Hamburg. There, around the extraordinary collecting work of Aby Warburg and the scholarship of Ernst Cassirer and Erwin Panofsky, a new history of art and a new understanding of the human were born.3 In Allies and Rivals, the spatial dimensions of Levine’s analysis are much wider and the cast of characters more dispersed. Some of her figures sustained long-lasting connections across the Atlantic. For others, attraction to German or American educational alternatives was a momentary phase in their student lives or later careers. Some of the initiatives thrived; others quickly failed.

In this sense, “cultural transfer” seems to have been less the book’s guiding spirit than the model of histoire croisée/Beziehungsgeschichte (“entangled history”) proposed by Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann.4 Levine does not embrace Werner and Zimmermann’s theoretical call for a perspective free from all comparative and national considerations. But the image of complexly overlaid maps that is at the more tangible heart of histoire croisée, where supra- and infra-national lines of force are interwoven with one another,

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is central to Levine’s accomplishment. Her chapters move from node to node of overlap and connection: sites where German or American models came into play, whether as templates for adaptation, as rationales for new departures, as threats to be avoided, or as sites of refuge from the crises around them. If this movement from node to node of interconnection gives the narrative of *Allies and Rivals* a certain restless feel, if more conventionally-trained social historians might miss simpler arrows of causation, it makes graphic the range of overlap between these two rival, never identical, but interrelated higher education systems.

Some of the nodes of connection on which Levine focuses will be familiar to historians of the United States in this period. Most of the Americans who traveled to nineteenth-century Germany for study came back most vividly struck by the contrasts in student culture they experienced. But a few took home an ambition to lay overtop of the American colleges the alternative model of research and learning that had impressed them so strongly in Germany. At Johns Hopkins (‘Göttingen at Baltimore,’ its boosters called it), the University of Michigan, Cornell, Harvard (after initial resistance), and elsewhere, forms novel to the American scene were inaugurated. American admirers of the new German research institutions did not try to import their faculty structures, to the extent that they were aware of them at all. But they were quick to contrast the liberty German research universities granted students and faculty to choose their own courses, free of the prescribed curricula, capstone moral philosophy courses, and textbook-and-recitation mode of instruction that still predominated in American colleges. The plentitude of books and laboratory equipment in the leading German universities, in comparison to their own, startled and embarrassed them. Finally, the presence of leading scientists in the ranks of German university faculties cemented a sense of that the torch of progress had permanently passed from the mere dissemination of knowledge to the open-ended frontiers of “research.” Not all their endeavors succeeded. Clark University, which was founded as a stand-alone research institution for graduate study, gave in to the prevailing American pattern and added an undergraduate college. Efforts to establish a national university in Washington, DC, on the lines of the University of Berlin could not breach the difference between the diffused state structures in the United States and the centralizing dynamics of imperial Germany. Still, though at the turn of the century most colleges held to their accustomed ways, prestige had clearly passed to the institutions of high learning which advertised their models as consciously “German.”

At the same time, Levine emphasizes, there was important traffic in the other direction. Even the powerful, autocratic Prussian minister of education, Friedrich Althoff, began to imagine harnessing the philanthropic donations that so powerfully shaped the new universities in America to relieve some of the tax burden of the state-funded system in Germany. By 1911, a new set of Kaiser-Wilhelm Institutes, jointly funded by state and private donations, were being layered on top of the universities, where faculty, unburdened of teaching responsibilities, could devote themselves exclusively to learning and research. That model was taken up, in turn, with Bamberger Store money, the administrative genius of Abraham Flexner, and the unexpected influx of exiled German scholars, at the Institute for Advanced Study in the 1930s—though the model of an institution of tenured, research-only scholars, separate from the universities, did not spread from there.

