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The New Journalism: im Introduction

one of many names sacribed to this phenomenon by its critics. It is also recent literary trend there are many doubts as to its definition and much books, scholarly articles and panel discussions. As is the case with any developments in American nonfiction writing, has been the subject of many media. The latter, however, will not be dealt with here and for our purposes press and radio, rock journalism and other changes in in American journalism in the 60's such as: the emergence of the underground niques to create a new kind of nonfiction, but also covers all the changes of a new group of journalists who abandoned traditional journalistic tech-New Journalian is a very broad term and does not only refer to the writing journalism, underground journalism, parajournalism or new monfiction. The often called: the nonfiction novel, alternative journalism, experimental confusion in the terminology that it employs. The New Journalism is only New Journalism and its main practitioner, who says: we shall accept a definition suggested by for Wolfe, the spokesman of the The New Journalism, the most frequently used label for the recent the established

*...the New Journalism is the use by people writing nonfiction of techniques which heretofore had been thought of as confined to the nowel or to the short story, to create in one form both the kind of objective reality of journalism and the subjective reality that people have always gone to the novel for."

This definition and the New Journalism itself cameed many contro - versies and the critics involved in them range from those denying the existence of this new literary phenomenon to people like the already quoted from Wolfe who accepts a very extreme view and even states that the

New Journalism is:

"... causing a panic, dethroning the novel as the number one literature ary genre, starting the first new direction in American literature in half a century."

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Although the statement can be argued with it is conspicuous that this non-fiction trend managed to raise reporting to the level of artistic form and produced a number of books which are now considered among those belonging to the group of the best postwar literary achievements, to mention only Truman Capote's In Cold Blood, Morman Maller's The Armies of the Might or Tom Wolfe's The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test.

of rapid change in manners, of student unrest, the Elack Panthers, Women's here were usually those of Pynchon, Barth, Barthelme and others. In such many critics called "the crisis of the novel". They thought that American of the best American monfiction writers. And it is not surprising that just flected in the American novel of the 60's, but they are present in the works ade of the Vietnam War, the Kennedys or the Moon-Shot, but also the decade the realistic novel, which had almost disappeared from the literary scene. as a reaction to this process, as an attempt to fill the vacuum left by patterns and that the novel had reached a dead end. The names mentioned novelists confined themselves to following surrealistic and irrealistic sition in the 60's. communal living, ecology and what not, All these phenomens are hardly re-Lib, Gay Lib, mini skirts, the Pill, drugs, the hipple movement, rock music, as one of the most interesting in American history. It was not only a dec-This disappearance is quite surprising in the decade which may be regarded circumstances the New Journalism, or the nonfiction novel, were considered the decade of the New Journalism's birth. The same decade witnessed what Juzz Age, it is Tom Wolfe - the monfiction writer - who holds the same poas a novelist - Fitzgerald - might be considered as a chronicler of the All three novels were written and published in the 60's which was

His works and those of people like Norman Mailer, Jimmy Breslin, Dan Wakefield or Hunter S. Thompson were a chronicle of the 60°s and at the same time a sort of alternative to the standard press whose objectivity was a myth. In times when it was impossible to distinguish between fact and fiction, when two different newspapers printed two different versions of the same event there was a need for something which would take the place of "who-what-when-where reporting". There was a need for new jour-

The beginnings of the trend are hard to trace. Its enemies often argue that the New Journalism is not really new since people like: Defoe, Addison or Tyain used the techniques that it employs now a long time ago. The wolfe although admitting his indebtness to Boswell, Dickens, Twain or Orwell, maintains that some features characteristic of the New Journalism

Capote's book infuriated many critics, since stooping down to the level of monfiction writer was at that time regarded as degrading for a famous novelist. But at the same time what Capote did increased the reputation of the New Journalism. Soon In Cold Hlood for which the author coined the phrase "monfiction novel" was followed by a book by another famous writer, Norman Hailer. With his The Armles of the Night subtitled "History as a Novel. The Novel as History", Mailer not only joined the New Journalistic circles but also became one of the key figures in this genre. At the same period many other well-known novelists tried nonfiction. New names such as Terry Southern, Joan Didion, Hunter S. Thompson appeared on the journalistic scene. At the end of the decade the New Journalism was in full swing.

