

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

1986

Joan Didion and the new journalism

Jean Gillingwaters

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project>



Part of the [American Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gillingwaters, Jean, "Joan Didion and the new journalism" (1986). *Theses Digitization Project*. 417.
<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/417>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

JOAN DIDION AND THE NEW JOURNALISM

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State

University, San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

English Composition

by

Jean Gillingwaters

June 1986

JOAN DIDION AND THE NEW JOURNALISM

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State
University, San Bernardino

by
Jean Gillingwaters
June 1986

Approved by:


Chair

June 5, 1986
Date

Abstract

Most texts designed to teach writing include primarily non-fiction models. Most teachers, though, have been trained in the belles lettres tradition, and their competence usually lies with fiction or poetry. Cultural preference has traditionally held that fiction is the most important form of literature. Analyzing a selection of twentieth century non-fiction prose is difficult; there are too few resources, and conventional analytical methods too often do not fit modern non-fiction.

The new journalism, a recent literary genre, is especially difficult to "teach" because it blends fictive and journalistic techniques. The result is a hybrid literary form with little critical analysis available to teacher or student. In this essay I explore the development of the new journalism and analyze two essays by Joan Didion, a new journalist whose writing displays a dominant personal voice. My analysis contributes toward a larger body of non-fiction criticism by showing how Didion rhetorically creates her powerful voice, as well as suggesting that teachers take a broader view of the rhetorical worth of other classifications of writing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. Introduction	1
II. The New Journalism	3
III. The Writer's Voice	18
IV. "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream"	32
V. "On Self-Respect"	48
VI. Conclusion	67
Works Cited	71

I. Introduction

In their best efforts to analyze modern non-fiction prose, teachers of writing often find themselves frustrated by two fundamental shortcomings: the first is the teacher's own limited experience within the broader body of literature, and the second is the lack of published criticism of modern non-fiction, which might guide her in her approaches to its analysis. She, therefore, reduces herself to pointing out dominant rhetorical modes, identifying symbols, asking students to outline main points, or to discussing the significance of titles. These activities may demonstrate the teacher's authority, but they leave the students confused about how certain prose models might apply to their own writing.

Part of the problem also is that modern non-fiction is a grab-bag of types, including science and nature writing, travel writing, and new journalism. The new journalism is particularly troublesome because critics cannot decide whether it should be classified as literature or as non-fiction prose. Briefly, the new journalism is a form of journalism that makes use of narrative and fictive techniques and displays an obvious personal voice. Arising out of some exceptional journalistic situations in the early 1960s, the new journalism was not trusted simply because of its novelty. The new journalism movement jolted

non-fiction's position in the literary world, but its final authority is still being evaluated.

Because no authorized body of criticism exists for non-fiction, each work worthy of published criticism creates separate standards for judgment. Certainly, the methods of analyzing fiction do not often apply to non-fiction. New questions must be asked. Some of the questions might be phrased this way: Does a writer's voice affect the reader's acceptance of the writer as an authority? If so, how? In non-fiction writing, what relationships does the writer create between facts? What do the relationships reveal about the author? Can an admittedly subjective voice present the truth about facts?

What I offer here, then, is a closer look at the style of the new journalist, Joan Didion. The ability to select just the right combination of stylistic details is the source of her genius, and I want to show how Didion's masterful style creates her distinctive character. This, more than anything else, is the source of her authority. In this analysis, I focus on two essays, "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" and "On Self-Respect," two essays frequently selected as models in anthologies designed for composition courses. Didion's voice was formed during the 1960s when, as a journalist, she tried to understand the forces affecting American life.

II. The New Journalism

The decade of the 1960s was a difficult one to write about because it was so extraordinary. John Hellman explains that American reality seemed to be undergoing a profound change:

Stimulated by Kennedy's election and unleashed by his assassination, long buried forces in the American psyche were coming to the surface with an almost eerie simultaneity in politics, in national and individual violence, in subcultures, in urban slums, in technology, in the young (2).

According to Tom Wolfe, the 1960s will always interest historians because of manners, morals, styles of living, and attitudes toward the world changed everything more than political events did:

. . . all the changes that were labeled, however clumsily, with such tags as "the generation gap," "the counter culture," "black consciousness," "sexual permissiveness," "the death of God," . . . the abandonment of proprieties, pieties, decorums connoted by "go-go funds," "fast money," swinger groovy hippie drop-out pop Beatles Andy baby Jane Bernie Huey Eldridge LSD marathon encounter underground rip-off. . . . This whole side of American life that gushed forth when postwar

American affluence finally blew the lid off--.

