

Reviews

Markku Henriksson, *Route 66. A Road to America's Landscape, History, and Culture*. Foreword by Susan A. Miller. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2014. 268 pages. ISBN 978-0-89672-825-7.

In 1920, the United States had three million miles of “highways” – usable for only horses and carts. With the rapid expansion of car ownership, the nation needed more and better roads (14-15). Established in 1926 and abandoned in 1977, Route 66 was rather short-lived. Yet, it is “the road” of America, if not the world. Not only was the road used for a short time, “a one and only” route actually never existed: “The location of the road varied almost annually,” depending on local interests and politics (21).

Route 66 has become such a potent symbol of America, because it “cuts right through the heart of America.” From the Old West to the New West, through the most fertile and driest lands of the country, through poverty and richness. Although the road itself was in poor condition for most of its life, it was the only direct route from Chicago to Los Angeles, and its roadside services provided a living for previously isolated communities (24).

Professor emeritus of American Studies Markku Henriksson has written a thorough and meticulously researched book on the “Mother Road.” He not only documents the cultural history of the road and its vicinity, but also discusses many topics relevant to the entire United States of an era. The book is much more than the usual guidebook or travel journal. For that reason, the book might not serve those that are, perhaps romantically, interested in the road alone; – but on the other hand, it might capture the attention of someone not fascinated by the road at all.

Henriksson manages to catch the reader’s attention from the beginning. He sets the scene in a way that takes the reader to the parking lot of a rundown roadside diner; or the hustle and bustle of downtown Chicago. Henriksson guides his readers along the entire length of Route 66, from east to west, the direction that many people would have traversed the road

in the mid-twentieth century. The book's chapters roughly correspond to the states through which drivers would pass as they journeyed from Illinois to California. The book's bibliography is quite informative, including not just printed sources, but also references to songs, television shows, and movies.

Rich in anecdotes about people and places, *Route 66* not only portrays the history of the road's life, but also much of the area's history all the way back to the time before Euro-Americans. Henriksson gives plenty of attention to literature, both academic and fiction, and music about the road. The choice of words might not always be quite idiomatic, but the language remains true to Professor Henriksson's style.

It is a pity that the pictures are black-and-white, small, and in many cases, lack focus. High-quality color prints would add to the appeal of the book. That being said, *Route 66* is an impressive cultural history, to be read on the road but just as well at home.

Many of the observations of the route have been made in 1996 and 2002, which means many of the mentioned sights or restaurants might no longer exist. In a way, this adds to the legend of the road as a celebration of what once was; or what we imagine there once was. "... Route 66 is America at its best: not how the US has been, but how it should have been" (22).

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John McLeod, *Life Lines: Writing Transcultural Adoption*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. 246 pages. ISBN 978-1-4725-9038-1.

In the 21st century, issues of exile, migration, integration and belonging take center stage in political, social and cultural contexts. Discussions of transnational and transcultural topics proliferate, yet adoption has yet to enter the political or academic limelight. As the editors, Peter Boxall and Bryan Cheyette write in introducing the Bloomsbury "New Horizons in Contemporary Writing" series, in which John McLeod, *Life Lines: Writing Transcultural Adoption* appears as the fourth title, "In the wake of unprecedented technological and social change, contemporary literature has evolved a dazzling array of new forms that traditional modes and terms of literary criticism have struggled to keep up with" (www.bloomsbury.com). McLeod's monograph certainly dazzles, in that *Life Lines* convinces