

Recovering the Peculiar Life and Times of Tom Hedley and of Canadian New Journalism

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The now largely forgotten Tom Hedley of Canada was a major influence on the New Journalism in his country both before and after he worked as an editor for Esquire magazine in New York.

When one begins to explore the era of the Canadian version of the New Journalism, 1965-1980, quite a number of living sources will say something to the effect of, “Have you talked to Tom Hedley yet?” or “Hedley—you have to find Hedley.”

Tom Hedley? Who is Tom Hedley?

Hedley is a fascinating, complex and very much submerged figure in the history of the New Journalism in the 1960s and 1970s, not only in Canada but also in the United States. There is little doubt that he is one of the central—if not the central—promoter of Canadian New Journalism even though he remains little acknowledged in the history of the movement, eclipsed in part by American exceptionalism, or the general belief that only the Americans contributed to the movement. That said, the New Journalism for Hedley was more than just the literary journalism we associate today with the movement of Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, Joan Didion, and Truman Capote. True, that is part of it. But for Hedley the New Journalism was also a way of thinking—a state of mind—for conveying what has been called the “aesthetics of experience”¹ in examining contemporary experience at the heart of such complex terms as New Journalism and literary journalism.

One reason why his contributions to the movement remain so submerged is that he left behind the world of magazines years ago, only to return occasionally, but in the meantime becoming a successful scriptwriter and script doctor, and later a film producer and even book publisher. Because

of this, not too many people in Canada actually know where Tom Hedley resides and what he has been doing lately. In fact, he now makes his home in New York but recently has been doing work in the United Kingdom on a live theatrical production of *Flashdance*, which was mounted for a test run there in the summer of 2008. What may seem even more surprising—and perhaps what might at least partially explain this influential New Journalist’s obscurity in the history of literary journalism, even in his own country, is that he is the original author of—and retains the copyright to—the script for the 1983 blockbuster movie *Flashdance*. Lately he has returned to this one undeniable commercial success of his life to transform it for theatre patrons. Perhaps even stranger, he will insist that *Flashdance* is the result of his New Journalism roots, although he is hard pressed to explain why.

Such is the peculiar history of Tom Hedley—and to some extent the history of the Canadian version of the New Journalism. To understand it, we must go back to the beginning and try to recapture a lost era in Canadian journalism, an era when “The New Journalism,” as espoused by Wolfe, et al., began to penetrate the border, colonize the young, and infiltrate the Canadian newsroom.

I

If you were to pick a time frame to call the “Golden Age of Canadian Literary Journalism,” that period would not be now, an era thoroughly dominated by service magazines catering to people’s consumer needs.² But a few decades ago, in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, literary journalism, in the guise of the New Journalism, began to impose its message, its methods and, in contrast to the staid presentation of the news of the day, its mayhem on Canadian journalism.

If one cared about writing, the dream in Canada at the time was very much like the dream in the United States. Upon graduation from university the idea was to work at a newspaper for about a decade. “You’d get your speed down, your style down, pay off your debts, then you’d quit and write your novel,” says Don Obe, who would prove to be one of Hedley’s earliest comrades.³ But with the advent of literary journalism—as practiced in *Esquire* magazine by the likes of Gay Talese, and especially in the *New York* supplement to the *Herald Tribune*, which contained the exciting work of the young iconoclast Tom Wolfe—suddenly a reporter who cared about writing did not have to write the great novel to bask in the satisfaction of having made an impact as a writer. One could in fact remain within the journalism realm and find the same level of artistic satisfaction. One could experiment, one could write in one’s own voice, one could even write short stories—except these particular short stories would be true.⁴

This is exactly what Hedley would eventually engineer. His journalism

career started when his father, a military man, called in a favour to help his son,⁵ then only an Ottawa high school graduate, to land a summer job in the radio room for the *Winnipeg Free Press* in 1960.⁶ He worked the overnight shift, and when September arrived he enrolled at the University of Manitoba and continued to report for the *Free Press* in the evenings. His first byline, “The Mr. Vibes of Jazz—Red Norvo,” appeared in October 1960.⁷ This pattern continued until Hedley dropped out of school in his final year in favour of a full career.⁸ According to Hedley, it was not until many years later that he cobbled together the necessary credits from New York University and the New School—while employed at *Esquire* magazine—to earn his undergraduate diploma.⁹

Hedley’s final front-page byline, “City Trucking Terminal Levelled in Big Blaze,” appeared in January 1962 and provides hardly any indication of his future path as a New Journalist.¹⁰ He left the *Free Press* soon after,¹¹ moved east and began reporting for a larger daily newspaper, the *Toronto Telegram*. As a young reporter he was assigned to various bureaus in cities and municipalities surrounding metropolitan Toronto, such as Hamilton and York. Before long, he had impressed his superiors sufficiently to be summoned back to the *Telegram*’s downtown Toronto offices. His unusual background—he was born in England to a British mother and a Canadian father,¹² had moved numerous times, including a stay in Germany, where he picked up a modest amount of the language¹³—landed the junior reporter a plum reporting task in 1966: being flown to Europe as a reinforcement to chase after the just-broken story of East German prostitute and alleged spy Gerda Munslinger, whose services a number of years earlier had been paid for by at least two Canadian cabinet ministers and was now found to be living in Munich, West Germany. The *Telegram* had badly trailed its archrival the *Toronto Star* on the story up until that point, but according to Hedley once he offered money to Munslinger he started to get somewhere. Then the race for more exclusives quickly degenerated into a case of cheque-book journalism, with Munslinger holding out for the highest bidder. According to Hedley, the winning entry ultimately was not Canadian but American. Having decided the entire episode was a farce, he bolted for Paris and the Left Bank to retrace Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald’s steps, before being ordered to return to the *Telegram*, whereupon he was reassigned to editing.¹⁴

After stints as assistant entertainment editor and assistant sports editor—revolving around layouts and paste-ups, mostly—he was appointed entertainment editor of the *Telegram* in 1966. Like the mythic editor Clay Felker at the *Herald Tribune* in New York, who had transformed the Sunday supplement *New York* into a New Journalism venue, Hedley inherited the *Telegram*’s version, which was called *Showcase*. It was here that Hedley

encountered his first important ally in the guerrilla war he was about to perpetrate against conventional newspaper and magazine journalism: Don Obe.

Obe had landed his first major professional job at the *Vancouver Sun* in 1961, where he was developed into the “zipper” man—the feature writer who contributed a lifestyle piece to Page One’s bottom horizontal strip.¹⁵ Somewhat bored with straight newspaper journalism, he acquired the habit of liberating the *New York* supplement every Monday morning from the op-ed editor’s copy of the *Herald Tribune*.¹⁶ Obe could not get enough of Felker’s transformed supplement, where Wolfe already had broken free of constrictive newspaper formulas. Then he moved back to central Canada and the *Telegram*, which is where Hedley found him.