. . . (29-30)

Terry Eagleton suggests the crux of the problem from a critic's viewpoint:

How was one to write in an industrial society where discourse had become degraded to a mere instrument of science, commerce, advertising and bureaucracy? What audience was one to write for in any case, given the saturation of the reading public by a "mass," profit-hungry, anodyne culture? (140)

In his 1961 essay "Writing American Fiction," Philip Roth seemed to have understood the new journalists' problem even though he saw recording "reality" as a problem for fiction writers. "The American writer in the middle of the 20th century has his hands full in trying to understand, and then describe, and then make credible much of the American reality" (224).

The new journalists, as realistic writers, found the problems even larger. Ronald Weber elucidates the new journalists' grappling with reality in a chapter titled "Toward Irrealism." Weber explains the problem this way: "Put simply, the problem had to do with the essential reality of those grander social and political phenomena of the times; were they indeed real in the sense of being true

reflections of present reality" (10)? And more to the point:

Contemporary reality was not only incredible then [in the 1960s] but untrue. It might offend and even embarrass the fictional imagination, but the more penetrating point was that it failed to reveal in its surface detail the true state of society. The forms of the society, its manners and morals, masked confusion, deceit, and spiritual disintegration. (11)

These references, then, emphasize writers' focus on reality, but they only introduce the topic; they do not explain it. Whatever the facts were, they alone could not speak for themselves. The reality became the interpretation of the facts. The various ways that the new journalists demonstrated relationships between facts produced a new form of journalism.

Some backtracking is necessary here to explain the new style of writing. Newspaper writers, particularly feature writers, are considered by the literary world to be on the lowest rung of the writers' ladder. Feature writers worked for newspapers hoping to accumulate experience, pay the rent, get to know the world, and then they planned to quit to write The Novel. During the 1960s, however, feature writers began to experiment with writing style partly to

compete with television for an audience, partly to meet the demands of reporting the surreal times. Two important writers emerged: Gay Talese and Jimmy Breslin. Gay Talese working for the New York Times had written an article for Esquire called "Joe Louis: The King as a Middle-aged Man." The article read like a short story with dialogue and descriptive scenes, yet it also fell within the format of conventional magazine journalism. The following year, 1963, Jimmy Breslin, a Herald Tribune columnist, made waves in the journalist establishment by writing columns that involved leaving the newspaper offices to gather information. His stories were exciting because they included dialogue, made use of symbols, yet were true-to-life accounts. Here were two writers from the lowest literary ranks embarking in uncharted territory. Breslin and Talese's work marks the beginning of a new literary style called the new journalism (Wolfe 12-14).

Others also experimented with new forms of writing. Writers such as Truman Capote and Norman Mailer veered toward fiction with a realistic touch. Truman Capote's In Cold Blood is probably the best example of "factual fiction." Capote spent five years researching his story and interviewing two killers of a wealthy Kansas family. The story ran in serial form in the New Yorker in 1965, and it was a sensation. Capote said he invented a new literary

genre, "the nonfiction novel." Capote's "success gave the New Journalism, as it would soon be called, an overwhelming momentum" (Wolf 26).

Norman Mailer's two novels--An American Dream and Why Are We in Vietnam met with little success. Then Armies of the Night (1968), published as an autobiographical account of his involvement in an anti-war demonstration, changed everything. His reputation raised the new style to its highest point so far. Here was non-fiction written with a literary touch.

By 1966 reporting took on a different character. Wolfe says, "Here came a breed of journalists who somehow had the moxie to talk their way inside of any milieu, even closed societies, and hang on for dear life" (26). John Sack wrote a book called M after getting permission to join an infantry company at Fort Dix as a reporter. Sack went through basic training with M Company and accompanied them to battle in Vietnam. George Plimpton trained with the Detroit Lions, a professional football team, and produced Paper Lion. Hunter Thompson lived among the Hell's Angels as a reporter for year and a half in order to write Hell's Angels: The Strange Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gang. Also during this time Joan Didion collected her articles about California in a book called Slouching Towards Bethlehem. "By 1969," writes Tom Wolfe, "no one in the literary world

could simply dismiss this new journalism as an inferior genre" (28).

