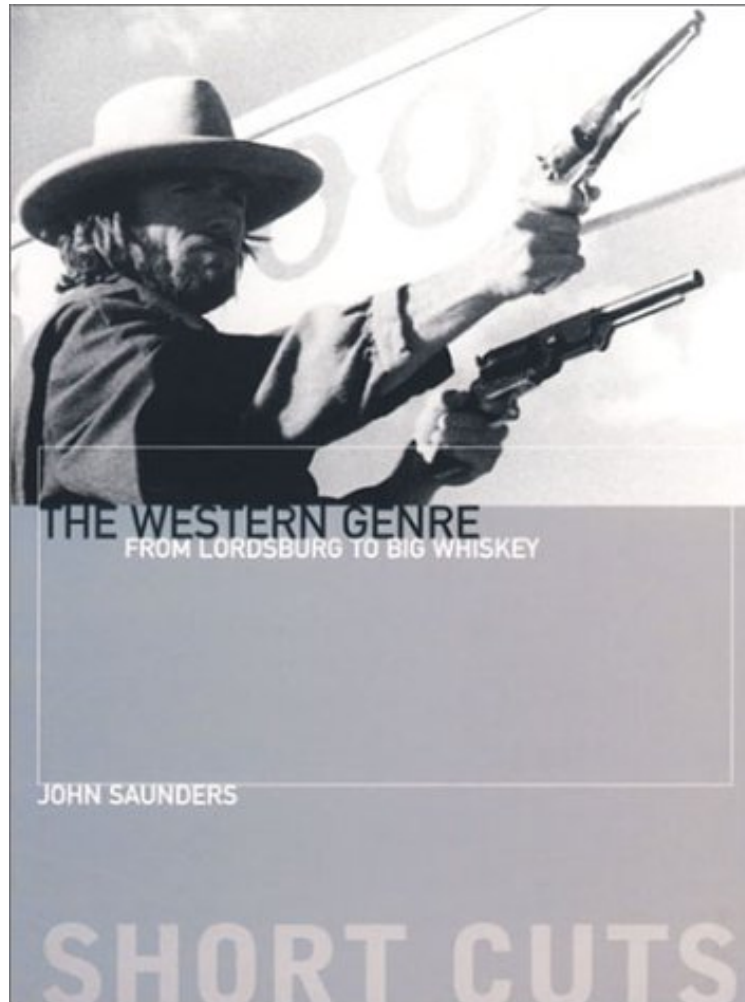


(Download free ebook) The Western Genre: From Lordsburg to Big Whiskey (Short Cuts)

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John Saunders

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John Saunders : The Western Genre: From Lordsburg to Big Whiskey (Short Cuts) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Western Genre: From Lordsburg to Big Whiskey (Short Cuts):

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. shame on Wallflower Publishers and the authorBy Otto Santa AnaIn 25 years of professional scholarship, this book (2nd edition) has the worst copy editing. In chapter 1, three full paragraphs of the text are repeated, and on page 11 the chapter abruptly ends in mid sentence and certainly not at the end of the author's thoughts. These errors are not a matter of the manufacturing of books --since the errors are in mid page---but sloppy copy editing. SHAME.16 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Short Cuts: The Western GenreBy John P. Garry IIIBrevity is the soul of wit--and of wisdom. Brevity finally hit film studies in the last decade with the publication of the on-going BFI Film Classics and Modern Classics series, and continues with the