It was an important bond, as both men had developed a passion for *New York* before they discovered a mutual interest. Hedley explains:

I was the youngest possible reporter. I had just come [to *Showcase*] from my job at the *Winnipeg Free Press*. I didn’t really know what I was doing. I was nervous, and Don Obe would help me. I would write these little literary memos. He told me they were very funny and original and that he wanted to meet me. He was also very influenced by *New York* magazine. We had a real common ground. He understood what I was doing, and supported it. It was easy to put it down as a kind of ambition of a kid who’s dreaming a bit, but he was very good at saying, “Oh no, no, what he’s doing, it’s good.” And I went on to do my thing.¹⁷

Hedley really did need the support. He had not yet been given the opportunity to let his editorial packaging skills flourish, and in the meantime his colleagues were critical of his writing. Looking back years later, in 1975, one said: “[H]e was a terrible writer, a joke whenever he wrote a story.” Another said: “In those days . . . we would never have thought (the ability to write) was in him. Still another said: “He writes like I play piano, . . . not very well and not very often.”¹⁸

Obe continued to defend Hedley against his critics, recalling in the same 1975 feature on Hedley, “There was this antagonism towards Tom, but it was the kind of antagonism you get from people set in their ways; what you get when somebody comes along and breaks every rule. At that time what later became known as the new journalism was just having its impact. Tom understood it earlier than anyone else.”¹⁹

Once Hedley was appointed entertainment editor in June 1966, he wielded the power to hire and fire and, influenced by *New York*, began to shape the publication. For example, he hired Barry Callaghan, the son of Lost Generation novelist and short story writer Morley Callaghan, and a budding novelist, short story writer and literary critic himself, to be his book editor at

the supplement. (Callaghan was already working at the *Telegram*. That spring television critic Bob Blackburn had asked him to “run the book pages,”²⁰ and Hedley’s predecessor Jeremy Brown subsequently hired him.) Callaghan was impressed with Hedley’s ability to present stories differently. “Hedley came out of the sports department,” he says. “He would put a half page shot of a horse in the mist on the cover of the sports page and everyone would wonder what was going on. He got all of his ideas straight out of *New York* magazine.”²¹

Initially, Callaghan did not want to have anything to do with the grubby daily journalism of the *Telegram* (let alone its weekly supplement), but editor Jeremy Brown took him out for lunch and charmed him. Still, he was skeptical that anything lofty could be accomplished. Here is Hedley’s account:

Barry Callaghan was an academic and was writing poetry and fiction. I met him because I wanted to meet [his father] Morley, and he took me to him. And I said [to son Barry], “I’m now the editor of this thing, *Showcase*. I’m no longer the assistant. I can hire my own team, so why don’t you be my book editor? You don’t have to worry, we’re not going to run anything embarrassing.” In fact, he did one of the last interviews with Edmund Wilson for me, and I sent him to do Edward Albee as well. We did serious stuff—we really went after it—because of what was happening in the *Herald Tribune*, in *New York* magazine. It was the precedent that allowed me to go for it. I wasn’t inventing anything; I was essentially copying them.²²

This was a time when Hedley was also very much under the spell of fiction writers. Five years later, in 1971, when he joined the staff of *Macleans* magazine back in Canada, he enumerated to then-editor Peter C. Newman what those exact influences were: the Lost Generation writers, especially Hemingway and Fitzgerald; Beat author Jack Kerouac; and the moody Hollywood actor James Dean.²³ And here he was, a half-decade earlier, meeting the son of the man who had lived in Paris in 1929, boxed with Hemingway, and gingerly walked through a typically complex relationship with Fitzgerald:

I had a very close relationship with Morley Callaghan, who was my mentor. Barry would bring me to see Morley at 20 Dale Avenue in Rosedale [a modest house situated in a tony downtown Toronto neighbourhood], and we would sit and talk about Hemingway and Fitzgerald and about writing, and about excellence, what good fiction writing is all about. Morley would finish writing late at night, around midnight. Then he would take a break and bring out the single malt whiskey that he drank, and he would have a few acolytes like us sitting around, and we would just talk about writing. We were completely immersed in it. It was all about fiction.²⁴

And what Hedley wanted to do was see journalism written with the techniques associated with fiction.

There was one other writer who was an important influence for Hedley: the philosopher and media theorist Marshall McLuhan. Beyond Hedley attending parties and spending time in favourite downtown artist and poet bars with friends Robert Markle and Graham Coughtry, or sitting at the feet of Morley Callaghan in Rosedale, McLuhan loomed large in the young editor's thoughts about culture and journalism. Hedley got to know him because he once acted as gopher for the intellectual giant at the Centre for Culture and Technology on the University of Toronto campus. "I loved the way McLuhan thought," says Hedley. "I would go and get him coffee and hang around, and then he ended up writing for me in *Showcase*."²⁵ Hedley convinced McLuhan to contribute some words to a special issue devoted to some of Canada's intellectual and artistic giants on the occasion of the country's centenary, as well as to submit a column on the National Hockey League—hockey being the sport about which so many Canadians are most passionate. Not only was Hedley editing one of his intellectual heroes, he was setting up an *Esquire*-style, fish-out-of-water scenario—pairing a topic and a writer in a novel way—in order to create what he thought of as a New Journalism-experience for the reader. Hedley explains New Journalism's relationship to McLuhan this way:

The medium is the message, it is absolutely true. Your responsibility is to the idea, and what the medium of the idea is, rather than, "Let's just do it the way it's normally done." By identifying what the idea is, and [what] the emotional continuity is, how the characters feel at the beginning, middle and end, you can create truly literary scenes, but they're happening in real time and in real situations. Whatever it is, this New Journalism, I've never done anything else but that—whether it's writing, film, or theatre.²⁶

Under the protection of various editors, Hedley's version of the New Journalism thrived at *Showcase*. He hired friends—his Toronto artist chums, not writers—to be his columnists, and their writing was fresh. Obe says people such as Coughtry and Markle were different because "they hadn't been brow-beaten, they didn't know any of the rules and they didn't care about them. Markle was a natural, and wrote stories that bore no resemblance to newspaper journalism, skiing stories that started, 'I ventured into a new world today. There I was on the slopes and I shook me some city.'"²⁷ The effect was soon felt across the *Telegram* newsroom, as other writers realized that for Hedley they could write in a freer style.²⁸

Hedley's moves at *Showcase* were revolutionary within the encrusted confines of the *Telegram*, where "small pockets of excellence and

contemporaneousness were hidden here and there amid the general run of mediocrity and indelible old-fashionedness.²⁹ As journalist Douglas Fetherling recalls, Hedley had a knack for finding that talent:

Some of the talent reposed at a section called Lifestyle Most of the rest could be found in *Showcase*, where Don Obe, Tom Hedley and others were managing to bring magazine techniques [to newspaper publishing]. Word spread. *Esquire* had its eye on two of the *Showcase* editors, one of whom was Hedley, a smart, slick, slow-spoken young fellow who somehow fostered a faint suggestion of greatness. Undoubtedly he possessed a certain style not then common in the brown-shoed Canadian media landscape.³⁰

With Hedley at the helm, the weekly *Showcase* magazine hummed along through 1966 and 1967, becoming more ambitious and steadily improving. The one issue Hedley returns to again and again when he talks about his time at *Showcase* is the one in which he dedicated the entire issue to Canada's birthday centenary, Saturday, July 1, 1967. He brought together luminaries such as the aforementioned McLuhan, writer Morley Callaghan, pianist Glenn Gould, surgeon Robert Penfield, actress Kate Reid, mathematician Donald Coxeter, and Group of Seven painter A. Y. Jackson to pose for a group photography session. Each of these leading Canadian lights wrote his or her column to accompany the extended series of pictures. The only person missing from the photo shoot was then-federal Minister of Justice Pierre Elliott Trudeau (elected Canada's fifteenth prime minister the following year), yet he also submitted a written piece for the special edition. Hedley's extraordinary ability to attract well-known national and international talent, and to mix and match that talent to task, did not escape the notice of Harold Hayes, another mythic editor who helped to shape the American New Journalism in addition to Felker. And it is a knack that continues. A couple of years ago Hedley suggested to *Vanity Fair* editor Graydon Carter that he reinvigorate a dull service feature concept by choosing the eccentric journalist and author Christopher Hitchens to be the perfect guinea pig for an extreme makeover.³¹