A less familiar node of connection ran through several of the interwar experiments in alternative education, including the New School for Social Research in New York City, the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany, and Black Mountain College near Asheville, North Carolina. The German-American linkages were looser here than in the case of the research universities, but their models of private, philanthropic funding, and their experiments in fusing radical pedagogy, politics, and aesthetics, all spoke to their interlaced histories. The New School’s University in Exile offered refuge to Frankfurt School scholars, Erich Fromm among them, during the disastrous 1930s; at Black Mountain some of the most prominent Bauhaus importers of modernism into American art and design were able to revive their work after the Nazi onslaught.
Not all interconnections between American and German research universities were benign. In both the United States and in Germany, universities consciously walled themselves off from those they deemed “undesirable.” The need for private resources to pay tuition or capitation fees made university attendance in both nations a class privilege. Jews were systematically excluded from full professorships in the Prussian university faculties and their numbers tightly restricted at the most prestigious of the American universities as well. German Social Democrats were barred as regime antagonists and their radical counterparts fitfully dismissed in the United States—the vaunted promises of Lehrfreiheit (academic freedom) notwithstanding. And yet, there were opportunities in the United States that startled Americans who imagined the barriers of status must be necessarily higher in Old World Europe than in democratic America. W.E.B. Du Bois was astonished at the lack of race prejudice he felt during his student years at the University of Berlin in the 1890s. But that example barely made a dent in the fiercely defended barriers of white privilege maintained by American universities into the 1960s.

A decade before Du Bois’s experience, M. Carey Thomas slipped through one of the cracks that allowed women to attend lectures in parts of the German university system if they could find a sympathetic faculty sponsor. She ultimately earned a PhD degree from the University of Geneva and came home to preside over the first American women’s college, Bryn Mawr, to provide graduate education for its students. But Thomas had absorbed enough of the systems of social privilege around her in both Germany and the United States to actively discourage Black students and Jewish faculty from studying or teaching at Bryn Mawr on the grounds that they were unsuited for the intellectual and cultural demands it would require of them.

Tensions like these, between the open-ended pursuit of scholarship and higher education’s obligations to state and society, run as a thread all through Allies and Rivals. They came to a head in both countries during the First World War when university faculties enlisted, with little or no peep of resistance, in the institutional mobilization of the war. In 1930s Germany, the gleichschaltung of the universities into agents of the state was repeated at even higher and more deadly intensity. German university faculties and administrators did not merely let themselves be absorbed into the revolution the Nazis made. They flung themselves into service to the Nazi Volk, Levine emphasizes. Whatever division of loyalty they had felt between the imperatives of open-ended science and the concentrated demands of the nation evaporated overnight.

The German universities, of course, were state creations and their senior faculty were state officials. But the US, with its strong private universities, Levine argues, was hardly immune from similar, transnationally mobile influences. Eugenics and “scientific” racism were as much an American scholarly project as a German one. Nazi officials studied American methods of racial discrimination and racial segregation. American universities went into the Second World War with more embarrassment at their World War I actions than did the German universities. There was no systematic purge of their faculties (though there was no open-armed embrace of refugee scholars either); no book burnings. But there was no hesitation about the need for the universities to mobilize their science and scholarship for the war and the Cold War that followed. The “academic social contract” (19-20), as Levine terms the compromise between the university’s pursuit of knowledge and its service to state and society, could carry deadly serious demands.

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Levine ends her book with reflections on the terms of that contract as universities now move now into a new century. One might wish that she had ended instead with a stronger statement of the contrasts threaded through these stories of connection, or with less fleeting glances at the other two models for higher education at play in France and England. I myself would have preferred an equally forward looking but less abstract conclusion for this densely grounded history. Throughout *Allies and Rivals*, institutional innovators play the key roles. In what directions are they moving now? Elizabeth Popp Berman’s brilliantly disturbing *Creating the Market University* offers a haunting prediction. Leading American universities, she argues, have already reorganized themselves not as institutions of “research” as much as arrays of profit centers. The most popular undergraduate majors—business economics, computer engineering, and pre-medical training—are the vocational tracks that promise best to pay off the students’ rising costs of education. Liberal arts teaching, which was so integral to the Humboldtian model of *Wissenschaft*, is increasingly marginalized as a mere add-on to the universities’ commercially valuable activities. What now grounds the modern American university structure are medical and scientific patents, faculty entrepreneurship opportunities, giant hospital chains, research parks, and industry-funded research contracts—even university-owned shopping centers in the Stanford variation. Increasingly these fund contemporary universities, undergird the logic of the “academic social contract,” and directly fuel the surrounding economy. “How academic science became an economic engine,” Berman aptly subtitles her book.

