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

its readers of the centrality of adoption to debates relating to globalization, transnationality, (in)equality, family, sexuality, and much more.

Life Lines begins and ends with an adoption tale, McLeod's own. His ground-breaking book combines his scholarly and personal journey into adoption and adoption writings, with English-language transcultural adoption texts located in Britain, the United States and Ireland indicating his range and comparative approach. Acknowledging and citing earlier literary and interdisciplinary scholars on adoption, such as Marianne Novy, Cynthia Callahan, Mark C. Jerng, and Margaret Homan, he brings diverse adoption texts and contexts into academic conversations and opens up spaces for multi-directionality and ideological and discursive creativity. Interested in "*what transcultural adoption makes possible*" (5) rather than in adoption as a primal wound, a rescue narrative, or middle-class assimilation of racial and cultural others, McLeod asks a series of questions, including "What new modes of thinking and enacting intimate transpersonal relations have been materialized by transcultural adoption? How might the prevailing understanding of racial, cultural, national and biogenetic attachments be progressively revised in the light of transcultural adoption stories?" and "Which new narrative forms does transcultural adoption require and create?" (5). In addressing these questions, *Life Lines* offers its readers—and not only those participating in adoptive relations—an opportunity to revisit and revise established categorizations of race, culture, home, and identity.

McLeod focuses on four relevant aspects of transcultural adoption representations, each with a chapter of its own: secrets, histories, traces and bearings. Chapter 1 on secrets includes astute analyses of Mike Leigh's popular film *Secrets and Lies* (1996) and Andrea Levy's novel *Small Island* (2004), which to many viewers or readers exposed and critiqued the secrecy of adoption and the transracial reconciliation of members of the adoption triad--biological parent(s), adoptee, and adoptive parent(s). McLeod demonstrates, however, that both Leigh and Levy practice and uphold the secrecy they supposedly condemn. Mei-Ling Hopgood's *Lucky Girl* (2009) fares better with McLeod, in that it advocates what he terms "adoptive being" by seeking to reveal rather than conceal the secrets of adoption processes and participants. The concept of adoptive being becomes a vital component of McLeod's analysis of adoption texts. Inspired by Jean-Luc Nancy and others, McLeod argues that "blood lines can be rethought in much more imaginative and non-essentialized ways, as one filament of the polyform personhood that adoptive being proposes" (27). Adoptive being, in short,

moves beyond the boundaries of nature and nurture into a space in-between or beyond, where "the polyform cultural transactionality upon which creating personhood depends" (28) appears and reverberates.

Subsequent chapters in *Life Lines* explore crucial issues in the adoption process. In Chapter 2, which zooms in on E. R.Braithwaite's *Paid Servant* (1962), Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992) and Sebastian Berry's *The Secret Scripture* (2008), McLeod shows through his innovative readings how stories of adoption reveal public prejudice and social restrictions and assist in subverting asymmetrical power relations. Braithwaite seizes transcultural adoption as a tool for subverting British racism; Morrison proposes, in McLeod's analysis, a "critique of biocentric origins as central to a racially progressive future" (35), while Barry takes on the silencing of single motherhood and illegitimacy in Ireland. Chapter 3 investigates the trope of tracing, familiar to TV viewers following adoptees to remote biological parents or relatives, often cast as a journey towards wholeness and selfhood. Especially Catherine McKinley's *The Book of Sarahs: A Family in Parts* (2002) and *Indigo* (2011) suggest through experimental and innovative forms and narratives a plural mode of being adopted, including "new rhetorical resources that might admit and rearrange myriad lines of attachment" (161). In Chapter 4, "Bearings," McLeod arrives at texts that move beyond normativity of various kinds into alternative and invigorating practices, what he finds to be "ways of thinking and acting adoptively by bearing new rhetorics of transpersonal relations that orient us towards alternative and empowering forms of human possibility" (225). This chapter includes Barbara Kingsolver and Caryl Phillips, with special praise reserved for Jackie Kay's *Red Dust Road* (2011).

Life Lines is a stimulating work. It includes a range of innovative thoughts—in details such as McLeod's argument for sound, not sight, as a means of resemblance (do adoptees *sound* like their parents?) and, on a larger scale, his transformation of being adopted into adoptive being. His chosen writers articulate "alternative ontologies of self" (23), but McLeod also makes his readers notice adoption everywhere—for this reader in classics such as Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* or Philip Roth's *Everyman*—so that adoption indeed becomes everybody's story, the life lines of "heredity and happenstance" (233) that constitute identity and selfhood in (post)modernity. McLeod's work importantly inserts adoption into cultural and social discourses; it further gestures towards adoption activism and legislation, and towards historical and cultural difference, thus providing

his stimulating readings with the interdisciplinarity and the generosity that characterize both the monograph and its author. *Life Lines: Writing Trans-cultural Adoption* empowers not only those in the adoption triad but every-one journeying through globalization and its discontents—without ideal-ization 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 *Un-forgiven*), 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, cul-tural, 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 Fron-tier Narrative*. The study is not an "exhaustive" and "expansive survey of the genre" (17). It is first and foremost "a critique of the established schol-arly readings" of the Western, including, of course, "a critique of Western films themselves" (16). Carter states his central aims clearly: "to offer a