The first time Hedley realized he could get away with hiring international talent at *Showcase* was when he capitalized on a newspaper strike in New York. He began to telephone and offer work to established names such as *New York Review of Books* illustrator David Levine. He knew the names of all the relevant artists in New York, and did not hesitate to use them if he could get them. This willingness to hire Americans, and eventually other foreigners, helped to spread Hedley's name around in New York's magazine publishing world. As Hedley remembers:

I did a concept issue—this is one of the things that got the attention

of *Esquire* in New York—where I had a motorized camera and I had these great Canadians walking towards the camera, and as you turn the pages they moved closer to you, and behind them were these lyric, young ballerinas dancing. It was a beautiful setting. I brought all of these people in for the photograph and we had a big lunch and celebrated them. I published a piece by Pierre Trudeau ... and all of these people—Gould, McLuhan, Callaghan—they were in the issue. They were edited interviews, really, and then they okayed them. That was a widely celebrated issue, and recognized in New York.³²

Barry Callaghan cites the special issue as an example of Hedley's visual way of getting across information. "The idea of that lunch, to take them all out and photograph them as a group, would have been Hedley's idea, there's no question. That's one of the great photographs of Canadian cultural history. That's the stamp of Hedley."³³

Callaghan agreed with what Hedley was doing from the start, although he says he would never have called his work "New Journalism"—then or now—insisting on the term "storytelling."³⁴ Whatever it was called, it was certainly not standard newspaper journalism. Callaghan was the sort of columnist who might write at length about subjects that were dear to him, not necessarily well-known authors the average reader might recognize. For instance, Callaghan decided to run a long conversation with John Montague, dedicating a huge amount of space to a then-unknown poet, reasoning that in a couple of decades he would become famous and therefore the *Telegram* would have been ahead of the curve on the topic. J. D. Macfarlane (not the magazine editor John Macfarlane), the newspaper's managing editor of the day, retorted angrily, "Don't you understand—this is fish wrap! Nobody will read it in twenty years." Callaghan says, "Now that I look back, it *was* outrageous, [writing about] wandering around the graveyards of Paris [with Montague], musing about Baudelaire."³⁵

2

The story of how Hedley came to work directly under Harold Hayes at *Esquire* magazine is convoluted and depends on the source. According to a post-*Flashdance* magazine profile of Hedley, *Esquire* management was actually interested in hiring Jeremy Brown, Hedley's predecessor and the one who had launched *Showcase* in the first place.³⁶ But Brown said he turned down the offer because it did not pay well.³⁷ According to Hedley, however, Harold Hayes was not all that interested in the ideas Brown had to offer, which is why Hedley was given a chance.³⁸ During the interview process with Brown, Hayes had an opportunity to look at several editions of *Showcase*. Hedley's visual sense and packaging savvy stood out, and Hayes took particular notice of Hedley's July 1, 1967 special issue dedicated to the

Canadian centenary. Hayes was interested to know more about the young editor who had conceived it.

Suddenly *Esquire* beckoned, as Hedley recalls:

I got a call out of the blue and Hayes said, “Look, would you come down for an interview? We’re looking at a thousand people for this job and it’s unlikely that you’d get it but why don’t you come down anyway?” So I got into New York and I was staying at a hotel around the corner on Madison Avenue the night before the interview. *Esquire* phoned and said, “Oh by the way, we want twenty story ideas from you tomorrow morning.” So I stayed up all night and came in with twenty-eight story ideas. [The number varies depending on the account.] The next day Harold said, “I want you to meet Arnold Gingrich”—the man who had published Fitzgerald and Hemingway and all that.³⁹

Gingrich was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, not so far from the Canadian border, and grew up experiencing the same landscape and weather as most Ontarians. Along with David A. Smart, he started *Esquire* magazine in 1933, during the Great Depression.⁴⁰ Hedley would have been star-struck, since Gingrich had known two of his Lost Generation heroes, Hemingway and Fitzgerald, as well as many other literary giants in editing the magazine until 1961:

So I went into this vast office with a big leather-winged chair, and [Gingrich] was finishing his hour-long practice of the violin. That put me to sleep. I was so exhausted, young, and stupid. He left me alone and I woke up startled an hour and a half later, realizing that I’d fallen asleep and he’d gone and I was really embarrassed. So I went out and they said, “Well, there are sixteen of your ideas that we’d really love to do right now.” And then Harold Hayes said, “When can you get here?”⁴¹

Hayes initially advised Hedley to stay away from the office and learn about the city. Most of all, he wanted Hedley to be on the lookout for fresh story ideas. Being twenty-four years old and interested in all things countercultural and avant-garde, *Esquire’s* newest and youngest associate editor happily complied, ingratiating himself with various New York subculture groups—Andy Warhol and his Factory entourage, members of the Youth International Party (Yippies) such as Abbie Hoffman, and so on. Yet he was tested and thrown into the editorial mix quickly, working on the March 1968 cover story package, “Here Come the Microboppers,” and visiting campuses around the nation during the era of student protest for the magazine’s September 1968 back-to-school issue, “The Beautiful People: Campus Heroes for 68/69.” His knowledge of Warhol and Pop Art came in handy for the May 1969 trend cover story on culture, “The Final Decline and Total Collapse of the American

Avant-Garde,” which *Esquire* art director George Lois famously illustrated by depicting Andy Warhol drowning in a Campbell’s soup can.

A couple of other “high concept” magazine packages define the kind of technique for which *Esquire* during Hedley’s era is known. It was not so much New Journalism (or literary journalism) as a writing style, although that was an element of it. But it was a part of the general anti-establishment ferment of that era in which the old conventional models of journalism were being challenged by the New Journalism as a way of viewing the world. For example, the October 1968 cover features a group still of playwright and author Jean Genet, author William Burroughs, author and screenplay writer Terry Southern, and the only New Journalist of the bunch, John Sack. All four men were sent to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, August 1968, to report in their own voices what they felt, thought, and saw, with Hedley’s fellow associate editor John Berendt acting as chaperone.⁴²

Turning famous literati into reporters is exactly the fish-out-of-water trick Hedley favoured and returned to over and over again in his career. He admits that sometimes the concept is much better than the actual execution. The Chicago Democratic convention cover package, he thinks, fell apart because not all of the writers delivered work of quality (Genet’s contribution in particular being especially difficult to edit into usable magazine prose).⁴³ But it is a technique *Esquire* pioneered and had been using for years—hiring novelist Norman Mailer to write a journalism feature about incoming President John F. Kennedy for the November 1960 issue, for instance—but one that Hedley was more adept at than most. In fact, he forced it on occasion. For the October 1970 issue, when Hedley and photographer Bud Lee could not find enough examples of white servants working for wealthy black people, they found fill-ins to complete the photo spread, “Do Whites Make the Best Domestic? Five Blacks Think So.”⁴⁴ It was certainly not literary journalism, and to some not even New Journalism. Obe takes that position: “Getting Norman Mailer to write about Jack Kennedy is a technique, but it’s not New Journalism. Gay Talese writing about Frank Sinatra is New Journalism. It’s the narrative scenes, where the reporter just shuts up—maybe he’s got a tape recorder going, maybe he’s going into the can and taking some notes or whatever, but watches and just recreates the scene.”⁴⁵