“Competitive emulation” impels, as before, the dynamic. Does it, as before, ramify across national borders, creating an interlaced system of market imperatives and market-driven academic institutions? Emily Levine’s intricately detailed account of the modern research universities’ first century of inauguration and change makes that question all the more urgent.

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Review by Brian Vick, Emory University

It is a commonplace to observe that universities such as Johns Hopkins, Cornell, or Stanford were founded on the German model of the research university—“Die Luft der Freiheit weht,” “the air of freedom blows,” as the Stanford motto reads. In Emily J. Levine’s perceptive and deeply researched new book, we gain a more nuanced account of how that came about and what it meant, in addition to learning about how the exchanges operated in the opposite direction as well.

In part, from the German model came the insistence on combining research and teaching in relative autonomy, with research focused on the professoriate and PhD students, and teaching aimed at both graduate and undergraduate students. Shifts towards graduate seminars and larger-scale scientific laboratories also owed much to German innovations. Going the other way, trends and experiments in the United States inspired innovations in German research universities in the late nineteenth century, including coeducation, private donor financing to supplement state funding, and the turn to applied science. The move toward research institutes, most famous in the Kaiser Wilhelm Society institutes which produced so many Nobel Prizes in the early twentieth century, also owed much to American precedents and experiments, particularly in the influence of the philanthropic industrialist Andrew Carnegie and his foundations.

In many ways, almost all scholars in institutions of higher education in the US and Germany would benefit from reading this book, particularly at a moment when academic freedom is under siege amid the resurgent culture wars in the United States (one could wish a wider, non-scholarly audience would read the book as well, not least policy makers). Levine examines the extent and limits of academic freedom within the constraints of government influence and individual and group self-censorship as a running theme throughout the book. Among the most important moments on the US side were the founding of the American Association of University Professors and the establishment of an institutionalized notion of academic freedom, and, increasingly, of professorial tenure, in 1915 in the run-up to American entry into the First World War.1

Levine centers her analysis on the notion of the “academic social contract” (10) as the basis of the relationship between universities and society, and thereby provides an insightful account of the growth and instrumentalization of the concept of academic freedom, and, more broadly, of the alternately expanding and contracting space for the institutional autonomy of the modern university and its imbrication with wider society. Throughout its modern history, the university has produced civil servants, functionaries, and professionals, and promoted the interests of states and empires, as its part of the bargain with government and private interests that left universities a certain freedom of action for their research and teaching missions.

In the course of the book’s ten main chapters, Levine traces the rise of the modern research university in Germany and the United States, as a contested enterprise and a series of compromises between “academic innovators” (11) and government and private elites, and as an intertwined phenomenon between the two countries through an ongoing sequence of cultural exchanges involving all three of those elite sets of actors as well as outsider figures aiming to participate in the benefits of higher education. The study covers the more than a century between the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810, which is traditionally taken as the originary moment of the modern research university, and the bifurcated experience of the year 1933 and its aftermath, when the Nazi assumption of power in Germany stripped away Jewish and many left-wing personnel from German universities, a move that fundamentally weakened German higher education and sparked the migration of many of those figures to the United States and elsewhere. That migration then

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further invigorated the landscape of American higher education and the role of German traditions within it. The present reviewer is a historian of Germany, as is Levine, but the coverage seems equally strong and well-grounded on the US history side as on the German.