welcome appearance of Wallflower Press' Short Cuts series. Published in London, England, and so far almost exclusively featuring UK-based authors, the series focuses on genres, historical periods, production forms, and formal dimensions rather than individual films. Always wise and occasionally witty as well, The Short Cuts series offer fast-paced, concise, learned, readable, and often fun studies of The Horror Genre, Disaster Movies, Science Fiction Cinema, The Star System, Early Soviet Cinema, with more topics on the way. The seventh entry, *The Western Genre: From Lordsburg to Big Whiskey* by John Saunders, is based on detailed summaries and analyses of 12 films, grouped around mid-century classics, the cinematic depictions of the outlaw Jesse James, the changing status of the Indian, the genre revisions of the 1960s-70s and the reconsidered genre in the 1990s. Dutiful summary and description is the keynote of the book, which often has a dry Cliff Notes quality in the opening chapters. Although he focuses on just a few titles, and doesn't plow a lot of fresh ground, Saunders manages to fruitfully lasso most of the genre's major films, directors, stars, thematic variations, historical precedents, and references many of the classic scholarly works on the genre. And he is not at all shy to point out shortcomings in established classics and Oscar winners. Surprisingly, Saunders' first in-depth analysis is of *Shane* (George Stevens, 1953), a film which serves as "the archetypal western, a self-conscious attempt to reproduce the familiar themes and characters in a classically pure state," but a film which also appears when the genre is already half a century old, giving just brief consideration to predecessors like *The Iron Horse* and *Stagecoach*. *Shane* has been analyzed quite a bit and Saunders' analysis lacks the profound, archetypal interpretation offered by Robert B. Ray in *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema* (1985), a book too many film scholars seem to have not heard of. Although director Anthony Mann resides in Andrew Sarris' second tier of great directors, he is far from a household name. Saunders includes him in a classical troika of Ford-Hawks-Mann, suggesting that Mann's reputation will continue to ascend. The book becomes more compelling when dealing with "revisionist" or "deconstructive" westerns like *The Wild Bunch*, *Little Big Man*, *Dances With Wolves*, and *Unforgiven*. The tension between classic form and revisionist impulse, as well as the turbulent social history of the 1960s and its aftermath, quicken the pulse of his discussion. He gives short shrift to the Sergio Leone westerns, which deserve at least as much space as forgotten entries like *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* and *The Long Riders*, and he completely ignores Robert Altman's bitterly revisionist westerns (*McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, *Buffalo Bill and the Indians; Or Sitting Bull's History Lesson*) and the low-budget existential westerns of Monte Hellman (*The Shooting*). He briefly considers the migration-extinction of western themes to other genres in a sentence on Clint Eastwood's *Space Cowboys*, but ignores the larger transference of western values to other genres--notably science fiction and the action film--as evidenced in postmodern/pastiche/hybrid films like *Star Wars*, *Outland*, and *The Road Warrior*. I suspect that omission is deliberate. Saunders probably prefers his genres straight--or only bent so far--and films like *Blazing Saddles*, *Dead Man*, and MTV westerns like *Young Guns* may seem merely desecrations, unworthy of discussion. The term "postmodern" is mentioned warily without definition--suggesting a menacing philosophical vulture circling over the dying western like the vultures seen at the end of *The Wild Bunch*. Other Short Cuts titles, such as *The Horror Genre* and *Science Fiction Cinema*, are more willing to engage the high concept, more blatantly commercial variations on classic genres. Like many western films, the book ends on an elegiac, nostalgic note; Saunders laments that *Unforgiven* could be the last memorable western. Perhaps it is inevitable that a scholar of the classic western might identify with Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) in the last shot of John Ford's *The Searchers*: his job done, turning his back on a future in which he doesn't belong, may not be welcome, and may not want to take part in--striding into the whirling sands of memory.

The Western Genre: From Lordsburg to Big Whiskey offers close readings of the definitive American film movement as represented by such leading exponents as John Ford, Howard Hawks, and Sam Peckinpah. In his consideration of such iconic motifs as the Outlaw Hero and the Lone Rider, John Saunders traces the development of perennial aspects of the genre, its continuity and, importantly, its change. Representations of morality and masculinity are also foregrounded in consideration of the genre's major stars John Wayne and Clint Eastwood, and such films as *Shane*, *Rio Bravo*, *The Wild Bunch*, and *Unforgiven*.

"Powerfully evocative... "The Western Genre" helps the reader develop a basic cinematic, thematic, and conceptual vocabulary for watching some truly great films." -- Jason Vest, Washington University in St. Louis, "Film and History"
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About the Author John Saunders is senior lecturer in film and literature at the University of Newcastle, UK.