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Ilaria Scaglia. *The Emotions of Internationalism. Feeling International Cooperation in the Alps in the Interwar Period.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-19-884832-5 (hardcover, \$85.00).

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At first sight, the title *The Emotions of Internationalism* may seem a contradiction in terms, so deep-rooted is the image of internationalism as a mild and rational persuasion, unable to inspire intense emotions, especially if compared with the strong hold that nationalism can exert on people's feelings, exploiting their fears and visceral needs. One comes to understand, however, that what the title suggests is a new way of looking at internationalism; and in order to do so, the author chooses a particular area of Europe—the Alps—and a precise span of time—the Twenties and the Thirties. The book's aim is to recognize the fundamental role played by emotion, which has largely been overlooked until now, in creating and defining internationalism. Its focus, therefore, is not on the theory or political discourse of internationalism, but on how individuals and institutions utilized emotions to promote internationally oriented initiatives and achieve their political or non-political goals.

The past decades have seen a renewed scholarly interest in internationalism, international state and non-state organizations, and the expanding field of humanitarianism.¹ Of course, as many recent essays point out, nationalism and internationalism are not two sets of beliefs and practices that are necessarily antithetical or even agonistic to each other. On the contrary, they are often intertwined, and not merely symbolically, as most international institutions, associations, and projects demonstrate, particularly in the interwar period when a *new internationalism* was being developed, above or among nations, not in opposition to them, maintaining strong national connections. It can thus be distinguished from the *old cosmopolitanism*, whereby national constituencies should disappear altogether.² The League of Nations' structure, policy, and ideals are the perfect example of the first approach: its functioning aimed at weaving different national threads into a new pattern of international cooperation. As Glenda Sluga remarks, “our memory of the league—a failure, unable to prevent calamity or exploitation or war—has forgotten the longer history of internationalism and its points of deep institutional and intellectual connection to the history of nationalism.”³

Scaglia redefines internationalism as “a broad set of ideas and practices based on the notion that the success of any given cause was contingent upon involving individuals, groups, and institutions from other nations” (15). Accordingly, even if the

¹ Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and the World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): both seminal studies.

² Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, chapter 1.

³ Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 3–15, and Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 46. See also Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012), 141–153.

various kinds of interwar internationalists—proletarian, liberal, feminist, Catholic, or humanitarian—disagreed on many issues, “they all engaged in the same practices [...] while trying to strike a balance between two extremes: universalism on the one hand and a vision where people would come together peacefully while remaining proud of their differences on the other.” Among the common practices she refers to is the one of “organizing events and long-term stays in the Alps to create and reinforce emotional bonds among people” (15). This brings us to the two main original aspects of her volume: the overall focus of the study, which is the emotional content connected with a variety of internationalist institutions and projects; and the geographical area selected for analysis—the Alps.

The book’s opening pages present us with maps of the Alps, showing not so much their peaks and valleys, as the cities within or close to them—over fifty in number, in several different countries—together with the passes, tunnels, and political boundaries which intersect them. Thus, the study singles out a vast region at the heart of Europe, extending from Marseille to Vienna and from Munich to Venice. In the same vein, the book’s opening paragraph describes the famed ballet *Excelsior*, which opened at Milan’s La Scala theatre in 1881 and has toured the world ever since. The ballet celebrates the first alpine tunnel between Italy and France, which was excavated under Mont Cenis and completed in 1871. The climax comes when the French and Italian teams begin to hear the sound of pickaxes from the other side of the rock and finally meet and welcome each other, having overcome the alpine barrier. Love and brotherhood triumph, while, in the words of the choreographer Luigi Mariotti, “the Genius of Humanity fulfills its promise to unite people in brotherly embrace” (xviii–xx and 1–2).

Scaglia describes the Alps as a national, transnational, and international region, chosen by many individuals, institutions, and governments for their international activities. For their neighboring peoples the mountains have always been both a physical barrier and a challenge to be overcome in joint ventures to affirm their friendship and cooperation, and all the more so as technological progress, particularly from the second half of the nineteenth century, became a driving force towards globalization. But there are also deeper, emotional, trends behind these facts. Since the eighteenth century, philosophers, poets, and artists have idealized the mountains as sites for an encounter with absolute calm and beauty, or to live the intense pleasures and pains of the *sublime*. They brought to completion the substitution of the monsters and demons of the medieval Alps by a more positive imagery, inaugurated by sixteenth-century explorers. In the late nineteenth century, symbolic and affective cultural processes constructed a new image of the Alps, one which is amenable to consumption by growing numbers of urban middle-class tourists.⁴