Actors in Levine’s study include not only Daniel Coit Gilman, founding figure of Johns Hopkins University on the German model in 1876, but also Martha Carey Thomas as the equivalent founder of Bryn Mawr on the US side, or the German-Jewish philanthropist Leopold Koppel alongside the Prussian official in charge of higher education Friedrich Althoff and the theologian and education consultant Adolf von Harnack for the German case. Attention to German scholars Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and Friedrich Schleiermacher helps ground the discussion of the founding of the University of Berlin—a founding myth in Levine’s depiction, following the work of Sylvia Paletschek—whereby the university was already beset by the compromises of the Faustian social contract with the Prussian government, and its influence was only later rediscovered in an effort to argue for a certain kind of academic freedom in the early twentieth century.²

The 1870s, and in particular the year 1876, emerge as an important point of inflection. Not only did 1876 see the founding of Johns Hopkins as a mixed undergraduate and PhD granting university, but that was also the year of the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia (the first World’s Fair on US soil), and the moment when Germans first took note of just how rapidly American technology and production allowed the US to catching up to and even in some respects surpassing Britain and Germany as front-runners of the industrial economy. Circa 1900, Levine still finds German universities to be the world leaders, but by 1910, she argues, US universities had taken the lead—that is, even before the shocks of the First World War, the German defeat, and the Nazis’ coming to power in 1933 (59-60).

Levine suggests that trends in the era under scrutiny here actually have more in common with our own time than with the period after the Second World War (11). Why this is the case is not fully explained, but in the conclusion it becomes clear that the Cold War decades of the well-funded military-industrial-academic complex constituted a rather distinct and unusual era, and that we may be heading back to something closer to the historical average. Relatedly, after a period of relative US hegemony in higher education, the world is already moving back into a phase of greater multipolarity.

Levine’s study puts the history of universities into the framework of the growth of nation-states and globalization in the nineteenth century and into that of transnational knowledge flows, but at the same time it emphasizes the role of exchanges and competition between cities. Thus, rivalry between cities within each country could spur innovation and “competitive emulation” (4) as much as that between countries, and in fact the knowledge and models acquired through transatlantic exchanges helped fuel the intracity rivalries within the US and Germany, as universities sought competitive advantages and could one-up their rivals through adopting or adapting the latest model from across the seas. This competitive dynamic worked all the more strongly in the US and the German states given their more federal political and cultural structures, as compared with the more centralized French and British systems. The reviewer would even highlight that notions of conflict and competition were integral to the nineteenth-century German culture of nationhood and its associated culture of Bildung, or educated self-formation, and that Wilhelm von Humboldt, who is central to discussions of German university reform through his part in the founding of the University of

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Berlin in 1810, had already theorized the role of multipolar rivalries in stimulating national and cultural strength in these same years.3

The author’s analysis may place slightly too much emphasis on the natural sciences in the developments within higher education in the two nations, and thus understate the extent to which social science and even humanities disciplines participated in the trends toward big science and the hiving-off of research into separate institutions. She notes Theodor Mommsen, for instance, among the “strange corners” (141) in which Adolf von Harnack found support for his proposed largescale research institutions, yet Mommsen’s own longstanding and multivolume collection of Latin epigraphy (the Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum) would be an example of such a trend toward collaborative “big science,” or even more the trends towards monumental archaeology behind the foundation of the German Archeological Institute in Athens and Cairo or the excavations at Olympia and Pergamum.4 Institutes for Advanced Studies on both sides of the Atlantic, at least partly on the Princeton model, continue to harbor humanities and social science as well as natural science programs, even if in today’s universities the overall imbalance between funding for science, technology, and health science research, and that for the humanistic disciplines seems larger than ever.

While comparison to United States history may make the German case appear darker and more compromised in Levine’s depiction than it already otherwise would, and the German comparison leaves the US case seeming relatively progressive, Levine in no way presents a sanitized depiction of the American history, but rather also illuminates the shadowy sides of the US past and its exclusionary heritage, above all in race relations. For Germany, discrimination against women and Jews takes center stage; for the US, that against women and African Americans, with African American women being doubly hit through intersectionality. The mixed fortunes of Jewish students and scholars in American universities also receive attention.