Regarding writing style, at least, Hedley is in agreement: “At *Esquire*, we were defining what the New Journalism was. There were arguments between us but we were very conscious that we were involved in a new form, and that form was the use of fiction techniques on nonfiction subjects.”⁴⁶ How the editors and artists of *Esquire* debated and defined the New Journalism sounds a lot like how Tom Wolfe codified it a few years later in his essay, “Like a Novel,” when he described it as a “journalism that reads like a novel.”⁴⁷

But to Hedley the New Journalism also meant more than just a writing style, his friend Obe's position notwithstanding. It was for Hedley a concept to be applied to the entire production process and he continued to push the boundaries of editorial convention. As editor, he says his particular skill at *Esquire* was the "Superman Goes to the Supermarket" trick: "The way I conceived ideas was to take an idea that the writer would not normally do, bring the writer outside of his milieu, his expertise, into an idea that is almost uncomfortable for him. You get something fresh out of that."⁴⁸ Indeed, for one of the *Esquire* cover concepts Hedley got something spectacularly fresh. For the August 1970 issue, he took the most staid of magazine trend stories—an overview of new films for the coming fall season—and transformed it into a window focused on the exotic perspectives of the European auteur: Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, and François Truffaut all contributed essays on the making of their art. Thus, some of the most distinguished film-makers in the world were now reversing roles and playing film critics.

It might appear that Hedley conflates two disparate concepts. One is to write nonfiction stories using the same narrative devices one associates with writing fiction stories. And this would be a version of the classic definition of New Journalism, which in turn is the 1960s-1970s equivalent of literary journalism, and which forms the basis upon which more recent, expanded definitions have been constructed. The other idea, the mix-and-match trick, may be clever, it may be entertaining, it may even have its informative and enlightening moments, but it is more about the craft of editorial packaging for magazines than literary journalism, at least as we know it now. But if the New Journalism meant improvising upon the normal recipes for presenting stories, then Hedley's spicy gumbos were exotic and it can be said that they were a part of the New Journalism culture of the time. They were a novel way of orchestrating and refracting through different lenses the aesthetics of experience. Today we see, of course, that it is now just another editorial tactic to attract readers—just one of many. But it also reflects just how much the New Journalism culture became mainstream in magazine publishing. Hedley's knack for juxtaposing elements that would not seem to work together, as well as his obvious social skills as an editor for enticing major names to do projects for him, happened consistently throughout his career.

For Hedley, the idea was to release the writer's shackles, to imbue the narrative with everything he or she could muster. But the writer had to be, in a certain sense, responsible about this newfound freedom. He or she had to avoid the "notebook dump," the feeling that whatever was written down was worth reading. Other musts to avoid were the chronological list of actions or the petty diary entries that could easily creep into the story. Hedley says a

good deal of New Journalism, or even so-called New Journalism, descended into the pit of “Me” journalism before too long:

The trick with editing these writers quite often is that it’s not personal. You have to see yourself in the third person . . . You are not you in the piece, you are a character in the piece. And the more distance you can create from that character, and the more you can make that you into the third person, the better New Journalist you’ll be. So it’s not about the ego, although it creeps in.⁴⁹

The Canadian feature writer Sylvia Fraser, for example, who wrote many personable magazine pieces in the 1960s for the old rotogravure format magazine, *The Star Weekly*, and who continues to do so for publications such as *Toronto Life* today, uses a *modus operandi* when constructing her stories that does not deviate from Hedley’s version of New Journalism (although she, like Callaghan, has never considered herself to be a New Journalist).⁵⁰ She says, “Sometimes it looked like I was writing personal journalism when I wasn’t. What I mean by that is that I used myself as a device in the story simply to be the straight person. You’d see me in the article and it looked like personal journalism but it wasn’t. It was just the structure.”⁵¹

At this point in his still young career Hedley seemed to have a firm purchase on a rich vein of New Journalism knowledge. Here is one description of his deep, abiding understanding of the form and his seeming gale-force editorial powers, as one critic has noted:

Hedley was spoken of with awe because the visual side of his brain was said to be so highly developed. He was more a designer than an editor in the normal sense, people avowed; a sort of god-like journalistic being who could somehow command text, image and design to come together, in some process more closely related to physics perhaps than to management.⁵²

3

And then, at the height of his powers, Hedley began to contemplate a return to his native country. The wonder of it all is that he stayed only as long as he did in New York, from the fall of 1967 until the winter of 1971, and the obvious question about his vertical career rise is this: Why exactly did Tom Hedley leave *Esquire* magazine? He had interviewed successfully for the job in late summer 1967. Then, with his editor’s permission, he had prowled around New York’s arts and intelligentsia scenes during the fall of 1967. His name was listed on the masthead as one of several associate editors for forty-one issues. Three and a half years is a good run during a great period in the magazine’s history, but not that long of one—so why leave?

Hedley says it was because he, like many, had become disillusioned with the ideals of the 1960s.⁵³ Plus, he was homesick for Canada. Plus, he wanted to write his great novel. Later, about a year and a half after he had returned, he wrote about this disillusionment. His feature story, “Mickey Mouse at 44,” was published in a special *America* edition of *Maclean’s* magazine, November 1972, published on the cusp of the Richard Nixon–George McGovern presidential election. Hedley attempted to explain the cumulative and collective fragility and exhaustion of his generation in purple New Journalism prose: “We would know that Manhattan Island was only 32 miles square and could pack six million ambitious souls together in unhygienic conditions and that from the sky it was apprehended as one large elitist cloister where outsiders were turned away at the gates of true acceptance.”⁵⁴

And: “The facts have nothing to do with the magical rhythm. Ants are on top of the Empire State Building, for God’s sake! How they got there is a question of academic pettifoggery for the aged.”⁵⁵

As one critic observed: “[I]t reads like a bad imitation of Tom Wolfe”⁵⁶

In the climactic scene, or nadir, as the case may be, Hedley recounts a story about dining with New York literati:

The rhythm broke for me just after midnight on March 21, 1971, the first day of spring, at the Café Nicholson on East 58th Street between First and Second Avenues, on the otherwise insignificant occasion of my twenty-ninth birthday.⁵⁷ Jorge Luis Borges, the Argentinian writer, had poured a glass of champagne over the table cloth announcing that this, the first glass, would be for the gods, and the second would be in mourning for the year I had just recently lost, and I knew, instinctively, that many more glasses would be toasted to this moment of my time and that, finally the evening exhausted, I’d be presented with the bill. It was my birthday but, after all, friends had arranged that Borges join us despite his hectic schedule and as he quoted from *Beowulf* in the original Anglo-Saxon, drinking *my* champagne, I realized that this was an utterly gratuitous and meaningless meeting of people, with the best of intentions, mind you, but empty, devoid of warmth and friendship and any intimacy, so typically a New York evening, people trapped by a manner of behavior imposed on them by something larger and more evil than themselves.⁵⁸

