

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.

Thomas Ærvold Bjerre

University of Southern Denmark

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-

evant, and what makes it stand out in the veritable sea of existing research on Hitchcock. Noting a “lack of attention to small-screen Alfred” (9), the book focuses on the television series’ *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour*, and draws on the popular discourse on Hitchcock in newspapers, general interest magazines, and photographic periodicals. Drawing inspiration from Thomas M. Leitsch’s (1999) study of TV Hitchcock, Olsson argues that “rather than just an intertwined strand in the larger fabric of the Hitchcockian oeuvre, it represents a resounding echo chamber for reception and reputation. For marketing and global brand recognition the television work was truly paramount and served Hitchcock well...” (9).

The book consists of an introduction, three chapters, two interludes (set between chapters 1 and 2, and chapters 2 and 3), and a conclusion. The introduction, with the subheading “A Body for All Seasons”, sets the table by formulating the study’s aim and motivation (see above) and by establishing the centrality of food and bodies (together with murder and humor) for the Hitchcock brand. Chapter 1, “Feeding the Legend”, expounds on the Hitchcockian figure as he moved from Britain to Hollywood, and how his physique became the primary topic in the American press. Interestingly, Olsson shows how the press’ gibes about Hitchcock’s weight were in fact promoted by the man himself as a strategy in the building of the brand (21-22). The marketing of the highly constructed off-screen Hitchcock was done by seeking out journalists, and he (and his studio) took advantage of photo journals, such as *Life* and *Look*, to maintain visibility. Olsson has managed to dig up lots of fascinating photographs, treating them (and the news stories) as what Gérard Genette calls *paratexts*, functioning as accompaniments to a text and the layers of significations surrounding it (84). All this, Olsson contends, was “essential for brand recognition and brand dissemination”, but as Hitchcock stepped into the world of television such strategies became less important in order to remain visible to the public (42).

The first interlude, titled “Tasty Bodies”, at last takes us to Hitchcock’s forays into television. It is a thematic analysis of the teleplay “Specialty of the House”, in which members of an exclusive supper club are regularly served up one of their own recently murdered “lifelong members” believing it to be a lamb dish. Here Olsson shows us how the macabre combination of food and murder (here in the extreme subtext of cannibalism) are set up as crucial ingredients for Hitchcock’s “body-obsessed franchise” (63-67). The second chapter, “Smaller Screen, Bigger Brand: Hosting Hitchcock”,

then expands on how television worked to strengthen the brand, using and inspiring “bodily descriptors and culinary metaphors” (70). Other important brand signifiers, according to Olsson, are Englishness and comedy. As a television host Hitchcock framed himself as English (British stories, actors, and settings), and his performance as host included wry comments on the events of the teleplay and snide complaints about commercials (74-75).

The second interlude, “Double Hosting”, is a close analysis of the episode “Arthur”, in which the protagonist murders his former fiancé and feeds her to his chickens. The aim of this analysis seems to be to establish a connection between small-screen Hitchcock and his overall oeuvre, as it ends with a discussion of concerns such as the perfect murder, a predilection for strangling, and a merging of murdering and eating (109-115). Standing on their own, the two interludes offer interesting analyses of two episodes that clearly demonstrate the centrality of food, bodies and murder, but as interludes they unfortunately become somewhat disconnected from the rest of the book.

Chapter 3, “Hitchcockian Reflections: Traces, Proxies, Doubles, and Corpses”, adds more flesh to the idea of Hitchcockian as dependent on “body-tinged notions inside the films and teleplays” (117). By way of Roland Barthes’ notion of the author of a text being inscribed in said text, the chapter traces Hitchcock’s authorial presence through “tones, themes, and suspense patterns read as Hitchcockian” (118). Hitchcock, Olsson argues, “can be found not as a carefully hidden meaning cluster but as a many-sided figuration bearing on his physicality” (121). Issues of food and eating have here been left behind for a focus on bodies. Finally, the conclusion again connects food and bodies, arguing that his hosting of the television series allowed Hitchcock to assume control over the body discourse. Television, Olsson contends, was crucial for the creation of the Hitchcockian brand, turning Hitchcock into a legend (210-212). A quote sums it up: “[T]he name and eponym ‘Hitchcock’, just like ‘Salvador Dalí’ and ‘Andy Warhol,’ represents intangibles beyond the oeuvre; it is a convoluted bricolage of art, commerce, marketing, and celebrity indicative of twentieth-century media culture at large” (210).

I have no major issues with the book, which is generally engaging and critically acute, but I find parts of it less motivated than others. I have already mentioned the interludes, and I would in fact welcome more metatext in general. I also wonder, at times, about the camera. Aside from in one section (“Undercutting a Ghost Director”) in the third chapter, the camera

is noticeably missing from the analysis. Could the framings of the figures, doubles, bodies, and the food not also be significant in communicating the Hitchcock brand?

Johan Nilsson

Örebro University

James McDowell, *Happy Endings in Hollywood Cinema: Cliché, Convention and the Final Couple*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014. 218 pp. ISBN 978-0-7486-9977-3.

In *Happy Endings in Hollywood Cinema*, James MacDowell examines both how critics have construed the happy ending as well as how references to happy endings have become a trope in Hollywood films, although it is a trope that is often qualified in films (133). The work functions as a critique of the tendency, which appears perhaps too often in film scholarship as judged by the examples MacDowell provides, for film scholars to draw overly broad conclusions.

After a chapter that examines the characteristics of the conjoined narrative devices—the final couple and the happy ending, the book goes on to look at the happy ending in relation to closure, unrealism, and ideology. MacDowell shows how the conventional assumptions about happy endings stem from a lack of attention being paid to detail: not only the details of the film’s ending but the details of the narrative prior to the ending. A film must prepare its ending, by establishing the trajectory of the couple toward one another, for example, and the various ways that a film does this can lead to various degrees of openness or closure as well as different degrees of happiness. MacDowell’s reading of *The Graduate* (1967) exemplifies how readings of endings that ignore the details of the preceding narrative can tend to fall back on generalizations about endings.

An interesting discussion that recurs in the book concerns an interesting (although commonplace) assumption: that there can be “a happy ending taking place after the end” of the film, a possibility implied, for example, by the ending of *Sideways* (2005) (122). Such speculation takes the (neo)formalist story/plot distinction to intimate the notion of a narrative to include not only inferences that can be drawn about what has happened prior to a film’s beginning, but what will happen after the final credits have rolled as well. The film ends but the narrative (more specifically, the story) is forever.