The author particularly explores the noted case of W.E.B. Du Bois as an African American scholar who sought advantage and leverage through furthering his education in German universities (92-104). His career also, however, spotlighted the limitations on even such a talented and well-educated individual as Du Bois, both in his efforts to cross the “color-line” and achieve personal advancement, and in those to expand the range of education and careers possible for African Americans during and after the Progressive Era.5 Du Bois’s experience of German higher education comprised an important element of his campaign and helped shape his ideas and approach, but it was not enough to guarantee success even when dealing with contemporary white scholars of similar Harvard and German educational backgrounds. At the same time, Levine also explains Du Bois’s focus on advancing the opportunities for the “talented tenth” as owing a considerable amount to German traditions, and suggests that this concentration on the African American intellectual elite may have hindered the overall success of the campaign for African American university education (103).6

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The author in general attributes much of the elitism of American higher education to the German inheritance, though certainly making clear that homegrown influences also account for some of that tendency (103-104). Here though it would seem that comparisons with the British or even the French systems that were even more strongly hierarchical—and, not unrelatedly, more centralized—suggest other possible conduits for elitism in American educational institutions. The tradition of the gentleman’s education from Britain helped shape American attitudes and practices in both North and South, and, to the extent that British influences were at times seen with a jaundiced eye in the early republic, then Americans often turned to French examples instead, which saw an only partly democratic effort to funnel the most talented young men to the Grandes Écoles or the Sorbonne in Paris. On the German side, the author notes the statistic that between 1800 and 1850, almost 50 percent of those taking the German university admission degree of the Abitur were themselves the sons of civil servants and professionals with such degrees (310, n.18), but this strikes me as a case where one can well ask: is this a little or a lot? This figure could be read as evidence for the relatively open nature of the elite in Germany, rather than as evidence of a self-recruiting caste.

Stepping back to consider the implications of this work for international history, Levine’s study above all puts the spotlight on universities as another institution that can be integrated into histories of international relations, similar to the way in which cities are increasingly included as diplomatic actors, or even NGOs and large corporations, multinational and otherwise. From the governmental perspective, this work also highlights the utility of considering the politics of higher education as part of the “soft power” of nations. And at the level of individuals and networks as diplomatic actors, the activities of the various academic entrepreneurs and activists in the space between society and government reveal both their importance within higher education, and that of the higher education sector within international relations. In this realm too, as Levine makes clear, the actions of women, Black, indigenous, people of color, and other marginalized groups also come to the fore, as they resist hierarchical exclusion or take advantage of new opportunities to expand their educational access and social and political influence.

Levine’s analysis of the role of professionalization as a factor militating against the involvement of academics in public life and public debates to some extent runs against the grain of emphases in the literature on the internationalization of science and politics in the later nineteenth century, according to which it was precisely the rise of transnational networks of experts and “epistemic communities” that helped to give actors from civil society more of a voice. The author cites the American philosopher John Dewey on the “paradox” (161) that professionalization, to an extent, tended to meet demand for scientific authority and engagement, and at the same time entailed a contract in which “scholars received academic freedom in exchange for not meddling in the public debate” (161). The discrepancy can in part be explained by underscoring the distinctions between rhetoric and reality and between different conceptions of what counts as politics. Professionalizing academic and activist communities were often keen to present themselves as unthreateningly unpolitical to both governments and publics, even as they strove to carve out spaces of policy that were to be subject to the influence or decisions of “objective” scientific expertise. Scientific authority could in this way convey a certain political authority, and moves that were in some sense still political, as part of the contestation of power, could be represented as purely technical matters to be settled by science rather than by the rough and tumble of party politics.