Barry Callaghan tells a slightly different version of the story:

He was out having dinner with all of these high-powered literary people, such as Norman Mailer, Jorge Luis Borges and a bunch of others [including Gore Vidal],⁵⁹ and they all had this fabulous dinner. They had this long evening of eating and drinking and talking and at

the end of the evening [Borges's translator, Thomas Di Giovanni]⁶⁰ turned to Hedley and said, "You get the cheque." Here Hedley was deluding himself that he was one of them—an equal—and yet to them he was just there to pick up the cheque. It devastated him.⁶¹

Over the previous four years Hedley had become something of a habitué of the various scenes and subcultures of New York, and was now exhausted to find that his magazine's expense account—as well as *Esquire's* coveted status as an entrée to a larger, popular market—were what the literary crowd most craved about him.⁶² What was clear of "Mickey Mouse at [the age of] 44" is that an American cultural icon for these young protesting Baby Boomers, invented by Walt Disney some forty-four years earlier, had now become an emblem of failed youthful idealism. The idealism had become a cartoon parody, with all that implies. And like Walt himself, the dark innocence of the Mickey Mouse Club had died. It was time, as Hedley understood, to put away the Mouseketeer ears.

So the June 1971 issue of *Esquire* was Hedley's last. Leaving New York behind, ostensibly to work away on his Great Canadian/American Novel—to be called "Some Evenings on a Farm Near America"—at a farmhouse in the hamlet of Holstein, Ontario, about a two-hour drive northwest of Toronto, Hedley instead ended up working at two Canadian media institutions, *Maclean's* magazine and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. It was at CBC that Hedley began to explore crossing over his New Journalism ideas to another medium: film. Over the next couple of years he produced documentaries for a program called *Weekend* on playwrights Sam Shephard and Tennessee Williams, and author Norman Mailer.⁶³

In true Canadian homecoming fashion, Hedley encountered jealousy and suspicion upon his return to Toronto. After all, why would any self-respecting Canadian magazine editor, who had transcended the parochial world of Toronto publishing and made it in the upper echelons of New York magazines, want to come back—unless he had to? Callaghan says, "Some people didn't make it very easy for him—really looked down on him, as if to say, well, you must be a loser because you're back here."⁶⁴ To Ian Brown, a Canadian feature writer, Hedley put it this way: "I had to go away to be hated in Canada. But they don't want you to come back. You come back, and they say, 'Oh, he came back. He blew it. He's just another loser like the rest of us.'"⁶⁵

Maclean's magazine, Hedley's print destination, was a venerable, dependable, if a little dull, forum. Today it is a weekly newsmagazine much in the vein of *Time*, and, under the leadership of current publisher and editor-in-chief Kenneth Whyte, sports a faux-tabloid design to go with its

pushy, irreverent right-wing tone. In 1971, however, under the guidance of Peter C. Newman, it was a monthly general interest magazine committed to tortuously examining Canada's national identity, especially in relation to its friendly superpower neighbour's overwhelming influence. Newman hired Hedley to be one of his associates, and his new editor joined the masthead for the July 1971 issue. Hedley brought the New Journalism with him,⁶⁶ and immediately began recruiting cronies from his *Showcase* days, including his painter friend Robert Markle and his literary friend Barry Callaghan as columnists. Here is how Newman enthusiastically described his newest star:

In those early months Hedley was the vital centre of the magazine, providing the visual and intellectual excitement . . . , prodding all of us into fresh ways of looking at our country. . . . We frequently disagreed on how far he could go without insulting our audience, but the tension seemed productive for both of us. Hedley seldom appeared in the office more than two or three times a week . . . but each visit was memorable.⁶⁷

Journalist Doug Fetherling, who wrote many magazine pieces during the era, describes Hedley's effect on Newman and the *Maclean's* staff this way:

Hedley was cool. He dressed cool, he dated cool. His stint at *Esquire* had given him a certain aura, which he wore like a cloak. He was renowned as a champion conceptualizer, a spinner and vetter of ideas, a child of McLuhan whose genre was spontaneous well-written conversation combined with a basic disdain of the medium in which he was working. He edited by means of what the Germans call *Fingerspitzengefühl*, the feeling in one's fingertips. He was totally disorganized, as though to suggest that paperwork and the mundane practicalities of getting out a magazine were beneath him.⁶⁸

Today, Hedley is less charitable about his stay at *Maclean's*:

I was always at odds with Peter Newman because I thought he was a plodding nationalist—black is beautiful, Canadian is beautiful . . . it was all wrapped up in [the] political correctness of the time, and it wasn't a true intellectual assessment of the country. I don't think you need to be a nationalist protectionist. You end up with things like "Canadian Studies." I couldn't bear it. To me, that's a second-rate way of looking at the world. Obviously he wanted me there, but I had not a lot of interest in being there.⁶⁹

The November 1972 issue of *Maclean's*, the America issue, was edited by Hedley, not Newman. Hedley lobbied for it and won the chance to do his own issue. But in so doing he demonstrated an unfortunate trait that proved to be something of an Achilles' heel upon his return to the Toronto magazine publishing world. Newman recounts:

This turned into a disaster because he suffered writer's block over his own article, "Mickey Mouse at 44." Even though he'd had three months to work on it, it was three weeks late, and the magazine's delivery schedule was disrupted for the first time since 1905. Hedley finally left by mutual agreement and thereafter only came in a couple of times a month to write treatments [meaning conceptualizing story ideas as well as suggesting display copy, headlines and sub-headlines for features].⁷⁰

4

Hedley continued to work sporadically at *Maclean's*. He contributed a lifestyle piece, for example, about losing weight entitled "Lead Us Not Into Temptation" to the July 1973 issue, which was long on packaging and short on prose. He also kept alive his dream of transferring his New Journalism skills to the medium of film during this time. In 1975, for example, a screenplay of his, *Double Negative* (adapted from a 1948 Ross McDonald novel, *The Three Roads*), was being shopped around in Hollywood. This became the hook for a cover story about Hedley written for *Toronto Magazine*, a Sunday supplement to the *Toronto Sun*.⁷¹ Eight years prior to the success of *Flashdance* already he was being christened "Canada's highest-paid screenwriter."⁷²

Then in 1977, Alexander Ross, who was the editor of *Toronto Life* magazine at the time, recommended to his publisher Michael de Pencier that Hedley succeed him. All of a sudden, Hedley found himself being drawn back into the magazine world for one more round. Initially he balked, but once he realized he was being handed an opportunity to recreate his beloved New Journalism, he was seduced. Again he reassembled his team of writers, artists and photographers. Again he added a couple of new voices, such as Stephen Williams and Norman Snider. He turned Café des Copains, a restaurant/bar located across the street from the *Toronto Life* offices, into a hangout for his writers. It was something of a "boys' club"—Hedley, Barry Callaghan, Stephen Williams, Paul William Roberts, Norman Snider, Robert Markle, and Don Obe, to name several. The fact is, Hedley very much enjoyed and encouraged having an entourage around him.⁷³ But, as Fetherling pointed out in his memoir, this would not have been unusual for the era:

