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The Student Third Class Association (STCA) was established 1923 by James Stanton Robbins, a student at Yale University. The STCA offered cheap and bespoke travel from America to Europe for American college students and sought to replicate the ties of college life at sea, creating an exclusive travel experience run for students, by students. Tamson Pietsch's original article explores the emergence and development of the STCA in the 1920s, and provides new insights into the explosion of transatlantic student travel in the first half of the twentieth century. The article simultaneously makes an important contribution to the history of students and student mobility, the history of tourism, and the history of American foreign relations.

The STCA came into operation at a time when transatlantic connections between American and European universities were being established in great numbers.¹ The historiography in this area has understandably grown in recent years, owing to the centenary of the First World War. This has resulted in a greater focus being placed on that conflict's consequences for the world of internationalism, within which scholarly exchange has received much attention.² Much of the literature on university internationalism focuses on the ways in which the war reshaped and transformed patterns of exchange, with many pre-war links between Germany and institutions in western Europe and north America broken in 1914 and an emphasis on 'inter-allied' connections later emerging in their stead. In particular, France and Great Britain sought to use the war as an opportunity to displace Germany's dominance as the preferred destination for American graduate students before the war. Much of the writing on the war and its consequences for higher education has been framed in terms of international politics, with national governments, educational institutions, and their presidents the key actors, and students less visible.

The cultural diplomacy of the First World War is generally seen as an essential context for the development of new exchange programmes in the post-war period. Perhaps the best-known, but by no means the only example of this is the Junior Year Abroad (JYA) scheme, instituted in 1923 when a group of students from the University of Delaware travelled to Europe to study in French universities. The JYA scheme was later expanded to include ex-enemy states, but owed its origins to wartime cultural politics.³ There is now a growing literature on the role played by students in interwar internationalist

¹ Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000).

² Tomás Irish, *The University at War 1914-25: Britain, France and the United States* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

³ Martha Hanna, "French Women and American Men: 'Foreign' Students at the University of Paris, 1915-1925," *French Historical Studies* 22:1 (1999): 87-112; Whitney Walton, *Internationalism, National Identities, and Study Abroad* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 62-84.

organizations, such as the *Confédération internationale des étudiants* (CIE), which worked with the League of Nations and grappled with national divisions and rivalries.⁴ Much work has also been done on international student activism, organized through universities, Christian networks, and other humanitarian bodies, which increasingly emphasizes the agency of students as international actors seeking to address international problems.⁵

Tamson Pietsch's article builds on ideas of student agency but moves away from seeing the history of student internationalism purely in terms of destinations, national rivalries, and international diplomacy; instead, the author describes the ways in which student identities were recreated on the international journeys. Pietsch explores the activities of the STCA, its founder, James Stanton Robbins, and the STCA's arrangement with the Holland America Line (HAL). This is a history which, in the words of the author, has "disappeared almost entirely from the history of Americans abroad in the early 1920s" (83). The article focuses on the mechanics of international student travel; how it was organised and by whom; how it was advertised; and how it was made bespoke for an eager cohort of students at colleges and universities across the United States. Pietsch utilizes the archives of the HAL, which are housed in Rotterdam, as well as American college archives, student newspapers, and other sources, to make this case.

While the article focuses on students, it has much to say about the business of tourism. In the wake of the First World War and the 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Restriction Act, the number of passengers travelling by steerage plummeted and shipping companies found that they needed to identify new markets. One method of doing this was through the upgrading of steerage travel to 'tourist third.' Travelling third class was traditionally seen as lacking in respectability for middle class passengers and one of the transformations that took place in the mid-1920s, pioneered by the STCA, was the reinvention of third-class travel to appeal to a middle class audience. As Pietsch points out, in this context, the experience of being on a ship at sea was just as important—if not more so—than the points of departure and arrival. Robbins took his idea for a bespoke student travel experience to the Holland America Line, which agreed to take it on in 1924 (incidentally the year of his graduation from Yale), offering third-class passage to Europe for the relatively low price of \$90. The enterprising Robbins timed the offer to coincide with the 1924 Paris Olympics and billed it as "the biggest opportunity ever offered for student travel" (90).