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This trend toward the professionalization of credentialed experts also to a considerable degree worked against inclusion of the voices of women and people of color, but they were not completely excluded, and, if anything, both groups were increasingly present in the years leading up to and following 1900. Levine’s work can help to explain why that was the case, insofar as these actors were not fully excluded from the benefits of higher education and had been able to battle for a place in that space and for the ability to engage those communities of experts in their own language.

Academic networks were involved in international relations in still another way. Scholarship on internationalization in the late nineteenth century has pointed to the growth of international professional organizations and to the related role of the ever-grander world expositions in this process. Levine’s account frequently brings to the fore moments of exchange at world expositions, above all those landmark ones in the United States in Philadelphia in 1876, Chicago in 1893, and St. Louis in 1904, but it could do so more self-consciously and explicitly in highlighting these as significant venues of exchange; examination of exchanges between Americans and Germans or other Europeans at the corresponding events in Europe would then also come more into the frame. Similarly, there could be more attention to international exchanges through academic conferences and professional organizations, which frequently held their international meetings in conjunction with the expos.

As with the elitism and academic hierarchies that are presented as detrimental in higher education, Levine emphasizes that international academic exchanges can propagate negative influences as well as beneficial ones. This tendency came through particularly sharply in the era between the world wars, with the prevalence of support for eugenics and racist science spreading in both directions across the Atlantic, an area in which the Rockefeller Foundation and other American institutions provided funding for German scholars and institutions well into the 1930s, even after 1933 (208-210). In this sense, the Rockefeller Foundation should not only be remembered for its role in helping resettle refugee scholars from Europe in those same years. Drawing on recent work by James Q. Whitman, Levine even stresses that racist rhetoric and legal models from the Jim Crow South found followers in Germany, including Adolf Hitler and the Nazis, who took inspiration from these sources in their racial policies leading to the Nuremberg Laws of 1935.

Levine’s new book ultimately offers revealing new perspectives on the history of higher education in both the United States and Germany and on their interconnections. It provides a timely study of the topic at a moment of increasing debates about the role of universities in modern society, academic autonomy and freedom, questions of access to higher education, and the optimal balance of research and teaching of humanistic and scientific disciplines. The work thus accomplishes one of the hoped-for aims of historical research by examining a problem in a previous era both in its own right and with an eye to deeper understandings of similar issues in our own time.

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Response by Emily J. Levine, Stanford University

I am honored that my book, *Allies and Rivals*, was selected to be the subject of this H-Diplo roundtable and for the engagement and close readings by such an exceptional group of colleagues: Erik Grimmer-Solem, Elisabeth Piller, Daniel T. Rodgers, and Brian Vick. I thank Will Gray for writing the introduction, and the editors for the opportunity to share the evolution of my thinking since the publication of the book, and to present future avenues for research.

A question that emerges prominently in these reviews concerns how one explains the movement of ideas across geographic boundaries and my reliance on what I call “competitive emulation” (4) as the driving force of the narrative.

When scholars speak of the relationship between Germany and America, they refer to the ‘import’ or what Rodgers calls in this forum the “notoriously vague categories of ‘influence’.” But universities are not commodities that are imported, and influence suggests a unilateralism that does not reflect the dynamism of this relationship. In my analysis, it is bi-directional transatlantic exchange that spins the motor of intellectual, institutional, and political history.

The reviewers mostly agree that “competitive emulation” is a valuable exegetical tool. As Piller notes, an “important contribution” is the book’s “close attention to the fact that transatlantic reform was not simply a one-way transfer from Germany to the United States, as German contemporaries might have had it, but was reciprocal and often circular.”