Toronto Life was also where almost everybody in time would be editor—except the women in whom reposed much of the magazine talent in the city but who all through the 1970s (and indeed 1980s and 1990s) continued to perform the managing editor's function of cleaning up the messes of the male conceptualizing geniuses and their respective entourages who followed them everywhere, hanging on their every utterance.⁷⁴

Following his old mentor Harold Hayes's advice, Hedley refused to edit

manuscripts in the office, much to the chagrin of his production-minded fellow editors. Lynn Cunningham, Hedley's managing editor, said Hedley once took a cover story manuscript with him and flew to New York for the weekend. When he did not return the following Monday, evidently because his plans had altered, panic ensued in the office.⁷⁵ (Hedley denies that he would have taken manuscripts with him to New York, saying he preferred to edit either at Café des Copains or go directly to the homes of his writers.⁷⁶)

It is certainly the case that Hedley subscribed to Harold Hayes's dictum—people who worked in offices were “worker bees” and a good editor should avoid them.⁷⁷ It was not the case that Hedley had no respect for the practical work of putting out a magazine; he simply did not want to be bogged down in it himself, or let himself get bogged down in it. “I wanted it to be a kind of café-society, Paris-in-the-twenties kind of thing—a salon, I guess—so they would come in and then we'd move over to Copains for lunch, and then you'd meet up later at Grossman's Tavern [a blues club on Spadina Avenue in the Chinatown section of Toronto's downtown] or the Pilot Tavern, where Leonard Cohen as well as all the painters would hang out.”⁷⁸ Cunningham, as managing editor and perhaps chief-working-bee-of-the-day, was nonplussed. Today, Hedley says of Cunningham, “She was very good at her job.”⁷⁹ Today, Cunningham's assessment of Hedley consists of one word: “poseur.”⁸⁰

However briefly he presided over the nation's most successful city magazine, Hedley made his presence felt. For his first issue his Canadian literary hero, Morley Callaghan, filed new fiction for him. The prominent Canadian artist Harold Town ruminated on the importance of Tom Thompson in the national psyche. Thompson's demise was—and remains—one of the country's enduring mysteries as he disappeared while painting his beloved Algonquin Park trees and rocks in 1917, leaving behind only his canoe.

In the subsequent issue of *Toronto Life*, October 1977, Hedley titillated readers. His friend Robert Markle penned the cover story entitled “Portrait of a Stripper, Sexy Sadie,” defending the seediness of Yonge Street, which begins at Lake Ontario and runs north, bisecting Toronto's east and west. A luminous cover photograph displayed Sadie's ample décolletage. Companion pieces included hard-boiled miniatures of “Lisa” the body rub parlour worker and “Janine” the drug smuggler. Hedley's *Toronto Life* was designed to vicariously provide pleasure to its wealthy subscriber base with the street-level wares of the city.

A couple of months later, in the December 1977 issue, the New Journalism devotee (and transplanted American) Philip Marchand—whose publisher and editors had spent much of the 1970s touting him as Canada's answer to Tom Wolfe but who was now looking for the key to free himself

from this stylistic straitjacket—produced an extraordinary long piece on the immigrant Azores Portuguese community of Toronto. Marchand's focus on one immigrant culture was the flipside of Markle's defence of seedy downtown society. There was a trigger to both stories. On July 28 of that year, a shoeshine boy named Emanuel Jaques was abducted from his perch on Yonge Street, sexually assaulted numerous times, then murdered. Torontonians demanded action in response to the crime, and the era of cleaning up Yonge Street began in earnest. Markle's piece rebutted the sanctimony of the citizenry, while Marchand's investigation into the community that produced a child such as Jaques was both elegiac and thoughtful, and, because of its immersion in Toronto's Portuguese subculture, much closer in both conception and execution to what Norman Sims characterized as a major trait of literary journalism: "Literary journalists gamble with their time. Their writerly impulses lead them toward immersion, toward trying to learn all there is about a subject."⁸¹

Barry Callaghan also returned to the Hedley fold at *Toronto Life*, this time as columnist rather than books editor. "He gave me a monthly column, and called it 'Callaghan,' saying, 'Write about the city, whatever you want, and if it's reporting, OK, and if it's fiction, OK, let the reader figure it out.'"⁸² Not only did Hedley's expanding version of New Journalism *cum* literary journalism include Wolfe's definition, plus Hedley's fish-out-of-water editorial packaging tricks, evidently it also made room for the quasi-gonzo journalism conceit that sometimes, under certain circumstances, the imagined truth is perceived as the greater truth. And, in fact, Callaghan was perfectly happy with this arrangement. As an English literature professor, with all that the discipline's tradition entailed, he would have recognized his area of study as one where literary journalism and fiction (which happily allows the creation of composite characters from reality and encourages invented dialogue in the spirit of capturing a perceived truth), might co-mingle.

Hedley's reign as editor of *Toronto Life* was not long—ten months. When his friend Don Obe took over, beginning with the July 1978 issue, Hedley was shifted to executive editor. For the next sixteen months he worked directly under publisher Michael de Pencier to develop special projects such as travel, fashion, wine, and stereo "guides." Hedley presided over the magazine at a time when it enjoyed healthy, even fat page counts, mainly because of the additional special interest sections. The idea was to develop the sections in *Toronto Life* and if they succeeded break them off to start new magazine ventures.⁸³ These thinly disguised sops to advertisers were intrusively inserted into the section of the magazine where *Toronto Life* readers would normally expect to find the in-depth stories—in effect cleaving the feature area in two. Even so, top-notch talent was enlisted to write for them. To name

two examples, novelist Margaret Atwood, of budding international renown at this juncture, and future multiple-award-winning investigative feature writer Marci MacDonald, reported on their travels to Afghanistan and Paris, respectively. In other words, Hedley's special sections, notable for their ability to attract advertising, contained uncharacteristically strong writing merit. As Hedley says, "I used to phone writers or authors up and say, 'Where do you want to go? We'll send you there and you can write about it for us.'"⁸⁴

With his literary entourage and his financially healthy magazine, Hedley seemed to have everything going his way at *Toronto Life*. One of his new writing recruits, Norman Snider, recalls meeting with a supremely confident Hedley while discussing Snider's upcoming feature profile of the reclusive classical pianist Glenn Gould:

No underdog, [Hedley] looked like a veteran ad exec type. With his penchant for a hybrid mix of high and low, unlike most Toronto editors, [he] had a talent for putting out magazines that had sexual glamour. . . . Hedley stood in pugnacious opposition to the cramped style of much of Canadian media. He loved Andy Warhol and Pop Art, magazines were just part of a hip mix that included novels, movies, comics, you name it; an article could reflect it all.⁸⁵

Hedley played to his strengths. He conceptualized ideas into clever and trendy packages for magazine consumers. In the context of the time, Hedley's preferences were in keeping with a general transformation in the role of editor from the previous generation:

[T]he notion of the magazine editor as a creative public personality, blown this way and that by myth and mystique, a setter of fashions and trends no less true (nor more false) than those it was his or her business it was to ferret out for readers—that I, believe, was a 1970s innovation, at least in Toronto. Like so many of Toronto's innovations, however, it was in fact a ripple of something that had taken place with more force in the States a few years earlier.⁸⁶

Hedley's weakness, as mentioned above, was in the organization and execution of his extravagant ideas and schemes. At *Toronto Life*, the production problems that had surfaced at *Maclean's* began to magnify. John Macfarlane, who edited the magazine twice, 1972-1973 and 1992-2007, recalls Hedley's *modus operandi* succinctly: "When he was editor it was a nightmare—it wasn't a nightmare of a magazine—but it never came out on time. Hedley was such an eccentric guy. He edited the magazine from the restaurant/bar across the street [Café des Copains]."⁸⁷ Don Obe, who at this point in time had been Hedley's colleague at the *Telegram* and was now his senior editor at *Toronto Life*, took the good with the bad quite willingly, but understood only too well the challenges involved in being led by such a mercurial figure:

Hedley was a freewheeling editor with an attention span of about five seconds. Lynn Cunningham was his managing editor, and he drove her completely nuts. Somebody had to hold the place together. You can imagine her frustration. Tom was not a thoughtful man, for the feelings of others or the job they were doing.⁸⁸

For Hedley, production chaos was secondary to creating the aura of the editor as artiste, the writers as acolytes, and together creating a kind of phalanx in the vanguard of cultural expression and change in the city.