In the romantic conception, ecstatic moments of sublimity could be experienced only by individuals, in intimate union with alpine scenery, in solitude and silence. After the traumatic years of the Great War, which was fought also in alpine terrain, with peaks and ranges serving as markers of nation-states, internationalists invested the mountains with a different meaning, however: they translated the individualistic search for lofty feelings into the experience of memorable encounters, lasting friendships and moments of brotherly union between people from the most diverse backgrounds. In the Twenties and Thirties, the Alps came to represent the internationalist horror for war and longing for peace, and became the ideal setting for public displays and consumption of various ‘brands’ of internationalism, with emotion employed as a binding agent. The region came thus to be associated with the emotional side of internationalism and pacifism; and it is in this context that Scaglia takes us on a journey through a wide variety of international initiatives hosted on alpine terrain: from art exhibitions and congresses to schools; from sanatoria to sporting events; from state and non-state cross-border projects to the activities of internationalist bodies such as the League of Nations and the multitude of smaller organizations established around it.

Much space is devoted to description of the alpine resort of Leysin, which offers a breathtaking view of Mont Blanc (110–52). In the Twenties and Thirties, Leysin became an international/internationalist destination and a major center for the treatment of tuberculosis, a disease quintessentially “of the age” (13) that was imagined not only as a physical, but as a spiritual illness. Sanatoria were cosmopolitan places, both in the imagination and in reality, and treated as symbolic of

⁴ Ben M. Anderson, “The Construction of an Alpine Landscape: Building, Representing and Affecting the Eastern Alps, c. 1885–1914,” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 29:2, (June 2012) 156–160; Andrew Beattie, *The Alps: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 103–165.

contemporary society, as in Thomas Mann's novel, *The Magic Mountain*.⁵ Feelings mattered to the success of therapy: besides medical treatments, daily activity schedules had the ultimate goal of regulating patients' bodies and souls, helping them to become fit to re-descend to the plains. Dr. Auguste Rollier, for instance, a prominent physician and the originator of heliotherapy for tuberculosis, a treatment that was much used in Leysin, always stressed the relevance of the mental and emotional components of his curative strategy.

The League of Nations, of course, occupies central stage in the book's narrative. The decision to establish the League's main site in Switzerland, which was not a member of the new international organization, was influenced by the country's neutrality during the war. The choice of Geneva, instead of Berne or Lausanne, which at the time could claim a longer tradition as hosts of international associations and events, was mainly due to the presence there of one of the first and most prestigious of intergovernmental institutions, the International Red Cross. Geneva was soon transformed from a bourgeois, conservative, and provincial town into a major cosmopolitan center and an attractive destination for internationally-minded travelers and professionals. Within a short time, in fact, about thirty international agencies had moved their headquarters to this Swiss town, making it a symbol of interwar internationalism.

The image of the League came to be associated with the town's serene landscape of mountains and lake: the Alps, in particular, served as building blocks in the construction of internationalist imagery and its emotional content. In Scaglia's words, "the League evoked contemporary discourses about mountains as sites for spiritual elevation, solidarity, and friendship, and argued that they could help people form emotional bonds indispensable for a lasting peace" (51). As a result, most of the League's branches, schools, and institutions deliberately chose mountain locations for their initiatives. Often the League's publicity used mountains as symbols of internationalist perseverance, strength, and dignity. Alps figure prominently on stamps and medals issued by the League or in paintings and photographs showing the Geneva headquarters' buildings or activities, and in many of the hundreds of projects submitted for their construction by architects from around the world, the view of the mountains was a crucial feature (70–78).

Overall, Scaglia argues that, starting from the end of the nineteenth century and especially in the interwar years, emotions such as those depicted in the ballet *Excelsior* became a fundamental element of internationalism. Throughout the period, she points out, internationalists expressed such feelings profusely, considering them essential to the achievement of their aims. Her study thus contributes significantly to the recently flourishing field of the history of emotions: their shape, influence, and changes over time in modern societies. We live, it seems, in a highly emotionalized age: both the consumer economy and mass politics endlessly appeal to people's emotions, and an emotionally charged language therefore dominates political and commercial communication, not to mention social media.⁶ However, as Geoffrey Hosking observes, cultural and linguistic historians, for all their skill in dealing with identities, representations, discourses, and narratives, "mostly fall short of understanding what connects those perceptions with decisions and actions." This is where feelings and emotions come in.⁷

Scaglia's volume, therefore, is a welcome and original addition to the historiography of internationalism. Her circumscription of the Alps as an area and the interwar years as a period for study adds flesh and blood to an analysis of the

⁵ Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg*, (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1924), English translation: *The Magic Mountain*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927).

⁶ Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History—Lost and Found* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011).

⁷ Geoffrey Hosking, *Trust: A History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5.

emotions pursued in various international initiatives and institutions. The volume enlarges our understanding of the spirit of an age in terms of one of its most significant creations: a whole spectrum of internationalisms.⁸

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⁸ Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin eds., *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).