

## PROPOSAL FOR MEDILL SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM SERIES: VISIONS OF THE AMERICAN PRESS

**I. Title:** The New Journalism: The Unexpected Triumph of the Long-Form Narrative

**II. Author (name and contact info)**

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**III. General Description of the Work**

The New Journalism was born in controversy. Tom Wolfe's first manifesto on its behalf was written in retrospect in 1970, after almost a decade of work by talented nonfiction writers such as Joan Didion, Norman Mailer, Hunter Thompson, and Michael Herr. The original inspiration for Wolfe's defense may have been an insult by the writer Dwight MacDonal. Reviewing Wolfe's 1965 book *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, MacDonal labeled the new style "parajournalism"—an unreliable bastard form, full of cheap trickery, the product of a veritable writing machine. A year later Renata Adler skewered Wolfe for his savagely irreverent satire of the *New Yorker*, which spoke of the "tiny mummies" who haunted the magazine's hallowed corridors. A decade later, cloaking himself in the authority of the past, John Hersey would condemn any contemporary journalist who blurred the line dividing fact and fiction. Hersey (who himself had used composite characters in his World War II reporting) declared that the legend on the journalist's license simply read, "None of this was made up."

Newspaper reporters and editors, for their part, often complained that the New Journalism violated long-held principles. They expressed outrage over its apparent indifference to the profession's canons of objectivity. Even worse, Wolfe—ever the lightning rod for such