5

And then Toronto found itself on the cusp of wholesale change. Film culture began to supplant magazine culture as the preferred destination of writers. Instead of becoming a famous long-form writer one could become a famous—and rich—screenplay writer (or so the thinking went; in Hedley’s case, it actually happened with *Flashdance*). Instead of hanging out at Café des Copains around the St. Lawrence Market, everyone congregated at Club 22 at the Windsor Arms Hotel, just south of Yorkville. Once famous for its hippies and drugs, Yorkville was rapidly gentrifying through the 1970s into an acceptable playground for the rich and the celebrated. Magazine culture in Toronto, in other words, was in the process of declining in direct proportion to film culture’s rise. Many feature-writing outlets ceased to exist; others were changing drastically. “Unlike Tom Hedley, the new editors often didn’t like writers, especially free-booting types like [Paul William] Roberts or [Stephen] Williams, who didn’t take easily to formulaic, corporate prose.”⁸⁹

Hedley was certainly at the forefront of this change, having already produced documentaries for the CBC, and, during the late 1970s, writing screenplays for three separate Canadian films aimed at the Hollywood market. Hedley’s ideas about repackaging the New Journalism of Felker and Hayes, as well as his own, for the big screen, started to gel in the late 1970s while editing *Toronto Life*. Two factors emerged in the city at this time, both of which helped ambitious members of this suddenly burgeoning film community. One was the 1976 birth, at the Windsor Arms Hotel, of The Festival of Festivals. Today called the Toronto International Film Festival, it is one of the top film festivals on the annual world circuit, but at the time it was just another fledgling celebration whose sponsors looked across the ocean to the glamour of Cannes. The other factor was the government of Canada’s change in tax policy that allowed generous write-offs for films being produced on Canadian soil.

As part of this new cultural gold rush, Hedley worked on three screenplays late in the decade. All three films—*Double Negative*, *Circle of Two*, *Mr. Padman*—were considered failures despite a certain level of acting and

directing talent involved. Yet failure was no deterrent. In fact, at the 1980 Festival of Festivals, Hollywood agents wanted to meet the Torontonion who had in so prolific fashion written three screenplays in one year. It was time for Hedley to leave magazines behind, which he did when he ceased to be executive editor of *Toronto Life* in autumn 1979 (although he has returned to his first passion periodically over the years, as occasional writer and consultant for *Esquire* and *Vanity Fair*).

Through his film connections Hedley's showbusiness career and lifestyle included toiling on a script for Barbra Streisand, renting a house on the beach in Malibu, buying a house on Big Rock Drive high in the Hollywood Hills overlooking the Pacific Ocean, dating beautiful blondes,⁹⁰ owning and driving around one of Elvis Presley's Cadillacs, notoriety and financial success with *Flashdance*, and, finally, marriage to an Italian "*principessa*."⁹¹ His old comrade Barry Callaghan remarked that this son of an obscure Canadian career military man seemed to have become the embodiment of Jay Gatsby,⁹² a sentiment shared by feature and screenplay writer Norman Snider: "Like Jay Gatsby, Hedley had sprung out of some Platonic ideal of himself."⁹³

Hedley has often said the idea for *Flashdance* came to him while watching strippers perform at a now-defunct club called Gimlets, at Victoria and Lombard Streets near the *Toronto Life* offices. There, young working class women with stages names such as "Gina, Gina the Sex Machina" and "Muscles Marinara" presented highly idiosyncratic and personalized strip routines—their own *tableaux vivants*, Hedley calls them⁹⁴—to customers. Originally, it was not Hedley's idea to frequent the club; his old friend, the painter Robert Markle, preferred to paint female movement, and suggested Hedley accompany him to a club in Buffalo. Mostly, though, they stuck to Gimlets in Toronto. It was probably cheaper for Markle to sit at a strip club and paint than hire models for studio work. Hedley describes this particular club world as pre-Mob infiltrated and pre-pornography obsessed, innocent by today's standards of shock and boredom in the realm of the sexual.⁹⁵

For Hedley, film was not a medium well suited to absorbing ideas directly from the novel or the play; rather than the literary world, he decided film's natural cousin was actually pop culture, from which he could effortlessly borrow and mix ideas and concepts—the quick-cut-away film techniques of MTV music videos, for instance, or the idea of the performer singing directly to the camera. In this regard, Hedley's film work resembled his magazine editor's output. "I ended up succeeding in film work based on my application of my *Esquire* techniques."⁹⁶ But again, these were not the techniques of the style of writing associated with literary journalism. Instead, they were the New Journalism techniques of magazine production, in this case putting disparate elements together in surprising and new ways. At least, that's what Hedley claims, and applying the lessons of editorial magazine packaging to

film packaging is not implausible. After all, the main character in *Flashdance*, Alex, is a blue collar welder by day and a dancer by night.

6

Although *Flashdance* was Hedley's major commercial success, it was not the end of New Journalism in print for him. And although it is true that he is remembered largely as an editor with an outsized influence on Canadian New Journalism, Hedley has continued to embrace literary journalism—at least, the kind recognized as such today—most fully when he has written about the one area he knows through direct experience: Hollywood. This is reflected in two feature-length salutes to fallen friends and comrades, comedian Sam Kinison⁹⁷ and (especially) Don Simpson⁹⁸ (“Don Juan in Turnaround”). The writing is still florid, but considering the topics—two over-the-top Hollywood characters—wholly appropriate. Here is a sample that contains Wolfe's desired cinematic effect of “telling the story by moving from scene to scene and resorting as little as possible to sheer historical narrative”⁹⁹:

Which brings us close to checkout time at the Hotel California. It is January 19, 1996. Simpson must be fifty pounds overweight. He's tired and troubled but somehow retains a gallows charisma. He'd spoon-fed himself an entire jar of peanut butter, washed it down with an exceptional bottle of wine, and talked to his friend writer-director James Toback for three hours on the phone. . . . As he heads upstairs to bed, he picks up a new biography of Oliver Stone subtitled the Controversies, Excesses and Exploits of a Radical Filmmaker and makes his way to his laboratory. He settles on the toilet and begins to read. Don Simpson, fifty-two, straining at stool and pregnant with death, suddenly pitches forward. His nervous system has shut off abruptly—and with it his heart. It can no longer live with impunity in a lethal environment of antidepressants, antipsychotic medication, sedatives, cocaine, and alcohol.¹⁰⁰

Whatever one may argue about whether this or that technique or tactic in magazine production is or is not New Journalism, Hedley's writing certainly reflects the aura of New Journalism, and, indeed, retains the imprint of literary journalism.