Robbins and his fellow organizers were keen to point out that not only was their scheme cheaper, but it was the experience of travelling with other students that made it both distinct and desirable. They sought to extend the customs and social habits of campus life onboard the ship and thus make the journey a continuation of college life. Their advertising campaigns emphasized that STCA travel was organized for students, by students, with distinct student needs being catered to onboard. The company even developed a university-style coat of arms for its letterhead to distinguish itself from the modernist logos used by other shipping companies at the time. Their advertising campaigns made much use of photography, with images depicting students from different universities fraternizing on deck. The STCA organized women-only decks onboard and made chaperones available for female students. The STCA's advertising pushed an exclusive experience but, as Pietsch demonstrates, exclusivity also meant racial selectivity. The American college campus experience was extended onboard STCA ships, and this was overwhelmingly white.

Robbins used his connections on campus to grow his business; he got the backing of key college presidents and figures in higher education, such as Stephen Duggan of the International Institute for Education. Securing the endorsement of prominent college leaders was useful for advertising, as well as providing the STCA with further legitimacy and opening

⁴Daniel Laqua, "Activism in the 'Students' League of Nations': International Student Politics and the *Confédération Internationale des Étudiants*, 1919–1939," *English Historical Review* 132:556 (2017): 605-637.

⁵ Georgina Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering: Britain and Beyond, 1880-1980* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Guillaume Tronchet, "L'accueil des étudiants réfugiés au xxe siècle: un chantier d'histoire globale," *Monde(s)* 15 (2019): 93-116; Tara Windsor, "The Domain of the Young as the Generation of the Future': Student Agency and Anglo-German Exchange after the Great War," in Tomás Irish and Marie-Eve Chagnon eds., *The Academic World in the Era of the Great War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 163-188.

doors to other campuses, which in turn caused the business to grow. One of STCA's key selling points was this it was a student, rather than a college-led, organization. In an era of growing transatlantic exchanges between universities and colleges, this allowed Robbins's organization to distinguish itself, and this distinct identity was popular. Unlike the Junior Year Abroad, the STCA programme was not credit bearing and gave students choice; they could be selective about where they chose to study in Europe, a real advantage in light of the vast array of summer schools that sprung up in the inter-war years.

Pietsch shows how the enterprising Robbins utilized intermediaries at universities to recruit students to travel with the STCA; deans, teachers and fellow students were given inducements to sell tickets, such as commission on sales or free transatlantic tickets. The STCA also had a publication called the *Hand Me Down*, which consisted of student evaluations and in which businesses could not buy a mention. The system was effective but soon led to a degree of imitation, with individuals at different colleges organizing their own trips.

The collaboration between Robbins and the HAL did not always run smoothly and this tells us much about class and gender dynamics among students in the mid-1920s. Robbins was frequently engaged in a struggle to get the HAL to upgrade the facilities on ships to ensure that the product on offer was truly exclusive. Pietsch cites one complaint from the mother of a female student who was placed in steerage rather than the student passengers on her trip, highlighting the stigma still attached to third class travel by some. Following this and other criticisms, Robbins insisted that STCA tickets and embarkation cards were clearly stamped to denote that they were members of a student party.

The author concludes that the STCA scheme expanded the place of universities and colleges in the history of U.S. foreign relations by presenting to the world a version of the United States as "wealthy and white" (106). The article makes an important contribution to the history of interactions between higher education and international diplomacy. It moves away from a focus on educational institutions and institutional leaders, and instead explores on student agency and its interactions with interwar internationalism. It is this agency—and the desire of students to navigate the waters of interwar internationalism on their own terms—which constitutes one of the original arguments in this piece. This student agency was white, middle class, and keenly aware of its own sense of difference. This article is an innovative new departure in the history of interwar internationalism and is suggestive of longer-term transformations that extended into the following decades. By focusing on the process of travelling and the ways in which this was made bespoke for a student audience, Pietsch sheds much new light on what Martin Geyer and Johannes Paulmann called the "mechanics of internationalism."⁶

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⁶ Martin H. Geyer and Johannes Paulmann eds., *The Mechanics of Internationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).