

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.

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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Hero is an outdated word.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

(1) A name given (as in Homer) to men of superhuman strength, courage, or ability, favoured by the gods; at a later time regarded as intermediate between gods and men, and immortal. 2. A man of extraordinary valour and martial achievements; one who does brave or noble deeds; an illustrious warrior. 3. A man who exhibits extraordinary bravery, firmness, fortitude, greatness of soul, in any course of action, or in connexion with any pursuit, work, or enterprise; a man admired and venerated for his achievements and noble qualities...

In this third definition, Kooistra's work is immediately justified. Heroes, contrary to popular impression, are not troubled by motive. They can be valiant, daring, brave, intrepid, bold, dauntless, gallant, courageous, fearless, noble "in any course of action" whether in war, whatever the pacifists may say, insurrection, whatever the views of the democratically elected authority, and even in crime, whatever the opinion of law-abiding citizens.

The author's theoretical framework of the argument is that to become a Robin Hood figure—a hero who robs the rich to give to the poor—he must be cast as "common folk," not as a member of a deviant sub-culture. The trouble is that Robin Hood is himself a myth who has eluded the pursuits of academics for centuries, even though our criminal hero, if he exists, must work against "enemies" of the people who corrupt the state, "adulterers" who have led to the divorce between law and justice. The nature of the criminal acts must be considered. Kooistra says:

If the Robin Hood criminal is to be a figure of justice outside the law, then his crimes are, in a sense, really seen as punishments meted out to deserving victims. But if his actions are too violent and exceed fairness, his behaviour will be difficult to rationalize and justify. A criminal who robs the corrupt rich may become a Robin Hood figure. A criminal who kills their children and rapes their wives will not.

Unfortunately, this definition really belongs to the fictitious Robin Hood and the real-life peasantry of Nottingham, which had no parallel in American history and is, therefore, a spurious imitation. Even so, in a world forever in search of heroes, it is easy to use this framework, to find excuses, rather than reasons, for anti-social heroes. IRA terrorists who planted a bomb in the

underground car park of the British Houses of Parliament and killed Airey Neave, MP, World War Two hero, friend and confidante of the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, were hailed as "heroes to someone." Surely, those who blew up the men, women and children at the Enniskillen November 11 remembrance service were not.

Ronald Biggs, the "tea boy" brought in "to make up the numbers" in Britain's £3 million 1963 Great Train Robbery—then the world's biggest—was immortalised because he escaped from a thirty-year jail sentence by climbing a twenty-foot prison wall on to a furniture removal truck, underwent not very convincing plastic surgery, fled to Australia, married, fathered children and found safe haven beyond extradition in Brazil. No one mentioned the train driver who was coshed and died prematurely.

East End of London gangster twins Ronnie (now dead) and Reggie (still jailed) Kray ran protection rackets and each killed perceived enemies to show their toughness. "I've done my one," said Ronnie. "Now you do yours." Reggie obliged. And the twins are still lauded as valiant.

They are pale imitations of Jesse James who, according to their biographer, Ramon Adams, was lauded in more than three hundred books and pamphlets. The Krays had to be content with a dozen books, one film, photograph albums and money-making interviews while incarcerated. The Krays were nevertheless seen as part of the once poor, Cockney rebellion against the rich, just as Jesse James and others were seen as heroic bank robbers struggling for the South against the "foreign" domination of the northern Yankee. Unfortunately, the twins frequently forayed into the rich west end of London fawn on, and be photographed with, publicity-starved celebrities, which gave them a popular and heroic identity in the public mind. The media obliged by regularly publishing the pictures.

Because President McKinley and his friends paid coal miners less than a dollar a day for their work, their contemporary, Butch Cassidy, the bank robber, was also granted valourous outlaw status. Thus social and economic conditions, though often irrelevant, are believed to play an important part promoting villains in the public mind to the ranks of the valiant. Even though the money stolen seldom finds its way into the pockets of the under-paid.

The dust had not settled on the Oklahoma City explosion, carnage and horiffic death roll of April 1995, when some hero-crea-

tors (including Congressmen) rushed to defend the existence, beliefs and operations of the private militiamen held to be responsible. Is not a person who defends the ancient American right to bear arms to further his perceived freedom a hero by definition?

While the sociologist is entitled to analyze such excuses for the definition of a hero, the media really decides the issue immediately and without too much, if any, analysis. In a world which by nature rebels against authority, the media treats every piece of news as instant truth, restricted in fact by reasons of space, where every person and event can only be seen in black and white, with no shade of grey, where there is ample opportunity to appoint a new literally justified hero who risks his own life to rob others.

How much of this can help us understand why people commit crimes and particularly spectacular, violent crimes, as Kooistra suggests, is difficult to fathom. Heroes of one sort or another will always be with us. As humourist Will Rogers put it most succinctly, "We can't all be heroes because someone has to sit on the curb and clap as they go by."

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J. W. Nienhuys, ed. *Science or Pseudo? The Mars Effect and Other Claims: Proceedings of the Third EuroSkeptics Congress, October 4-5 1991, Amsterdam*. Utrecht, Sichtung SKEPSIS.- III.-[Skeptische notities 8], 1992. vi+226 pp. Index. F125/BFr450

These *Proceedings* present seventeen papers. The first four discuss the paranormal in general (1-41). The next seven papers are more empirical and discuss alternative medicine, teaching of science, and dowsing crop circles. Irrespective of their original discipline (psychologists, jurists or scientists) a common approach of hostility to paranormal claims unites the authors (42-111). The same hostility permeates the third group of papers, which discusses the Mars Effect—a claim, made in several publications