Although the indulgence of the New Journalism had been frowned upon in many quarters for its indiscipline (well-warranted, in many cases), it is clear that Hedley had an enormous influence over the period 1965-1980 in Toronto, and by extension, Canadian journalism circles. He himself seems to have recognized that his way of presenting stories began to lose its appeal and fall from fashion. With the New Journalism devolving into the Mickey Mouse

“Me” journalism, younger editors becoming resistant to (or bored with) its charms and also less patient with independent-minded, high-maintenance freelance talent.

Yet at the same time, considering how diligently magazine culture attempts to “sex up” each and every newsstand package for allure, purchase and consumption, we might at least say that in the 1960s and 1970s, the *Esquire* team perfected many techniques and tactics of magazine presentation. Tom Hedley contributed to those, and brought many of the New Journalism techniques back with him to seed Canadian magazine and newspaper journalism.

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Endnotes

1. John C. Hartsock, “Tracing the Historical Outlines of ‘Literary Reportage’: The ‘Other’ Literary Journalism,” *International Literary Journalism: Historical Traditions and Transnational Influences* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, in press), MS p. 2.
2. John Macfarlane, Interview, Toronto (18 January 2008).
3. Don Obe, Interview, Toronto (25 April 2008).
4. Obe.
5. Tom Hedley, Interview 2, New York (14 January 2009).
6. Dale Pollock, “Mr. Flashdance,” *Saturday Night*, October 1984, 48. (Tom Hedley told me in my second interview with him that he had always felt that Pollock had been commissioned by *Saturday Night* magazine to write a “hatchet job” profile, a typically snide attack on a Canadian success story (i.e., a Torontonion who became a millionaire in Hollywood and was known for being the original scriptwriter of a crass commercial bauble, *Flashdance*).
7. Hedley, “The Mr. Vibes of Jazz—Red Norvo,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 1 October 1960, 32.
8. Hedley, Int. 2.
9. Ibid.
10. Hedley, “City Trucking Terminal Levelled in Big Blaze,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 19 January 1962, 1.
11. According to a *Toronto Telegram* notice published June 4, 1966, announcing

Hedley's appointment to the entertainment editor position, Hedley had been "a reporter and editor for more than four years."

12. Pollock, 48.
13. Hedley, Int. 2.
14. Ibid.
15. Obe.
16. Ibid.
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19. Base, M3.
20. Barry Callaghan, *Barrelhouse Kings* (Toronto: McArthur & Company, 1998), 184.
21. Callaghan, Interview 2, Toronto (22 September 2008).
22. Hedley, Int. 1.
23. Peter C. Newman, "Introducing Tom Hedley," *Maclean's*, July 1971, 14.
24. Hedley, Int. 1.
25. Ibid.
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28. Ibid.
29. Douglas Fetherling, *Way Down Deep in the Belly of the Beast: A Memoir of the Seventies* (Toronto: Lester, 1996), 208.
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32. Hedley, Int. 1.
33. Callaghan, Int. 2.
34. Ibid.
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36. Obe.
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39. Hedley, Int. 1.
40. Fetherling, 209.
41. Hedley, Int. 1.
42. Carol Polsgrove, *It Wasn't Pretty, Folks, But Didn't We Have Fun? Esquire in the Sixties* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), 190.
43. Hedley, Int. 2.
44. Polsgrove, 218.
45. Obe.
46. Hedley, Int. 1.
47. Tom Wolfe, "Like a Novel," in Tom Wolfe and E. W. Johnson (eds.), *The New Journalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 10-22.
48. Hedley, Int. 1.
49. Ibid.
50. Sylvia Fraser, Interview, Toronto (22 April 2008).
51. Ann Ruppenstein, "Dear Sylvia." *Ryerson Review of Journalism*, Summer 2007, 71.

52. Fetherling, 210.
53. Hedley, Int. 1.
54. Tom Hedley, "Mickey Mouse at 44," *Maclean's*, November 1972, 36.
55. Ibid.
56. Pollock, 48.
57. The occasion was actually Hedley's twenty-eighth birthday. During our second interview in January 2009 Hedley realized the mistake in the copy, thought about it, then decided the fudge may have been intentional. The dictum, "Never trust anyone over thirty," was still part of the *zeitgeist*, he reasoned, and so turning twenty-nine sounded a lot more ominous.
58. "Mickey Mouse at 44," 92-93.
59. Upon being read Barry Callaghan's quotation, Hedley, in my second interview with him, mentioned that his friend had gotten it mostly right, but that Vidal had also attended.
60. Hedley corrected Callaghan here, saying it was actually Jorge Luis Borges's translator (Thomas Di Giovanni), not Borges himself, who delivered the fateful instruction to Hedley to pick up the cheque at his own birthday celebration.
61. Barry Callaghan, Interview 3, Toronto (25 September 2008).
62. Hedley, Int. 2.
63. Pollock, 49.
64. Callaghan, Int. 3.
65. Ian Brown, "Route 66 Revisited," *The Globe and Mail, Destinations Magazine*, 6 March 1987, 48.
66. Obe.
67. Newman, *Here Be Dragons: Telling Tales of People, Passion and Power* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004), 367.
68. Fetherling, 201.
69. Hedley, Int. 1.
70. Newman, 367.
71. The *Toronto Telegram* went out of business in 1971, but many of its employees banded together to start the *Toronto Sun*, the city's first tabloid newspaper.
72. Base, M1-M3.
73. Lynn Cunningham, Interview, Toronto (15 October 2008).
74. Fetherling, 212.
75. This story was recounted by Obe as well.
76. Hedley, Int. 1.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
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80. Cunningham.
81. Norman Sims, "The Literary Journalists," in Sims, ed., *The Literary Journalists: The New Art of Personal Reportage* (New York: Ballantine, 1984), 10.
82. Barry Callaghan, *Raise You Five: Essays and Encounters 1964-2004, Volume One*. (Toronto: McArthur & Company, 2005), xx.
83. Hedley, Int. 1.
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86. Fetherling, 204-205.
87. John Macfarlane.
88. Obe.

89. Snider, 19.

90. Hedley, Int. 1. Hedley told me that, like many others before him, his first inclination after making his fortune on *Flashdance* was to find a house in Malibu along the more exclusive ocean front property that is well away from Pacific Highway 1. But he found that whenever he went walking on the beach he would encounter a pesky film management type, who would proceed to harass him about a script he was working on. So the “beautiful blonde” he was living with at the time found him a house in the hills overlooking the ocean, where he could retain his privacy.

91. John Macfarlane’s term, not Hedley’s.

92. Callaghan, Int. 3.

93. Snider, 2.

94. Hedley, Int. 1.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid.

97. Hedley, “The Last Laugh,” *Esquire*, December 1992, 140-3, 172-7.

98. Hedley, “Don Juan in Turnaround: Sleaze and Excess Lose Their Glamour in Hollywood,” *Esquire*, 1 Sept 1996, 122-132.

99. *Wolfe*, 31.

100. “Don Juan in Turnaround,” 127.