

In the textual essay that follows Quirk's historical essay, Frederick M. Link suggests that the task of editing Cather's works has been particularly tricky because of her strong engagement in the editorial and publishing process. Cather protected both her personal life and her early writing, disposing of many of her letters. As daunting as the aim of the editors is, Link notes that they are nonetheless

committed to providing readers with the most fully realized text belonging to the period of Cather's most complete imaginative engagement with her work, not with what might be in our opinion the "best" text of that work (269).

As in the other volumes in the series, this one includes the use of "warm, cream antique paper stock," large type, and wide margins as preferred by Cather (x).

In short, the Scholarly Edition of Willa Cather's *Alexander's Bridge* makes an important contribution to Cather research. It adds to our understanding of Cather's identity as a writer, and to our understanding of the text in relation to the larger body of her writing. It provides an important contextual resource that will benefit scholars, but also teachers and new students of Cather's work. Readers of this new edition of the novel and its accompanying essays will be reminded that writing and publishing are painstaking, contested cultural and politicized endeavors. But readers will also find reminders of the many ways in which imaginative writing is always a transformative process.

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Jennifer Eastman Attebery. *Up in the Rocky Mountains. Writing the Swedish Immigrant Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, 304 pp., \$20.00 softcover, ISBN 978-0-8166-4768-2. \$60.00 hardcover, ISBN 978-0-8166-4767-5.

Since the beginning of the Swedish migration to America, thousands if not millions of personal accounts of the experience have been written in letters and sent to friends and family in Sweden. A carefully defined set of these letters, from 1880 through 1917, has now become the subject of Jennifer Eastman Attebery's study focusing on the Swedish immigrant experience in

the states of Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. Many of the extant letters sent from the Rocky Mountain West have been archived at the Swedish Emigrant Institute in Växjö. Attebery examined more than three hundred of these, and in particular, she focused on the correspondence of seventy-four immigrants. Personal voices are certainly palpable in many of the letters, something that she readily shows. Nonetheless Attebery locates shared themes that are clearly demonstrable in the letters. Her thesis is that the personal letters form a genre which in turn can be examined to reveal the Swedish experience in the Rockies. She aligns her study with the work by David A. Gerber and others, who want to unify a theory concerning vernacular textual interpretation. Her focus on Swedish letters takes inspiration from H. Arnold Barton, whose book *Letters from the Promised Land: Swedes in America, 1840–1914* (1975) was also published by the University of Minnesota Press.

Each of Attebery's eight chapters begins with at least one passage extracted and translated from a letter. The author contextualizes the individuals in time and space before launching the main theme investigated and illuminated in each chapter. In the first two chapters of her book, Attebery describes the process of reading the letters from her viewpoint as a folklorist. Among the constellation of several features she mapped, including orality, she identifies a typical formula for the structure of the material at hand. The letters display tri-partite organization: *openings*, frequently containing greetings and expressing gratitude for letters previously received from Sweden; *middle sections*, where the writers develop topics; and *closings*, where the writers typically send warm wishes and ask that greetings be forwarded to other loved ones and acquaintances.

Chapter three is devoted to Swedish-American "*nodes and networks*" in the Rockies; chapter four to the ways *work* was described in the correspondence; chapter five to the idea of *sending money* back to Sweden; chapter six to evidence in the letters that the writers were identifying themselves as *Westerners*, and chapter seven to the *religious language* apparent in many of the letters. All of the chapters give a very competent impression, but chapter 4, "I work every day": Becoming American workers," stands out as particularly fine. The descriptions of working conditions found in the letters lend themselves admirably to Attebery's thesis, which is clearly supported.

Examining letter after letter, Attebery looked for the definable forces that shaped the Rocky Mountain Swedes into Westerners and Swedish Americans. Her book marshals evidence that the letters actually reveal processes



of identity transformation. Not surprisingly, many Swedes living in the Western Rockies wrote home using vivid images of the mountainous landscape (ch. 6). Line after line, the correspondents described the hardships they had endured. Attebery demonstrates how the commentary they wrote on their survival and subsistence in itself was a sure sign that they had become different individuals. Regarding the ways Swedes became Westerners, Attebery provides highly informed descriptions of Swedish socio-economic conditions in the late 1880s and early 1900s to place the letter writers in their American context.

In the final chapter, she looks objectively at the method she applied and the lessons she was able to derive. She acknowledges that "Folklorists studying historical materials" are "nonparticipant observers," in part because archivists have previously played a decisive role in collecting the materials (170). In addition, she acknowledges that her interpretation will be "partial" (171) in the sense that she will only be able to "partially reconstruct" the relationships the letter writers had with the people they wrote.

In my opinion, a particularly difficult challenge Attebery faced was how to achieve balance in a book-length treatment of the letters. As mentioned, she wisely limited her study to a geographical region and time span, but this still left the problem of how to spotlight many of the individual letter writers without stealing the show from the main themes she wanted to reveal in the vernacular genre. Several individual correspondents represented in her material gave piquant impressions; other writers sent poignant accounts back to the homeland. Attebery gives them space in her book, but thanks to the framework she skilfully constructed, their individual voices do not take over.

Attebery's prose is precise and structurally adept so that the organization of the volume itself can adapt itself to different kinds of reading experiences, likely appealing to general readers and scholarly readers alike. She makes great effort to keep her chapters accessible to non-specialists even while introducing theoretical terminology. For example, early in chapter one, Attebery briefly introduces the concept of the *vernacular* as she has chosen to apply it to the letters, but she elects to postpone her full explanation so that she can put some immigrant letters in the forefront of the readers' attention.

An acknowledgement that Attebery makes from the beginning is that the translation of the letters was a collaborative effort with Christina Johansson, head of archives at the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research

Center, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Johansson's expertise in translating and interpreting Swedish texts from the time period under investigation shines throughout the book. Her capable translations make the letters readily accessible to readers who do not know Swedish.

The book would be an excellent choice to include on a booklist for graduate courses on Scandinavian studies, folklore, American studies, and the American West. Thanks to the clarity of Attebery's writing, it would even fit well in advanced undergraduate courses. All topics are fully contextualized so that readers on both sides of the Atlantic can readily follow the thread of Attebery's argumentation. The book rounds off with a substantial appendix, which gathers up supplemental details concerning the letter writers and presents many of the letters in translation in full. The appendix also contains a map of Sweden with designations of the regional provinces and communities where the immigrants were born. This is useful, especially for American readers. It would also have been equally useful to have a map of the Rocky Mountain West, as not all readers will have a mental map of the Rockies.

Attebery has capably demonstrated that personal letters can reveal the forces that defined the experiences of the Rocky Mountain Swedes over many decades. The book will inspire analysis of immigrant letters from many vantage points and will undoubtedly be a forerunner for future comparative research.

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*Reconstructing Hybridity: Post-Colonial Studies in Transition.* Edited by Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2007

*Reconstructing Hybridity* takes its starting point in the conviction that hybridity theory enables us to fulfil one of the most central tasks in the humanities today, that of critically examining and questioning those boundaries and phenomena we have learned to take for granted. The concept of hybridity is therefore fundamentally connected to a process of unlearning what earlier generations established as truth, and of seeing the ethical dilemmas inherent in what previously counted as moral and civilized behaviour. The scrutiny which we are encouraged to undertake concerns mainly our "knowledge" about peoples and cultures, specifically areas through which