

American interest in early twentieth century Swedish political and social developments and supports the author's thesis that the commemorations need analysis in a multi-national context.

The 1948 Swedish Pioneer Centennial had similar experiences in that many individuals, organizations, and locations vied to participate in the celebrations. It differed because of strained political relations between the U.S. and Sweden following World War II. During that conflict, while Swedish authorities had declared neutrality, they took actions that the allied powers considered pro-German. After the war the government established what came to be called the Swedish Institute (SI) to help smooth relations with the U.S. particularly when it chose to remain out of NATO. This situation seems to have had little direct impact on local plans developed as part of the Swedish Pioneer Centennial efforts, but local historical societies, religious groups, and clubs all joined to demonstrate the importance Swedish immigration and settlement to Mid-western development. Swedish representatives attended ceremonies in both Chicago and Minneapolis as others had ten years before at The Rocks in Delaware.

Throughout this analysis of the two ethnic celebrations of remembrance the author shows clearly how by being Protestant and from northern Europe gave Swedes a favored position within the American ethnic mosaic. Few others enjoyed such easy entry into the developing society and support when celebrating their experiences. This narrative leads the reader through the goals and actions of a welter of local, state, national, and international commissions, church and civic groups, historical societies, and concerned individuals to develop its central thread. The Swedish historical commemorations of 1938 and 1948 serve as persuasive examples of the many-faceted nature of such international events.

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Miroslava Chávez-García, *Migrant Longing. Letter Writing Across the U.S. – Mexico Borderlands*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018. XI + 261 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4696-4103-4.

In her recently published book, *Migrant Longing. Letter Writing Across the U.S. – Mexico Borderlands*, Miroslava Chávez-García, professor of history at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and daughter of Mexican im-

migrants who settled in the United States in the 1950s and 60s, analyzes a collection of more than 300 letters exchanged between her family members and acquaintances, those living in the U.S. and those who stayed in Mexico. For many years the correspondence remained in the family archives. To read such personal and often intimate letters today, half a century after they were written, offers a significant way of drawing attention to an issue the American media of our time has been preoccupied with: the U.S. – Mexico border. Against the reality of the border wall being constructed, the idea of letter writing, a somewhat dated and slowly disappearing form of communication, acquires new power.

Miroslava Chávez-García makes use of her professional expertise to put the letters she is studying into historical perspective, analyzing carefully both the American and the Mexican historical and cultural context in which the letters were written. At the same time, she remains sensitive to the letters' private character. At the heart of Chávez-García's critical approach is her desire to read the family letters not only as a record of Mexican immigrants' experience of adjusting to life in the United States, but also of the experiences of the people left behind in Mexico: parents, siblings, spouses or lovers. It was mostly young Mexican men who, in the period the letters covered, ventured to emigrate to *el norte* in search of a better future.

The first two chapters of *Migrant Longing* (defined by the author as “an emotional, mental, and physical response to living in the borderlands”) present the transnational lives of Chávez-García's parents working in the U.S. but always remaining in close contact with the family and the community in Mexico, culturally and emotionally between *aquí y allá* until their tragic death in a car accident. Chapter 1 recreates in a detailed way the father's long-distance courtship of the mother. José, who took advantage of the *bracero* program (an agreement between the U.S. and Mexico to bring Mexican farm laborers to the American Southwest, introduced in 1942), managed to get permanent residence in the United States, and eventually married a Mexican woman and established a family with her. The courtship, carried on in the form of letters José calligraphed, took long. Conchita, the girl of José's choice and Chávez-García's future mother, to whom chapter 2 is devoted, was an open-minded young woman interested in pursuing her education. Instead, she had to work hard to provide for her impoverished family, especially for her ailing mother. José and Conchita did not marry out of love; but intimate relations developed between them with time.

Chapter 3 also presents a relationship between two people, Paco and

Chonita, Conchita's older sister. Although their story had the potential of becoming a romantic tale, they were not able to deal with the hardships of making a living and pursuing a long-distance love affair on the two sides of the international border. In chapter 4 we follow the decline of José Chavez's father, the family patriarch. With his sons in the United States and his health weakening, he lost control over the family and lived in poverty. His daughter, influenced perhaps by the modern lifestyle associated with the United States, married a man the father did not approve of, Rogelio, a family friend of whose life we learn in chapter 5, was unable to realize his American dream of becoming a wealthy immigrant from Mexico. Like so many Mexican young people who tried their luck in the borderlands, he suffered from emotional instability and economic insecurity.

Frequently both written and read in silence and in solitude, letters sent across the U.S. – Mexico border represent attempts to bridge distances between people living in the two neighboring yet very different countries. The epistolary form has been used before to seek connections between Mexico and the United States. In 1918 the daily newspaper *El Paso del Norte* published a collection of letters by Olga Beatriz Torres, a young Mexican girl who, together with her family, fled from the revolution in her home country. The Torres family settled in El Paso, Texas, and Olga corresponded with her aunt who remained in Mexico to look after the family estate. Her letters, written in Spanish, appeared in a collection entitled *Memorias de mi viaje*; many years later, in 1994, they were translated into English and brought out as *Recollections of My Trip*. In 1986 Ana Castillo, a Chicana writer, published an epistolary novel, *The Mixquiahuala Letters*, in which her protagonist is reflecting on her travels in Mexico in search of the Chicana identity. Both Torres's and Castillo's letters, similarly to those discussed by Miroslava Chávez-García's in her newly published book, are meant to alleviate the sense of alienation and the grief of absence by creating moments of intimacy, however illusory, between the senders and the addressees.

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Jeffrey C. Stewart, *The New Negro. The Life of Alain Locke*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 932 pages. ISBN: 978-0-1950-8957-8.

The history of African-American intellectuals in the United States during the era of federally sanctioned segregation 1896-1954 has been dominated