



Welcome Home Mr Swanson: Swedish Emigrants and Swedishness on Film

Ann-Kristin Wallengren

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Between 1840 and 1940, more than one million people emigrated from Sweden to America. The fact that so many chose to leave to seek a better life across the Atlantic was a major trauma for the Swedish nation. Filmmakers were not slow to pick up on an exodus that proved to be of lasting importance for the Swedes' national identity. In *Welcome Home Mr Swanson*, film studies scholar Ann-Kristin Wallengren analyzes the ways in which Swedish emigrants and Swedish-American returnees are depicted in Swedish film between 1910 and 1950, continuing on to recent films and television shows. Were Sweden's emigrants seen as national traitors or as brave trailblazers who might return home with modern ideas? Many of the Swedish films were distributed to the United States, and Wallengren discusses the notions of Sweden and Swedishness that circulated there as a result. She also considers the image of Swedish immigrant women in American films—a representation that bore little resemblance to the Swedes' idealized view. Wallengren shows how ideologies of nationality had a prominent place in the films' narratives, resulting in movies that project enduring perceptions of Swedish national identity and the American way of life.

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