much dislogue as a means of characterization, wolfe or Capete realize representatives of the New Journalism is the device of shifting point of hand or a tape recorder, a procedure often applied in preparing many of its original form or as close as possible to it the New Journalists had their moral viewpoints and attitudes. To present the full dialogue in that the very language used by the characters can create and describe be found in the 19th century realistic novel. Just like Dickens who used logue. This device, like many other techniques of the New Journalism, can of historical narrative. Another device is a very extensive use of disthe use of "scene-by-scene construction" leaving as little as possible point program. One of these points, a device often employed by dandified guru" 4 is Tom Wolfe. In his writings he follows his own four sion to journalism, or as some would have it "the genre's self-appointed and theoretician of the movement, a man who introduced an esthetic dimenthe new journalistic books. One more technique employed by Wolfe and other to interview the persons they wrote about for a very long time using short-As has been already mentioned, the most important representative

may not be relevant to the story. Taking this for granted, Wolfe seldom reader a possibility of a wider view on the world and presents its comporter assumes here that he is being more honest if he makes ar attempt presents his own point of view but rather that of his characters. The reperson narrator / prevailing in autobiographies, memoirs and many forms of of view is very characteristic of all Wolfe's writing: character to that of the reporter himself, and this type of shifting point ducer Phil Spector, the point of view changes from that of the described nalists. In the following quotation from a piece on a famous record proconsciousness technique - one more device of fiction used by the New Jourtence. Presentation of characters' thoughts often results in a stream of plexity and disorder. Tom Wolfe seems to employ this device very often sents facts, dates and numbers. With this the New Journalism offers the at presenting his characters' subjective experience than if he merely prestandard journalism/ presents only one point of view which in many cases view and the use of different types of narrators. The use of the first do it in a very subtle way even within one paragraph or a sen-

"All these raindrops are h i g h or something. They don't roll down the window, they come straight back, toward the tail, wobbling, like all those Mr.Cool snow heads walking on mattreesses. The plane is tarding out toward the runway to take off, and this stupid interfaced water wobbles, sideways, across the window. Fill Spector, twenty-three years old, the rock and roll magnate, producer of Philles Becords, America's first tree-age tycoon watches ... this water pathology... It is sick, f a t a l. He tightens his seat belt over his bowels..."

Wolfe developed this technique later in his The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test where, morover, he often uses his characters' type of language even when it is the narrator who tells the story. This creates the illusion of sesing the action through the eyes of someone who is actually involved in it, which — in Wolfe's opinion — is more effective than the use of the neutral style of the depersonalized narrator. The presentation of the interviewing them very closely about their opinions, thoughts and emotions very often it requires a very serious commitment on the part of the reporter who in order to be close to the described events joins the same and goes to Vietnam John Sack, the author of M, a book on the Tietnam wer/ or joins the Hell's Angels to be eventually badly beaten by them

The last of the four points mentioned by wolfe is the stress on the recording of customs, manners, fashions and all sorts of detail that can describe the character's position in society. This stress on detail,

once again, is not anything new - this technique of realism deriving from Dickens and Balzac is only rediscovered by the New Journalism, and the novelty here lies in introducing it into nonfiction.

Not all the New Journalists follow this program and Tom Wolfe does not confine himself to the four points only. The majority of the critics writing on wolfe notice that it is something else that makes him so original. They call Wolfe a "post journalist" and discuss mainly his style. Undoubtedly many of Wolfe's mannerisms of writing, his unusual use of punctuation marks, some of which never existed before, empty spaces, nonsense words, pleonasms, the excessive use of the historic present or onomatopeis make Wolfe's style very rich and original. His seemingly strange use of punctuation marks and other similar devices is, however, always functional, hobert scholes makes an interesting remark concerning Wolfe's style. Writing about The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, a book presenting the famous American novelist Ken Kesey, the leader of the hippis - like Marry Pranksters, their wild bus rides through the United states and their experiments with LSD and other mind-expanding drugs Scholes notices:

"Wolfe's chameleon styles are more reflective of his material than of himself. /.../ Here he has an ideal subject for his rhetorical virtuosity. Recreating the psychedelic experience in words requires the verbal equivalent of Day-Glo and Stroboscopic light. Wolfe has the equipment."

A similar comment is made by Michael L. Johnson who writes about the same book: "...his /Wolfe's/ style grows out of the fantastic events of the story." These seem to be the lest replies to the critics maliciously remarking that Wolfe's experiments with style are done for pure effect and are in no way justified.