To say, though, that new journalism is "new" is incorrect. Several critics and Tom Wolfe, the leader of the new journalist style, point out similarities between the rise of the novel and the rise of new journalism. Since writers have usually sought to recreate reality, the new journalists were learning, as Wolfe says, "the techniques of realism--particularly of the sort found in Fielding, Smollet, Balzac, Dickens and Gogol--from scratch" (31). In fact, journalists and novelists share similar roots in various ways. For one, writers of both literary forms have always been concerned with getting the "story just right." The realistic novel may be said to originate in the eighteenth century with Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding. Like these writers, the new journalists strive for detailed realism.

But recording the events of the 1960s, for the most part, fell to those writers called the new journalists. "No novelist," Wolfe asserts, "will be remembered as the novelist who captured the Sixties in America, or even in New York . . ." (24). There seem to be two main reasons for this: fiction writers were having trouble using the techniques peculiar to the novel in chronicling the reality of this decade, and the journalists found the

who-what-when-where-why voice of traditional journalism too neutral for recording the upheaval of the 1960s.

Journalists began experimenting and found the most effective writing for their purposes borrowed story-telling techniques from fiction writing and used a dominant, autobiographical voice.

Tom Wolfe summarizes several other similarities between the early days of the realistic novel in England and the new journalism. For one thing, each genre was criticized as being shallow, simply entertainment. Both forms produced intense feelings and excited their readers, and this was regarded as slightly dangerous because there were no guidelines in either form of writing for evaluating the reality they tried to present. These works have both been criticized because they offer no moral instruction. Also, both the realistic novel and the new journalism are relatively easy to read; Coleridge said serious literature should be challenging morally as well as intellectually. Wolfe goes on to say that the realistic novel and the new journalism are accused of dwelling on "manners" or the superficial aspects of ordinary or inconsequential subjects and people (37-39).

Interesting, too, is the similarity between the words "fact" and "fiction." "Fact" derives from the word facere meaning "make or do," while "fiction" comes from fingere

meaning "to make or shape." Lennard Davies has studied other ties between journalism and fiction. Davies reports that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, "the word novel seems to have been used interchangeably with the word news--and both were applied freely to writings that were about true or fictional events . . ." (126). By studying laws passed to tax printed material, he also shows that into the eighteenth century little difference existed between journalism and novels except the length of the text (127-128).

Defining the new journalism is complicated by the fact that an interplay of various techniques and results makes classification difficult. One critical faction argues that since the new journalists apply narrative as well as occasional cinematic techniques to their reporting, the new journalism is a form of literary fiction. Another group of critics bases their arguments on the final effects of the discourse. If the focus finally turns inward, in the same way that fiction points to itself, then the new journalism is literature. If the final effect is outward, pointing to the world, then the new journalism is just a variety of non-fiction or journalistic prose. Complicating this last argument is the fact that much new journalism is successful because it points both inward and outward. Besides Tom Wolfe, who is a journalist, others have defined journalism,

emphasizing different aspects of the new journalism.

Gay Talese, in his work Fame and Obscurity says "the new journalism, though reading like fiction, is not fiction. It is, or should be, as reliable as the most reliable reportage although it seeks a larger truth . . ." (2). John Hellman, the author of Fables of Fact, supports the view that the new journalism is mainly literary fiction. According to Hellman, the new journalism is "most properly understood as a genre of literature. Like realistic fiction or romantic fiction or fabulist fiction, it has an aesthetic form and purpose making its 'final direction' inward" (24). Michael Johnson, author of The New Journalism, focuses on the personal quality of new journalism. He writes:

I think that the personal mark of New Journalistic style is the writer's attempt to be personalistic, involved, and creative in relation to the events he reports and comments upon. His journalism, in general, has no pretense of being "objective" and it bears the clear stamp of his commitment and personality. (46)

Because evidence exists for both arguments, critics might conclude that the new journalism is both a form of literary non-fiction and a kind of factual literature. The various terms coined for this genre reflect this: faction, literature of fact, factography, documentarism (Zilliaccus

"Radical Naturalisms" 97). Definitions that straddle the fence, though, do not identify the remarkable writing of such men and women as Tracy Kidder, Sara Davidson, and Marc Singer. Northrop Frye's view that "to grow out of something is in part to outgrow it" seems to be the case with the new journalism (Frye Anatomy 352). The various distinguishing characteristics, though borrowed from other literary and non-literary genres, combine to create a written form particularly suited to a reading audience in the sixties, seventies, and now in the eighties. The new journalism has no canon, but four distinctive characteristics give this literary form its power: immediacy, concrete reality, emotional involvement, and a gripping or absorbing quality.

