

Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*,  
Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, 224 p.

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Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, 224 p.

Since the international turn of the 1990<sup>s</sup>, historians have paid more attention to the concept of internationalism. Inspired by the reflections of Akira Iriye who “argued the importance of internationalizing history,”<sup>1</sup> and by the new questions raised by the intensification of globalization, scholars have put emphasis on topics such as international relations, international institutions, transnationalism, circulation, etc. But working on these new themes have brought some difficulties, the principal one being the question of definition. Consequently, historians are now aiming to do more than writing a descriptive history of internationalism, but to understand the implications of such a concept.<sup>2</sup> Glenda Sluga’s book *Internationalism in the Age of*

1. Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, p. 9.

2. See Patricia Clavin, « Defining Transnationalism », *Contemporary European History* 14, no 4 (1 novembre 2005): 421-39.; Patricia Clavin, « Time, Manner, Place: Writing Modern European History in Global, Transnational and International Contexts », *European History Quarterly* 40, no 4 (1 octobre 2010), 624-40, doi:10.1177/0265691410376497.; Patrick Finney, *Palgrave advances in international history*, Palgrave advances (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York:

*Nationalism* contributes greatly to this effort of making sense of internationalism.

In this very efficient and short book, Sluga proposes new interesting and convincing ways to consider internationalism. Arguing the importance of the latter, she puts internationalism at the center of the long history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The four chapters of the book, each focusing on a different key period of time—the Belle époque and First World War, the Interwar and the creation of the League of Nations, the creation of the UN, and the 1970s—recount the evolution of the phenomenon. In order to do that, Sluga studies the thought of individuals who were participating in the development of ideas that were named “international,” giving an important place to people of marginalized groups such as women and racialized people. This analysis then shows how the language about internationalism has evolved throughout the century, passing from the idea of an “international mindedness,” to a “citizenship of the world,” and, finally, to an impression of “globality.” This focus on the evolution of internationalism allows the reader to really grasp how contemporaries conceptualized internationalism at any given period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although it would have been interesting if she had really addressed this question of change in the language instead of simply describing it.

However, the most interesting part of Sluga’s essay is probably the epistemological reflection articulated in the introduction and in the afterword. She goes beyond the description of the phenomenon of internationalism and reflects on the ways historians have approached the history of internationalism. Influenced by Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, she proposes to look at internationalism the same way he studied nationalism, hence putting emphasis on the “imagined” and

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Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).; Daniel Laqua, éd., *Internationalism reconfigured: transnational ideas and movements between the World Wars*, International library of twentieth century history, v. 34 New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.; Pierre-Yves Saunier, *Transnational History, Theory and History*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

the “representations.” In her effort to put internationalism at the center of 20<sup>th</sup> century’s history, she also urges the importance of thinking nationalism and internationalism not as two opposed categories, but as two elements of “a wider process of categorical thought and action.”<sup>3</sup> She then calls upon a better understanding of the ways nationalism and internationalism are entwined and complements each other. By regrouping these two concepts in one new larger category, Sluga opens the door to a to a whole new way of studying the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And that might be the most significant contribution of Glenda Sluga’s *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*: she succeeded in writing a book that not only introduces new ways of understanding internationalism, but also a more integrated and profound way of understanding one of the most studied concept of the last 50 years, nationalism.

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3. Malkii in Sluga, *Internationalism...*, p. 7.