As has already been mentioned not all the New Journalists followed step by step the four point program of Wolfe. Norman Mailer, whom many call "the best journalist in America", the author of meny books, three of which: The Armies of the Night, Miami And the Siege of Chicago and Of the Fire on the Moon are fine achievements of the New Journalism, follows a slightly different route. Mailer's books are projections of his own personality which - as it seems - is always as important as the described events. Mailer, unlike Wolfe, is always present as a protagonist in his books. In The Armies of the Night the author uses the third person autobiographical form and speaks of himself as "Mailer" and not only does he present and make comments on the famous March on Pentagon, the political situation of the United States in the late 60's or more generally his search for the American psyche, but also uses the book as an outlet for showing his own personality and skill. The estress on "ego" is clearly

visible here. The book is full of digressions, its chronology is very often broken and long, detailed descriptions co-exist side by side with reflective, almost poetic passeges. Very often Kailer makes use of direct authorial intervention, a device quite common in the 18th or 19th century novel. This may be seen in the following quotation:

"Let us then make our comic here the narrative vehicle for the March on Pentagon".

The New Journalist is then free to use any even very old fashioned device of fiction.

In The Armies of the Night there are constant shifts between megalomania and self-deprecation. Mailer often calls himself a "snob of the worst sort", a "crocked person" or an "absolute egomaniac". While the presence of negalomania is quite easy to explain, the occurence of self-deprecatory phrases and scenes calls for some explanation. It seems that Mailer does this to win the reader's trust so that the reader may put more confidence in his reporting. This is only one of many various devices used by the New Journalists to gain credibility.

Mailer and Wolfe although very different writers and personalities, the latter being more detached, skeptical, interested in manners rather than exploring morals, social rather than political, share some common features which have been summarized as follows:

"They are more involved in what they report than a journalist would be, and they bring to their reporting more efficient intellectual apparatus, a richer framework of idegs and attitudes, a perspective more historical than journalistic".

This comment seems to be true of most of the New Journalists and summarizes well what the New Journalism is about.

Tom Wolfe, Truman Capote, Norman Kailer not only try to make reporting an art form but also personalize their writing thus strengthening its credibility. It is this process that results in one more label that the New Journalism is given by its critics - "personal journalism". This name is often used in connection with Hunter S. Thompson, the author of Hell's Angels, Fear and loathing in las Vegas, Fear and loathing: On the Campaign Theil '72 and many magazine pieces. In his first book Hell's Angels the guthor uses the first person narrator and at the same time is one of the characters. This book is not a typical example of what is called "personal journalism" or as Thompson himself calls it "Gonzo journalism". His own reactions and emotions which occupy most of the space in his later books are not so important here. The Angels, their customs and life are the main subject of the book. Thompson's analysis of the group is close to the New Journalism not only because of the techniques that are employed by the author. What brings it close to it is also the author's intention to show

the real picture of this subculture phenomenon and contrast it with the official, distorted picture of the Hell's Angels. In his book Thompson uses quotes from the articles on the Hell's Angels taken from the established magazines and from police reports and then contrasts them with the reality which he thoroughly familiarized himself with by living with the Angels.

Thompson, like Mailer, makes use of a centre-stage participatory manner of presentation. In his later books and articles it is the author's reality that is presented and the supposed subject of his books seems to be purely incidental. Such a method of reporting is often criticized for being mon-objective. Thompson is evere of this and comments:

"Objective Journalism is a hard thing to come by these days. We all yearn for it, but who can point the way? /.../ The only thing that came close to Objective Journalism was a closed-circuit TV setup that watched shoplifters in the General Store at Woody Creak, Colorado -/.../ With the possible exception of things like box-scores, race results and stock market tabulations, there is no such thing as Objective Journalism. The phrase itself is a pompous contradiction in terms."

The problem of objectivity versus subjectivity or, more generally, fact versus fiction, in the New Journalism demands a separate study and can only be signalled here. Wolfe's statement that the New Journalism brings us the news together with a unique way of looking at the world from the viewpoint of different characters, offering in this way both objective and subjective reality, although superficially correct, should be amplified and carefully studied.

Only a few names have been presented in this paper, but there are many other writers trying to pursue reporting as an art form in their own individual ways. Tet it was fom Wolfe, Truman Capote , Horman Mailer and Hunter S. Thompson who stirred up most of the controversies.