My conceptual framework of competitive emulation draws its “guiding spirit,” as Rodgers intuits, as much from the tradition of *l’histoire croisée/ Beziehungsgeschichte* or “entangled history,” as from the history of exchange.\(^{1}\) I am delighted that Rodgers connects *Allies and Rivals* to newer work that refines our understanding of adaptation and transfer that move beyond influence, work that has made inroads in the study of globalization in neighboring fields.\(^{2}\) Given that Rodgers has shaped this approach through his prolific career, I take it as a high honor that Rodgers says that “the image of complexly overlaid maps that is at the more tangible heart of *l’histoire croisée*, where supra- and infra-national lines of force are interwoven with one another, is central to Levine’s accomplishment.”\(^{3}\)

Vick (and Piller), both of whose work elevates cultural diplomacy in their fresh accounts of international history, applaud the book’s inclusion of the university in our broader understanding of the history of globalization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.\(^{4}\) Much as both of these scholars do in their respective work for “soft power,” Vick argues: “Levine’s study above all puts the spotlight on universities as another

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2. The concept of “transfer” is now found far afield from its origins in German and French literary studies. See, for example, this persuasive work in political economy: Cornel Ban, *Ruling Ideas: How Global Neoliberalism Goes Local* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).


institution that can be integrated into histories of international relations, similar to the way in which cities are increasingly included as diplomatic actors, or even NGOs and large corporations, multinational and otherwise. From the governmental perspective, this work also highlights the utility of considering the politics of higher education as part of the ‘soft power’ of nations.

Exchanges do not happen on their own. Piller identifies as another “central contribution” of the book a reintegration of individuals into the international history of transfers—especially individuals on the margin. Erik Grimmer-Solem, for his part, characterizes my treatment of W.E.B. Du Bois and Martha Carey Thomas as “derivative,” but unfortunately does not apprehend the wider significance of this chapter for the narrative. The book’s epistemological claim is precisely that these marginalized individuals are not part of a separate story, but that their inclusion and exclusion must be narrated as part of the central story. If it feels “tacked on,” as Grimmer-Solem suggests, it is precisely because Du Bois and Thomas have a surprising presence in the earlier history. Moreover, their presence ironically led to the ossification of institutional boundaries that later excluded them, and the African American and female scholars who followed them.

The second concept on which the book relies, as described by Piller, is the “academic social contract,” which Vick assesses as forming the “basis of the relationship between universities and society, and thereby provid[ing] an insightful account of the growth and instrumentalization of the concept of academic freedom, and more broadly, of the alternately expanding and contracting space for the institutional autonomy of the modern university and its imbrication with wider society.”

Grimmer-Solem, identifies the above section, the first chapter of the book, as the “weakest” in large part because “it perpetuates a ‘Humboldt myth’ that has now been debunked by a great deal of scholarship showing the wide gulf that existed between the ideals articulated by Humboldt and the rather more prosaic realities of Berlin University until the 1860s.” Indeed, scholars tend to refer to the founding moment of the University of Berlin as the Humboldt ideal. Yet Allies and Rivals contributes to—rather than disputes—the argument that the retrospective finding and re-narrating of Humboldt’s essays in the first decade of the twentieth century fashioned a history of a Humboldt ideal that was more about its present moment than the past.

As Vick explains better than I could, the “founding myth in Levine’s depiction, following the work of Sylvia Paletschek.... [shows how] the university was already beset by the compromises of the Faustian social contract with the Prussian government, and its influence was only later rediscovered in an effort to argue for a certain kind of academic freedom in the early twentieth century.” That is true of many institutions whose origin stories were crafted after the fact and which project continuity grounded in a selective genealogy to serve their contemporary political needs. The distinct contribution of Allies and Rivals to this conversation is to argue that the founding moment of 1809–1810 was in fact more transactional than previously understood. The exchange of service for autonomy and patronage is what I call the “academic-social contract,” and, in my telling, it is what distinguishes the University of Berlin from antecedents and marks the beginning of the modern university.

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Vick argues that the implications of the academic social contract for the present could be vast: “In many ways almost all scholars in institutions of higher education in the US and Germany would benefit from reading this book, particularly at a moment when academic freedom is under siege amid the resurgent culture wars in the United States (one could wish a wider, non-scholarly audience would as well, not least among policy makers).”