In "New Journalism, Metaphor and Culture," David Eason, a journalism professor, also lists four qualities of the new journalism. The new journalist, says Eason, portrays singular events as symbols of the larger problems of society, casts himself into a character role, calls attention to his style, and stresses different views of the world (146-147). Similarly, Norman Sims, editor of a collection of new journalism prose, outlines what he sees as the controlling elements of literary journalism:

(1) structure--the architecture of the work inherent in the research material; (2) accuracy--careful recording of details and quotes; (3) immersion--time spent on the job,

living for years if necessary with those the journalist is reporting about; (4) responsibility--accepting the consequences of personal reporting; (5) voice--a dominating presence of the journalist focusing on her own reality. In the introduction to Sims' collected readings, Mark Kramer and Tracy Kidder articulate these standards of literary journalism. New journalists follow a tradition of story-telling to impart experience rather than to relay facts. The new journalists immerse themselves in the lives of their subjects. They pay attention to language of the particular by using concrete images. The new journalists frequently confirm the accuracy of their story by showing it to an authority in the field. The new journalist rejects the institutional voice in favor of a personal one (Sims 12-13).

Then Taylor says, "Something has happened in relatively recent times to the relationship between the documentary and the imaginative in American writing, something importantly and perhaps uniquely accessible in personal narrative as a locus of change" (xi). The word locus is an important one, and it deserves amplification. Locus means place. It is interesting that Taylor uses the word place rather than form when he writes about the new journalism. The idea of place, locus, is deeply important in travel writing, a form popular in the nineteenth century and now receiving some increased

interest once again. To a travel writer, place or locus may be the "other" she tries to understand in her experience as a writer. The new or other place is different and arouses increased or intensified sensory response. This difficult relationship with a new place provides the means to express old emotions in new ways, or perhaps more accurately, the conflict with place enables the writer to form a unique relationship with herself, her topic, and her reader. In the case of the new journalism, the new form becomes a new place, a "physical setting" perhaps to inject meaning into topics. I also hesitate to make the following analogy, but sometimes psychologists and counselors advise that a change of venue or locus improves or vivifies a sexual relationship. Why can't this same sort of need occur in writing, a phenomenon involving delicate relationship between author and reader, and the creation of something? For Didion, certainly, voice becomes her sense of place. The point is that the new journalistic form did allow journalists to inject a new life into their work and thus attract an increasing audience.

On another level, Clas Zilliacus says that the new form of journalism "might be a way of bypassing an ossified literary system by bringing new subject matter to a habitually nonreading public" (101). The new journalism does away with a narrator. The new form is direct. Of

course, "the ossified literary system" refers to fiction, probably the novel.

Combining factual reporting with narrative methods created a transforming kind of writing, often reflecting the writer's own grappling with altering reality. Hellman proposes that the new journalism is a transforming prose: ". . . far from being realistically dramatized confrontations between fact and mind, between the words of journalism and fiction" (x).

The new journalists developed this transforming journalism to help their readers make the leap between the facts and understanding. What they appealed to is the reader's imagination. By grounding their work in the conscious world and by calling upon imaginative, fictive techniques to draw attention to the role imagination plays, the new journalists created a pattern to help readers understand reality. Hellman says:

This is the central assumption of the experimental strategies by which both the fiction writer and the new journalist deal with contemporary American reality: the power of an individual consciousness to perceive pattern in experience. (16)

The purpose becomes one of understanding reality rather than of exposing it.

In a more complicated explanation, Zilliacus tackles

the new journalist's effort to combine facts and imaginative technique. He sees the new journalist's difficulty in transmitting reality much the same as that faced by modern naturalists. He gives this explanation:

The report is accompanied by a distance performative signal. That is, what it offers is not a presentation of its author's imaginings but a representation of reality, of unadulterated slices of life. Two antithetical characteristics follow: an overriding realistic intent and the rush of a vacuously authentic apparatus grinding out perspectiveless minutiae. (97)

In other words, strictly factual reporting results in non-understanding. The assimilating power of one's imagination must be appealed to; otherwise a vacuum of understanding results. When the new journalists ground their work in information perceived on the conscious level and appeal to the reader's imagination by using narrative techniques, the result is a form of prose writing that meets the needs of readers trying to understand particular events during a particular time.

