his stimulating readings with the interdisciplinarity and the generosity that characterize both the monograph and its author. *Life Lines: Writing Transcultural Adoption* empowers not only those in the adoption triad but everyone journeying through globalization and its discontents—without idealization or didacticism. McLeod does not promise "friction-free portability" (35) for his ideas, but he makes our passage through his book worth-while indeed.

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Matthew Carter, *Myth of the Western: New Perspectives on Hollywood's Frontier Narrative*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014. 246 pages. ISBN 9780748685585.

The American Western has been declared dead as a doornail on a regular basis since the late 1960s. The commonly held view of the genre is that after the "classical" period of 1940s and '50s, in which the "winning of the West" by manly men was celebrated, the genre moved into "revisionist" territory as a way of reflecting the turbulent changes in U.S. society in the 1960s. This meant films that display a new level of cynicism and featured more complex heroes as well as a new awareness of race, gender, ethnicity, and the very fabrication of the frontier myth. And just as the Vietnam War highlighted the cracks and fissures in America internally, Sam Peckinpah almost single-handedly killed off the genre in the bloodbath that was *The Wild Bunch* (1969). While revisionist westerns have come up for air every so often, most notably in the early 1990s (*Dances with Wolves* and *Unforgiven*), since then Westerns have, in effect, been "post-Westerns," films that focus on the ruins left in the wake of the collapsed frontier myth. This chronological approach to the Western neatly follows the historical, cultural, and political development of the U.S. and makes the genre an obvious mirror for understanding U.S. society in the 20th century.

Or so we would like to think. Matthew Carter adamantly disagrees in his monograph *Myth of the Western: New Perspectives on Hollywood's Frontier Narrative*. The study is not an "exhaustive" and "expansive survey of the genre" (17). It is first and foremost "a critique of the established scholarly readings" of the Western, including, of course, "a critique of Western films themselves" (16). Carter states his central aims clearly: "to offer a

series of alternative arguments," to question the "aesthetic and ideological-mythological functions of the [above-mentioned] introspective categories: 'classical', 'revisionist', and post'" (4). So where the majority of old and recent Western scholarship supports "patterns of development" and identifies "narrative uniformity," Carter sets out to undermine the patterns and disclose narrative complexity. He sets out, in other words, as a trail-blazing maverick. And while the ride could perhaps have been more straightforward, it delivers new horizons worth taking in.

The Introduction lays out the theoretical framework: a continuation of recent scholarship in genre theory that stresses "the transience of genres" and deprives "them of eternal or essential features" (5). It also utilizes and expands the arguments in Ted Gallagher's 1986 essay "Shoot-Out at the Genre Corral. Gallagher critiques the so-called mythological approach that has been the default mode in much scholarship on the Western. It then summarizes the "cultural, historical and political premises" at the roots of the Western and its traditional scholarship, in other words, industrialization, Buffalo Bill, Frederick Jackson Turner, and Theodore Roosevelt.

Chapter 1: "A Good Man with a Gun" continues in a summarizing manner by defining key terms and outlining the traditional scholarly approach to the classical Western; "genre evolution theories and their political-allegorical variants" (17). It then moves on to a specific case study, George Stevens' *Shane*, widely celebrated as "an archetypal Western, as *the* classical western" (29). In an interesting move, Carter spends the first part of the chapter (seventeen pages) on a meticulous "classical reading" of *Shane*. He then spends the rest of the chapter challenging and critiquing the traditional evolutionary approach. He politely contends that "certain aspects" of the classical reading are valid, but it is "merely one interpretation among many" (51). By employing genre theory, Carter convincingly discloses the "ambiguities and fissures (un)contained within the narrative that open other possibilities for critical analysis" (51). He concludes that the knightly Shane is actually a rather ambiguous hero, and that one can also see in the film a debunking of the "triumphalist brands of frontier mythology" traditionally associated with it (69). While Carter's traditional reading of *Shane* is not exactly news to scholars versed in the Western, his approach of setting up the old reading against his new analysis is certainly pedagogical and will be welcomed by anyone teaching Westerns in the classroom.

