

the activities of the working class with [their] popular literary formulas" (6) have largely failed.

While some readers may choose to resist this sociological interpretation of modern story-telling, there is little doubt that most of the democratic processes outlined have indeed taken place. Even more illuminating is the new prominence given to the stern morality that these formulas of the mystery genre would all seem to embrace. The bourgeois triviality of Hollywood and the banal decadence of the 1930s would alike appear to have been rejected in the face of much sharper notions of (moralistic) pursuit, confrontation of evils, and the burgeoning need to redress various social imbalances and parasitic or manipulative behaviour.

JOHN S. RYAN
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND, ARMIDALE
NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA

Barbara Johnstone. *Stories, Community, and Place: Narratives from Middle America*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990. Hb 148 pp. Index. ISBN 0-253-33134-X.

Using stories from America's "Heartland," Barbara Johnstone examines the dynamic interactions among personal and community narrative processes, sociolinguistic community construction and maintenance, and the formation and function of geographic and ideological "place" in everyday storytelling.

Based on student collections of stories told by long-term residents of Fort Wayne, Indiana, Johnstone's investigation highlights the value of contextualized narrative studies. Non-minority "mainstream" America has long generated the legal codes and privileged behavioral norms for Americans in general. This "mainstream" now also represents the "monotone background against which minority populations are foregrounded," writes Johnstone (4). As her phrasing implies, too often this "monotone background" has been assumed to be homogenous as well as dominant. Johnstone provides evidence to the contrary. Her analysis de-

tails the specifics of the local narrative style employed by white, middle-class Fort Wayners, and she defines some of the ways this style differs from middle-class Whites in other parts of the US as well as from other ethnic groups in Fort Wayne.

Johnstone organizes her material into overlapping and cumulative treatments of the title themes: story, community, and place. The first few chapters present an overview of previous scholarship dealing with the role of personal narrative discourse in the structuring of experience and society. Her reality-construction approach emphasizes the interactive and co-creative nature of sociolinguistic community and individual storytelling. She demonstrates basic narrative concepts such as theme, structure, and use in easy-to-follow examples.

Shifting her focus to "community," Johnstone explores the reciprocal and co-creative relationship between narrative and social norms. Her examples show how the stories and their tellers reflect and perpetuate the group's conventions for behavior and conversational interaction and how those conventions, in turn, generate an identifiable local storytelling style. Then, stating the obvious but easily overlooked maxim that "a person who behaves in completely conventional ways would also be completely boring" (19), Johnstone examines the presence of individual creativity within the prevailing conventions. She discusses some of the strategies tellers use to delineate subsections of narratives, to facilitate transitions, and to summarize and provide coherence between segments. She also advances a model of "interpretive interaction" on the part of tellers and listeners to account for a flexibility within the conventions that allows a teller to create a personal "style" while still leaving story understandable to listeners.

With her final theme, Johnstone shows how geographic location serves to unite individuals into, and define them as, a community. At the same time, Johnstone contends, stories about a location serve to create it as a "place" to which community members—and their stories—are anchored. Using a recent event in the life of Fort Wayners and their city, Johnstone traces the "Flood of '82" from factual reports treating the floodwaters as an inanimate force to be dealt with by city officials, to emotional and value-laden stories about volunteers and evacuees, to the emergence of a authoritative "collective story," to the marketing of the flood as "a symbol of the city's moral character" (113).

Of special relevance to legend scholars are Johnstone's analysis of the local norms concerning the truth value of various narrative genres, and her comments on intertextuality, collective authority, and the use of "place" as a symbolic resource for establishing the type of "truth" the teller wishes to express. Among white, middle-class Fort Wayners, personal experience narratives "cannot appear to be fictions, or else they will count as lies," writes Johnstone (101), and "specific details about places, times, and people help to create an aura of reportage" (90). Indeed, if fictional stories are framed as real experiences (such as in tall tales), Fort Wayners feel "tricked and angry" (102). Johnstone considers Fort Wayners' personal experience narratives to be explicitly referenced to familiar, "real world" people and places because, within this group, such stories must both incorporate their conventions for conversational interaction and meet their standards for veracity and authority. The use of everyday specifics anchors their stories to their community in both ways. According to Johnstone, the more any narrative becomes detached from "real world" specifics (particularly place), the more important the basic "point" of the story becomes. Such progressive detachment increasingly transforms the story into a symbolic, fictitious, could-happen-to-anyone "tale" about being human. Conversely, the more specific and familiar the location, the more closely the narrative is tied to the actual, everyday lives of teller and listeners, and they are more likely to consider the "truth" of a narrative to be explicitly meaningful to their own lives rather than merely illustrative of the human condition. Although she does not make the connection specifically, Johnstone's comments on relative truth value and geography may help to explain some of the impetus toward localization that is one of the hallmarks of contemporary legends. The practice of naming real world (especially familiar and immediate) places and citing "nameable" (if somewhat removed from the scene) actants accommodates both the need to emphasize the "point" of the legend and the need to "ground" it in the interests of a particular community and to its conventions for non-fiction. Her comments are also pertinent to the dissonance that often results when a story shifts genre categories from "experience narrative" to "contemporary legend" and to the authoritative power of the "collective" nature of the legend.

The book is well organized; Johnstone guides her readers

through the text with introductions, chapter summaries, and frequent, cumulative summaries. The index is adequate for the size of the volume. Johnstone's writing is clear and accessible, and while her overview of previous scholarship may seem a bit cursory to narrative scholars, she efficiently consolidates the essential insights of a variety of recent approaches to personal narrative. This volume could serve as a good, central text for a course on personal and community narrative.

DONNA WYCKOFF
COLUMBUS, OHIO

Paul Kooistra. *Criminals as Heroes: Structure, Power and Identity*. Bowling Green, Kentucky, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989. Pb 202 pp. Index. ISBN 07972-432-3.

Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956), the German poet and playwright, in *Galileo*, 1943, said, "Unhappy is the land that needs heroes." Paul Claudel (1868–1955), the French playwright and poet, wrote in his *Journal*, "People are only heroes when they can't do anything else." H.L. Mencken (1880–1956), the American editor, essayist and philologist, said, "When I hear a man applauded by the mob I always feel a pang of pity for him. All he has to do to be hissed is live long enough." It is a pity that those last words appeared in *Minority Report* in the last year of Mencken's life, when he was eighty-seven years of age.

All of these authors were contemporaries, and none of them was noticeably referring to criminals, which begs the question: Is there any difference between the structure of heroism in the dishonest and the lawful man? Paul Kooistra selects for heroism in his dissertation such outlaws as Frank and Jesse James, Billy the Kid, Butch Cassidy, the heroic criminals of the 1930s, American social bandits and the modern heroic criminals like Patti Hearst and Charles Manson.

Hero is an outdated word. It is ancient Greek, ultimately adapted from the Latin, popularised in Middle English and defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as