Note from the Editor…

Although literary journalism can have immediate impact (*Hiroshima*, *Silent Spring*), it is not often thought of as newsworthy, or even newsy. Its essence usually involves deep immersion in the field—the gathering—followed by long bouts of rumination at the desk. The latter task, involving pure reflection—call it the not-gathering—is necessary if only to discover just exactly what the story is really about. The deskwork, or laptop work, or scroll work, or the pasting up and moving pieces of paper around on the wall kind of work, nourishes a complementary yearning to present material in as writerly a way as possible. Yes, voice is important.

And yet this not-news quality is not always absent. There have been two recent instances when the news included literary journalism. The big announcement was the awarding of a Nobel prize for literature in October to a writer who can be snugly labeled a literary journalist. And while not quite news of that magnitude, still impressively newsy was *Vanity Fair* pairing a current high-profile literary journalist with the patriarch of the New Journalism for an eighteen-page magazine feature.

The first event spurred contributor John C. Hartsock to offer the journal an excerpt from his forthcoming book, *Literary Journalism and the Aesthetics of Experience* (University of Massachusetts Press, early 2016). Specifically, *LJS* was interested in Hartsock's thoughts on Belarusian writer Svetlana Alexievich, whose books include *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War* (1992) and *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster* (2005). Hartsock writes that there is no question that Alexievich is the first exclusively literary journalist to win the Nobel, and explicates her particular kind of storytelling, which relies on detailed portraits of ordinary people contrasted with the grand schemes of the state, buttressing her prose with a wide breadth of examples from literature.

The less spectacular but still fascinating event is Michael Lewis's piece in *Vanity Fair*'s November 2015 issue. Entitled "The White Stuff"—presumably referring to Tom Wolfe's sartorial preference for white suits, not cocaine—it posits a fresh origin tale for the man who assumed the role of head cheerleader for fully, deeply researched stories told with verve, style, and, in his case, flash—stories that brought cultural currents and upheavals into focus in a way regular news stories and features could not. In Lewis's hands, the man who popularized the term New Journalism is treated in much the same way, that is, as a topic ripe for excavation, courtesy of the New York Public Library's 2013 purchase of the Wolfe archives. It's a beautifully told account, as Lewis injects a dosage of personal journalism into the historical narrative (for instance, he tries to explain to his daughter, who is traveling with Lewis to visit Wolfe, how much Wolfe had meant to him when he was growing up). I won't say more—well, okay, I am tempted to say that it is mandatory reading for literary journalism scholars and

practitioners alike—except to tantalize by casually mentioning the jet pilot with the serendipitous name and Lewis taking us inside Wolfe's Hamptons home.

From the *LJS* perspective, the timing of the Lewis piece could not be more propitious, as we had already been preparing for this very issue Michael Jacobs's detailed examination of Wolfe's methodological somersaults in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. Jacobs elucidates the complex situation of Wolfe wrestling with showing the reader the Merry Pranksters' lives. These are classic issues for literary journalism: Exactly how does one climb inside the mind of an acidhead anyway? And if one manages to access this strange reality, how to spank it down onto the page so the reader feels it? Jacobs provides us with thoughtful answers. As a bonus, Jacobs tracked down the wonderful Jack Robinson Archive, which contains several striking Wolfe photographs from the mid-1960s, two of which the Archive graciously has allowed us to reproduce for this issue.

Wolfe is also mentioned in Julien Gorbach's "The Old New Journalist," an examination of crime reporter, columnist, playwright, author, and (most famously) film writer Ben Hecht's possible role as a proto–New Journalist. In the later stage of his career, for reasons Gorbach explains, Hecht returned to nonfiction, specifically to write the story of Mickey Cohen. Gorbach provides examples of Hecht's literary journalism, which read almost "Talesian," but the book was never finished. Unfortunately, Hecht, the man who played the gangster concept into a lucrative Hollywood career, was then himself played by an old gangster.

Wolfe also makes an appearance in Nicholas Lemann's keynote address, "The Journalism in Literary Journalism," which argues for more emphasis on doing the hard work of reporting, and for listening to what the social scientists have to say, and worrying less about the literary aspects of telling the story. Josh Roiland's response to Lemann's address, "By Any Other Name: The Case for Literary Journalism," argues that the adjective literary should not be taken as a value judgment, but as an apt descriptor, and that we should be defending the use of the moniker literary journalism against intrusions from meaningless but social-media friendly terms such as long form.

Away from the influence of Wolfe (finally . . . this was not planned, dear reader!), and across the ocean, Kate McQueen's contribution to this volume is a richly textured portrait of German newspaper columnist Paul "Sling" Schlesinger. Sling's 1920s vignettes may remind some of Jimmy Breslin's columns, that is, short stories based on fact. I am sure readers, whether familiar with Sling or not, will delight in McQueen informing us how Sling came to pretty much singlehandedly turning crime reporting into a credible form of literary pursuit, and influencing an entire generation of editors and writers in the process.

Magdalena Horodecka's essay sorts out Polish literary journalist Ryszard Kapuściński's relation to the ancient historian, specifically in the text *Travels with Herodotus* (2007). She examines Kapuściński's long-term fascination with *The Histories*, along with his intellectual infatuation in the 1980s and 1990s with taking up the lens of hermeneutics, having read his Dilthey, Rorty, Ricoeur, and Barthes. At no point, however, was the master storyteller in danger of falling for "death of the author" postmodernism.

Finally, our Scholar-Practitioner Q+A teams up David Abrahamson with author Michael Norman. It is a treat to listen in on this conversation, as Norman describes, among other things, how a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art teaches students to write better narratives. Norman and his wife Elizabeth are currently working on a follow-up to their book-length exploration, *Tears in the Darkness: The Story of the Bataan Death March and Its Aftermath* (2009), with another challenging subject, this time about life and death inside Bellevue Hospital in New York. Norman has some penetrating, insightful thoughts on the nature of structure, and how vexing it can be to find exactly the right one for each story.

Bill Reynolds