

JULIA IN AMERICA

I wonder how you have it and if you are living....

(From a letter to a rural parsonage in Sweden, 1907.)

It seems so strange.

Six autumns passed since I've seen you all.

The years seem like slivers of time.

Olivia I last saw in blue and lace blessed
as the strawflowers from our meadow little Brita
offered, yet the child clutched her mother's skirts
as if she'd be swept with me across the Atlantic.

I last glimpsed Wilhelm sporting his *studentmössa**
as the train glided through Lund's gingerbread
and spires, one hand salute-still aside his sadness.
I waved until I thought my arm would crack
the grimy window, watched his figure fade
among the carts and crates along the platform.

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Some workday mornings
my Smith Street car assumes
the oak and iron of the coach
that clacked away from Eslöv station,
Monday's soot and cinders swirling,
tracks steel ensigns in the sun.
I watched Momma to our vanish points,
coiled gray-strake hair, crisp cotton blouse,
wrapped by black from belt to sole,
the sturdy fingers close to me for eighteen years
petition-laced just beneath her waist.



*Zeth Höglund with *studentmossa*, 1902. [from Wikipedia]