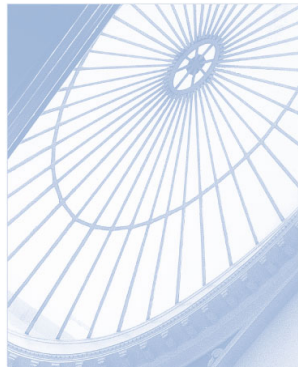


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TAIT KELLER, *Apostles of the Alps: Mountaineering and Nation Building in Germany and Austria, 1860–1939* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), xvii + 283 pp. ISBN 978 1 4696 2503 4. US\$29.95 (Paperback)

Taking the politicization of the Alps as its main focus, Tait Keller's book seeks to explore 'the paradox that Europe's seemingly peaceful "playgrounds" were battlegrounds where competing visions of Germany and Austria clashed' (p. 3). The author presents three threads to his story, the first of which is the 'account of humans in nature', as increasing numbers of middle-class tourists flocked to the Alps from the mid nineteenth century onwards in search of 'respite from the stress and strain of industrial development and the hustle and bustle of city life' (p. 3). A second thread follows the development of mass tourism, with 'humans shaping nature'. Hikers, mountain-climbers, and spa resort visitors 'brought the modern world with them when they civilized the crags' (p. 3). At the same time, these social and economic transformations possessed an overtly political dimension, which provides the final thread to the narrative: 'nature as a national symbol.' Thanks to the 'the labors of "apostles" of the Alps, the mountains came to serve as 'hallowed ground for the secular nation' (p. 4).

Keller divides his narrative into two parts, containing four and three chapters respectively. Part One provides a panorama on the 'opening' of the Alps between 1860 and 1918, whereby the first chapter focuses on the emergence of Alpine associations in Germany and the Austrian half of the Habsburg Monarchy, prior to a process of merger to form the 'German and Austrian Alpine Association' in 1873–4. Here, and in the next chapter, Keller outlines the widespread impact of Alpinists on the natural landscape through the construction of mountain-huts and pathways, while a burgeoning infrastructure of roads, railways, and hotels made the Alps more accessible to the affluent bourgeois tourists who thrilled in the romantic vistas. Chapter three explores some of the tensions arising out of these changes, resulting from the unease that some Alpinists felt about the scale and pace of transformation, especially with the development of skiing as a new form of commercial activity. Arguments in favour of conservationism possessed an evident class dimension, however, with some sections of the Alpine movement rejecting the presence in

the mountains of socialist outdoor groups such as the Austrian Friends of Nature (*Naturfreunde*). Chapter four then outlines how the First World War interrupted the flow of tourists, but led to the intensification of human intervention into the Alpine environment after Italy's entry into the war in May 1915. The respective armies on each side of the front line built new access roads or cable connections, excavated into the stone and ice, and detonated peaks such as the Col di Lana, permanently scarring the landscape.

Part Two of the book describes the attempts at 'dominating the Alps' from 1919 to 1939. Chapter five explores the aftermath of the war and resentments caused by border revisions after the Paris peace treaties (notably, the cession of South Tyrol to Italy). Heightened German nationalist claims to the Alps were accompanied by moves on the part of radical sections of the Alpine Association towards the exclusion of Jews from membership (a trend that accelerated and deepened through the 1920s and 1930s). Chapter six discusses the renewal of tourism in the inter-war period, which proved a difficult process in a testing economic climate. Public work programmes, such as the construction of the Großglockner road in Austria, affirmed anew the 'modernization' of the Alps. This was further fuelled by the genre of Alpine films, many of which glorified the events of the war and an ideal of heroic manhood battling to conquer nature. Chapter seven sketches the intensification through the 1930s of the trends described in the preceding two chapters, as well as looking at the role of Alpine groups in pressing for *Anschluss* between Germany and Austria. Finally, the conclusion offers a brief epilogue on the situation after 1945, rather than reiterating a firm argument that binds together the two main themes identified in the title. Indeed, it is the lack of a fully convincing analytical combination of these two themes that comprises a weakness of this book.

If much of the story that Keller tells is familiar in outline to scholars of the region, he nonetheless provides a useful overall account of developments, filling his narrative with verve, enthusiasm, and numerous interesting vignettes. He effectively synthesizes a good deal of research, while making an original contribution through his extensive use of association periodicals and focus on the work of Alpine activists. In several places, however, the analysis could be more systematic and rigorous. To take a couple of examples: the author cites the role of Alice Schalek as an embedded journalist for a

Viennese newspaper on the Alpine front in the First World War, and the 'spirit of unity' she perceived among the local troops (p. 99). Yet, while suggesting that Schalek 'saw only what she knew from her comfortable bourgeois upbringing' (p. 107), he does not make it sufficiently clear that she was a notorious pro-government propagandist with friends in the Army High Command (Karl Kraus provided a scathing depiction of her activities in *The Last Days of Mankind*). Similarly, the work of South Tyrolean writer, mountaineer, and film star Luis Trenker, described here simply as a 'movie star and veteran' (p. 109), is mentioned without underlining how Trenker's work in the 1930s and early 1940s was bound up with NSDAP film organizations. Such details matter when it comes to the question of 'nation building', but ultimately Keller fails to contextualize this subject convincingly. He jumps too readily between 'German' and 'Austrian' areas of the Alps without looking in detail at the national movement of the 1860s, the subsequent evolution of German nationalism in Austria after 1866-7, regional dimensions of nation-building, and the national competition between Germans and Slovenes, as well as Italians, regarding the Alps. To suggest, for example, that 'Alpine enthusiasts did not think in terms of regional identities' (p. 48) is to overlook the findings and nuances of recent scholarship. Use of relevant works by Dieter Langewiesche, Julia Schmid, and Heidrun Zettelbauer, among others, would have enabled a more effective contextualization of nation-building in the German Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy. Instead, Keller provides a sweeping overview, which often seems to blur the social and political specificities of the different states.

On balance, therefore, Keller is a more effective guide to the mountaineering than the nation-building side of the story, but his work constitutes a solid overview and an enjoyable read.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Nationale Identität der deutschsprachigen Bevölkerung Tirols 1860–1914 (2000), and editor of *Glanz – Gewalt – Gehorsam: Militär und Gesellschaft in der Habsburgermonarchie (1800–1918)* (2011); *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy* (2007); and *Different Paths to the Nation: Regional and National Identities in Central Europe and Italy, 1830–70* (2007).