Rodgers wishes that the concluding chapter on the academic social contract presented a “stronger statement of the contrasts threaded through these stories of connection” or “an equally forward looking but less abstract conclusion for this densely grounded history,” and mentions Elizabeth Popp Berman’s *Creating the Market University* as one powerful articulation of a new academic social contract. rods i accept Rodgers’s suggestion that we might expand the academic social contract to account for how universities compete and cooperate today in a value system that is vastly different from the one that came before. I would argue, however, that this difference is a matter of degree, not kind. That is, the academic social contract is a framework, not a set of values. As such, the relationship is dynamic. To my mind, the related question we must answer today is whether all academic social contracts are valid and how to alter them if not.

In this vein, since the book’s publication, I have refined the conceptual framework of the “academic social contract” with sociologist Mitchell Stevens, and proposed using it as a starting point for a discussion about the purposes of higher education and who should pay for it, a consensus that we argue was last iterated in the post-World War II age and is currently unraveling. In two widely circulated editorials for *The Washington Post*, I suggested that a new academic social contract (and corresponding concept of academic freedom) could help repair the broken trust among publics and their universities. Most of the reviewers of this forum wish that I had considered other transatlantic relationships in my analysis. Grimmer-Solem argues that my lens should have expanded to include trans-Pacific relationships, exchanges that he expertly addresses at length in his recent book *Learning Empire*, which is more explicitly organized around how global entanglements contributed to the concept of Weltpolitik. My own—albeit brief—discussion of the Japanese-German relationship emphasizes that it never developed into the symmetrical one I argue characterized the German-American bi-directional exchange. In fact, what is so unique about the German-American story that I center in *Allies and Rivals* is that it represents how the underdog turned the tables on the incumbent—a rare occurrence that holds meaning that extends beyond this specific case to aspiring institutional innovators.

One of the great advantages of having a book review forum is the opportunity to reflect on its conclusions long after the author has completed her research. I have come to understand that what gives *Allies and Rivals* what Rodgers calls “a certain restless feel” is both the source of its weakness and its strength. A framing around exchange rather than one national context or another has the disadvantage of sacrificing nuance and clarity for synthesis and universal application.

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As Rodgers observes, “if more conventionally-trained social historians might miss simpler arrows of causation, [Allies and Rivals] makes graphic the range of overlap between these two rival, never identical, but interrelated higher education systems.” What a great honor it would be if, as Piller suggests, “Future research…should draw heavily on the pioneering work of Levine and others on German-American academic entanglement to develop a broader transnational history of academic relations.”

Through the lens of higher education, Allies and Rivals tells the story of the ascent of Germany and America, and their ambitions for world power at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. But it also contains more universal lessons about how ideas spread and where innovation comes from: namely, through the open exchange of ideas and competitive emulation, even, and perhaps especially, with fierce institutional rivals. This is an important reminder in our moment of resurgent nationalism.  

We might say that the COVID-19 pandemic, during which time I completed this book, represents a shock to the education system that in many ways feels comparable to the wars that often prompted change over the 100-year story that I tell. To be sure, we do not yet know whether the institution that combined research and teaching will survive intact. Vick argues that “[Allies and Rivals] provides a timely study of the topic at a moment of increasing debates about the role of universities in modern society, academic autonomy and freedom, questions of access to higher education, and the optimal balance of research and teaching of humanistic and scientific disciplines. The work thus accomplishes one of the hoped-for aims of historical research by examining a problem in a previous era both in its own right and with an eye to deeper understandings of similar issues in our own time.”

The enduring point that I hope the wider public takes away is one that Rodgers underscores, that the university we have inherited and in which many of us work, did not have to turn out this way. I would hope that this observation is a reminder that we should be feel empowered to change it.

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14 I treat the history and future of the university’s hybrid identity, in “Research and Teaching: Lasting Union or House Divided?” in “Advances and Challenges to International Education,” special issue for Daedalus Journal, American Academy of Arts and Sciences (forthcoming, 2024).