Reality could be shown by both the novelist and the non-fiction or "factual novelist" through the adventures of a single hero. This technique does not work for the new journalists, though, because many of the significant events

of the 1960s were collective experiences: Woodstock, mass political protests, urban riots, the Vietnam War, drug culture. Traditional reporters typically pursued a story in centers of power: the White House, for instance. The new journalists moved to a larger arena. The activities of ordinary people also had a power, and the complex lives of Americans and their subcultures gave insight into how the larger institutions worked. The new journalism showed, too, that the collective experiences affected the traditional power structures. The new journalist is part of the collective experience, and when she makes her stance clear by using a defined, personal voice, she and the reader collaborate in trying to understand reality. The surreal aspect of the 1960s' reality forced the writer to interject her own perception of the events so that the reader is guided along by an understanding of the eye-witness' interpretation of the situation. The journalist is not a literary, narrative hero; she comes off as an ordinary person presenting the facts and her view of them something like this: "Well, here it is, and I can't do anything about it either." This voice creates the contract between the writer and the reader, giving the new journalism its authority.

III. The Writer's Voice

Ethos, the Greek word from which comes the idea of writer's voice, means the distinguishing character, moral nature, or guiding sentiment of a person, and in the case of the Greeks, the speaker. Today, when we refer to the writer's voice, we mean his or her particular individual character. In some instances, voice indicates the right of expression, as though having a voice implies the privilege to express an individual opinion. Sometimes voice means influential power, the power to influence others. But above all voice is a distinct expression of the writer's character, something intimate and personal. The writer's dominant voice gives new journalism its self-conscious quality and establishes the writer's authority.

An effective voice, one that reveals the writer's character, is personal. It calls attention to itself, but at the same time is directed outward to the world at large. When we read anything, says Northrop Frye,

we find our attention moving in two directions at once. One direction is outward or centrifugal, in which we keep going outside our reading, from the individual words to the things they mean, or, in practice, to our memory of the conventional association between them. The other direction is inward or centripetal, in which we try to develop

from the words a sense of the larger verbal pattern they make. (23)

Frye makes a distinction between descriptive and assertive writing in which the final direction is outward, and literary verbal structure where the final direction of meaning is inward (Frye 74). The new journalism takes both directions.

Before the 1960s, the journalist's voice was collective, institutional, detached. Its flatness commanded little or no attention. Then, when the world seemed to be splitting apart, the flat voice became obsolete; because of its familiarity and impersonality no one paid attention to it. The conventions of journalism were inadequate to shock--or to convey the shocking times. Just as Jonathan Swift created a satirical voice in "A Modest Proposal" to capture the attention of those who, as a result of their greed at others' expense, had become anesthetized to the situation of starving people, the new journalists, facing the events of the 1960s, also required a new voice. The new journalism demanded a more personal kind of interviewing and research than does traditional reporting--what Wolfe calls "situation reporting." The new journalist's voice, the one that creates a contract between her and her reader, is probably the most important difference between traditional reporting and the new journalism. The new journalists

changed the relationship between the reader and the people and the events they were depicting by entering directly into the relationship with the reader. The new, frankly subjective voice bears the stamp of the writer's personality. By freely admitting her own prejudices as she records her personal reactions to people and events that make news, the reporter explodes the myth that the old "who-what-when-where-why-how objectivity" is the only way to present truth.

The new journalist's voice is so dominant, so carefully and artfully developed, that much of its appeal is based on voice. Wilson, examining Didion's style in The White Album, says, ". . . what I suspect constitutes the appeal of her writing is not its revelation of a nonpolitical mind, but rather its willingness to surrender to the reader a large and anguished part of the author's own self" (Wilson 94). It might work this way:

He [the new journalist] would be governed by a sense of how the events he encountered were constellated, how they affected his own feelings and thinking, and how they constituted a concrete human experience for him or other people involved; and he would then make a "journal" of the event, a novelistic or impressionistic reconstruction, or an extended and thorough document. (Johnson 46)

This voice that has now acquired authority permits the writer "to have one's immediate say on contemporary matters and to retain at the same time a loyal readership" (Hollowell 14). Thus, the contract between writer and reader is clinched.

Hellman says, "This contract or agreement between author and reader has a crucial effect on how a text is perceived" (Hellman 27). The new journalists have to convey intrinsically their integrity, honesty, and skill in their work. These, then, become appropriate subjects of study, just as style and point of view are. According to Hellman,

An author can make a convincing journalistic contract in a number of ways. The first, simplest, and very effective method is simply to say so: to have the book labeled as nonfiction. . . . The author can strengthen this claim by explaining in framing devices (forewords, afterwords, epilogues, etc.) that the book adheres completely to his own or others' observations. He can develop this into a detailed description of materials available to him, or he can place various documents and externally verifiable data within the text. Finally, he can in various ways, such as through unusual self-revelations, convince the reader of his honesty and trustworthiness.