Chapter 2 delves deeper into the dark heart of the Western to look at the captivity narrative and the genre's general tendency to depict Indians

as racial Others. It's an engaging discussion where Carter draws initially on John Ford *Stagecoach* (1939) and then in detail on Ford's *The Searchers* (1956). Again, Carter presents the evolutionary approach that defines most of the scholarship on *The Searchers* before making his own powerful deconstruction of the film in order to show the extent to which it blurs the racial binary between whites and racial Others, thereby questioning the validity of the triumphant frontier narrative. It is a praiseworthy analysis that expands usefully on our understanding of one of the most praised and critically acclaimed Westerns.

Carter then moves into revisionist territory in Chapter 3. He outlines the commonly held view of the revisionist phase (it started with Ford's 1962 *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*) and points to how this view was accompanied by the rise of New Western History. To Carter, the problem with New Western historians, like Patricia Limerick, is that they reduce "the entire formal and thematic scope of the Hollywood Western to that of an ideological sentinel" (116). It is this essentialist view that Carter's study as a whole tries to readjust. A case in point is his reading of Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* (1992), again prefaced by an earlier scholarly analysis (in this case by Stephen McVeigh) that sees *Unforgiven* as "*the* postmodern Western" (119). Carter then goes on to show why he finds that reading unsatisfactory. Comparing the film with classics from the 1950s and looking at both the town of Big Whiskey, the role of the prostitutes, the nature of violence, and the figure of the gunfighter, Carter concludes that *Unforgiven* "does little to critique or problematize either the so-called classical Western or the mythic theme of regeneration through violence" (151).

In the second part of the book (consisting of chapters 4 and 5), Carter moves into the new millennium to examine the so-called post-Western, and he does so by focusing primarily on Tommy Lee Jones's *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (2005) and the Coen brothers' *No Country for Old Men* (2007). This part differs in style in that it is less busy with undermining the evolutionary theory prevalent in Western scholarship. Carter can breathe more freely now, and the result is more fine analysis that is less defensive than that of the first part. Carter expands his theoretical scope and to include discussions of cultural hegemony and transnationalism. The Western genre today, Carter argues, is still culturally, politically, and historically valuable in its ability to circulate ideas and discussions about *la frontera*, borderlands, and the constructed mythologies that exist on both sides of the border. *No Country for Old Men* is read as a film that both has ideological

significance in the way it "(de)construct[s] the cultural rhetoric behind" the Afghanistan and Iraq wars and, more broadly, critiques "the influence that the myth of the West holds over the sociopolitical trajectory of the present-day United States in its role as the world's figurative lawman" (196).

While reading, I wondered about the absence of specific scholarly works. Especially because the study is so keen on critiquing established scholarship on the Western, and on contributing to the "scholarly debate" (17), the absence of Richard Etulain's *Telling Western Stories* (1999) seems odd. Likewise, it is simply erroneous to claim that *No Country for Old Men* has not "received much … scholarly attention" (20). Carter does not include any of the essays in the 2009 anthology *No Country for Old Men: From Novel to Film*, eds. King, Wallach, and Welsh. Also, while his analysis of *Unforgiven* is both insightful and rightfully refutes the traditional reading of the film, there is no mention of Janet Thumim's essay on "Masculinity and In/Competence in *Unforgiven*" (published in two different anthologies in 1995 and 1998), a critical omission, especially since Carter reaches some of the same conclusions as Thumim.

But these omissions aside, *Myth of the Western* is a necessary work in the continuous evolution of Western scholarship. Overall, Carter's arguments, his method, and his examples are convincing. He is refreshing in his argumentativeness, and his approach of showing what he critiques makes the book extremely valuable in the classroom.

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Jan Olsson, *Hitchcock à la Carte*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015. viii, 261 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-5804-6.

Body-centered branding is a key feature of Jan Olsson's engaging study of one of cinema's greatest stars, Alfred Hitchcock. However, it is not as film director we meet Hitchcock here, but as host of his own television shows and, above all, as builder of his own brand by performing a certain type of figure for American media. In referring to Hitchcock's figure, Olsson argues he is able to "highlight the constructed nature and multiplicity of [the] renegotiated, refashioned, and paradoxical Hitchcock as a discipline and identity in motion, across a body of works and with many working bodies" (8). This is what makes the book particularly interesting and rel-