Journalism, Letters, and Nation: The Newspaper Letters of Samuel Bowles's Across the Continent (1865)

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Abstract

Newspaper publisher Samuel Bowles set out on a trip in the early summer of 1865 to see and write about the United States of America. A leading figure in journalism and in political discourses before and after the Civil War, Bowles shared his experiences in a series of thirty-two letters, addressed to the readers of his influential Massachusetts newspaper, the Springfield Republican. The letters were subsequently compiled into a book, Across the Continent: A Summer’s Journey to the Rocky Mountains, the Mormons, and the Pacific States, with Speaker Colfax, and constitute an engaging narrative of adventures from the plains of Kansas to Salt Lake Rocky Mountains, to the Pacific Coast and the Pacific Northwest with the personality of the author and bring textual snapshots of 1865 America to life. Although Bowles’s letters may, in other contexts, be dismissed as ephemeral newspaper articles, the Across the Continent letters suggest something more enduring, something more important to the often disparate studies of journalism, literature, and American nationality. This study, therefore, briefly establishes Bowles as a literary journalist writing in the form of letter with implications for an ideology of nationalism that was emerging in the wake of the Civil War. It is the first critical study of Bowles’s Across the Continent letters to adopt a literary perspective. Chapter One provides historical background and contemporary commentary on Bowles to establish his influence in 1865. Building on existing approaches to letters and letter-writing, known as epistolary theory, Chapters Two and Three introduce and explore the form of epistolary journalism, using Bowles’s letters of Across the Continent to illustrate and support my critical model. Chapter Four then suggests that many of the same qualities that make Samuel Bowles’s letters function as epistolary texts also place Bowles within a tradition of early literary journalism. Finally, Chapter Five examines ways that Bowles’s letters articulate the new ideology of nationhood emerging in

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Mind the gap: Materiality of gendered landscapes in Deerfield, Massachusetts, ca. 1870-ca. 1920, the regional part of the artesian basin discords Toucan, as in this case the role of the observer is mediated by the role of the narrator.