Critical opinions concerning their works came into being with the New Journalism itself, and it seems that it was Dwight MacDonald who was the first to air his views and critical remarks about the new literary genre, calling it in 1965:

"...a besterd form, having it both ways, exploiting the factual authority of journalism and the atmospheric license of fiction. Entertainment rather than information..."

MacDonald and many other critics saw the New Journalism's bad side in what they called "the lack of solid reporting". Literary devices seem, in their opinion to influence to a considerable degree the factual contents of the New Journalism's final products and lessen the amount of journalistic information. There is also a feeling among other journalists and critics that the new monfiction movement gives us emotions instead of facts and that the

new journalists' insistence that the reader sees life in the 1 x terms sives as a result a distorted picture of the described events and persons One of the critics ironically remarks:

"The New Journalist is in the end, I think, less a journalist than an impresario. Tom Wolfe presents... Phil Spector! Jack Newfield presents... Nelson Rockefeller! Norman Mailer presents... the Moon Shot!" 12

To see whether the characters' thoughts and actions in some new journalistic pieces were not just made up by their authors many critics took the trouble to interview those persons, only to become disappointed with their answers, and to conclude that all the details were indeed very accurate.

Some critics also suggest that the New Journalism is open to criticism in another respect. It is often claimed that reporters who take us inside the heads of their characters cross the border between reporting and creative writing, but that since they remain bound to the fact, they fall chart of high artistic quality.

There are many other charges against the New Journalism and there will be many more as long as the New Journalists claim that they belong both to serious, creative writing and to journalism. It should be understood that the New Journalism is something unique. As a new literary genre it operates on different levels and obviously must be understood in different terms. Ferhaps Maller, Wolfe and the rest should not be called the New Journalism ts but, as Ihab Hassan suggests, "factual fictionists". The necessity for introducing new terminology to discussions on the new literary phenomenon seems to be indispensable. As long as the critics commenting on books like The Armies of the Night or The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test treat them as journalism or fiction only they miss the point.

Streszczenie

Artykuż przedstawia w ogólnych zarysach tak zwane "nowe dziennikarstwo amerykańskie". Ten nowy prąd w literaturze amerykańskiej nie doczekał się jeszcze w Polsce żadnego opracowania, pomino że w sanych Stonach Zjednoczonych uważany jest za niezwykle ważne zjawisko literackie. "Nowe dziennikarstwo" polega na wprozdzeniu do standardowego reportażu technik literackich wykorzystywanych w powieści lub opowiadaniu. Artykuł zaznajamia z sytucej społeczno-literacką w jakiej powstało "nowe dziennikarstwo" wymienia i pokrótce charakteryzuje jego głównych przedstawicieli oraz dokonuje klasyfikacji tych cech, które różnią "nowe dzienni-karstwo" od tradycyjnego reportażu. Przedstawione są również zarzuty krytyków pod adresem nowego prądu literackiego.

NOTES

- 1. The New Journalism: A panel Discussion With Harold Hayes,
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- 2. , The New Journalism, /in/ The New Journalism with an Anthology, ed. Tam Wolfe, 3.W.Johnson, Picador, London 1975, p.15
- 3. Tom Wolfe, The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine Flake Streamline Baby, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 1965.
- 4. Scott Donaldson, The Old World and the New Journalism, And the Novel, "The Sewance" July-September 1974, p.531.
- 5; Tom Wolfe, The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine Flake Streamline Baby, op.cit. p.53.
- 6. Robert Scholes, <u>Double Perspective on Hysteria</u>, "Saturday Review Aug. 24 1968, p. 37.
- 7. Michael L. Johnson, The New Journalism, The University Press of Kansas, Lawrence-Manhattan-Wichita 1971, pp. 58-59.

 8. Norman Mailer, The Armies of the Night, Perguin, Harmond-
- 9. Robert Scholes, op.cit., p.37.

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- 10. Hunter S. Thompson, Year and Loathing: On the Campaign Tra-11 72, Popular Library, New York 1973, pp. 47-48.
- 11. Dwight MacDonald, Parajouznalism, or Tom Wolfe and His Magic Writing Machine, /in/ The Reporter As Atist, op.cit., p.223.
- 12. Micheal Arlen, Notes on the New Journalism, /in/ The Reporter As Artist, op.cit., pp.253-254.