(Hellman 29)

The new journalist gives intimate reminders of her presence. This "foreword" technique can bind or frame the piece. It is used to emphasize the factual nature of the reporting and strengthens the contract between the reader and the author because it "strengthens the reader's perception of the work's link to actuality" (Hellman 14). This contract is intended to be noticed, to be startling.

Roland Barthes might have had Joan Didion in mind when he wrote about the writer's giving "society a self-confessed art, whose rules are visible to all. In exchange, society is able to accept the writer" because Didion's essay "On Self-Respect" displays a brilliant control of style which, in turn, establishes Didion's voice, and it is her voice that creates the bond between the author, text, and reader (Degree Zero 65). Barthes also might have had Didion in mind when he wrote that readers play a text like music, and if the text is successful, the reader hears the writer's voice ("From Work to Text" 79). What I hear when I play Didion's essay line-by-line is a clear, tight, pure voice.

In two essays, "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" and "On Self-Respect," Didion's style is characterized by economy, parallel structures, repetition, and concrete images. These reflect her voice. Didion uses her voice to

reveal her own ethos or character. Her style gives the reader the ethic--the value of her character--and this becomes the most powerful means of Didion's persuasion. Didion is evocative because her style creates a personal character whom the reader trusts. Didion would persuade the reader that the world of the 1960s is falling apart, and her aggressive deliberateness of style becomes a kind of rhetoric, a persuasiveness.

In essay after essay, it is Joan Didion's style to confront the reader directly. A sampling of opening sentences from her writings demonstrates this head-on quality.

Consider this. (Democracy)

The center was not holding. ("Slouching Towards Bethlehem")

The place might have been commissioned by The Magic Christian. ("The Getty")

I was once invited to a civil rights meeting at Sammy Davis, Jr.'s house in the hills above Sunset Strip. ("Good Citizen")

To read a great deal of Doris Lessing over a short span of time is to feel that the original hound of heaven has commandeered the attic. ("Doris Lessing")

1969: I had better tell you where I am, and

why. ("In the Islands")

Possessing one of the most engaging voices among the new journalists, Didion doesn't allow the reader to turn her attention away; she cannot wander from Didion's imperatively directed path. Besides confrontational, other adjectives appearing in reviews of her work, dust covers of her books, prefaces in anthologies characterize her distinctive voice: concrete, tight, unsanitized, unsentimental, neurotic, intense, aggressive, acid. Didion's voice in turn reflects her style. It is this aspect of Didion's tactical persuasiveness with which I am concerned.

The reader cannot help but notice that Didion finds the world during the 1960s depressing, and her rhetoric helps the reader see that reacting to a disintegrating culture neurotically is natural; in fact, if you're not feeling neurotic too, something is wrong.

Ellen G. Friedman, editor of Joan Didion: Essays and Conversations, writes, "Didion's is the most depressing writing I know. It is also among the truest and most brilliant" (90). Friedman accurately identifies Didion's sensibility as a writer. Her reactions to the world are a blend of shock, depression, and cold analysis. In fact, Didion's writing is paradoxical. Didion shows us the depressing side of the 1960s culture, yet her skill in presenting it fascinates us. Didion chooses powerful,

sometimes glamorous topics, yet the reader gets the feeling Didion herself is shocked by them. Didion's writing style also reveals a dark and a light side. Her knack for detail and accurate recording juxtaposes her sense of objective observation with subjective responses. John Romano identifies this paradox as the coming together of "the twin extremes of hopelessness and precision [of writing]" (142). And Anne Mickelson says that "Didion concentrates on the meaninglessness of existence" (87).

Donald Barthelme says that one does not choose a style; for instance, a writer doesn't decide to write a "Chinese Chippendale poem" (48). Style comes about because of what a person is--dependent upon his culture, his background. Didion's background is traditional. Her family has roots several generations deep in the Sacramento Valley; she was a member of the Episcopal church. Family relationships are important to Didion. She often returns to her parents' house in Sacramento to complete writing projects.

Invariably, Didion displays neurotic feelings in her work, sometimes in the preface as she does in Slouching Towards Bethlehem; sometimes as the subject of the essay, as in "In Bed"; and sometimes within the essay as in "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" or "The White Album." What is important to remember about Didion's openness is that by laying her apprehensions out for public view, they

themselves do not become an issue. Didion merely demonstrates her vulnerability, then she moves on. Yet, critics of her work are fascinated by Didion's frankness about her personal fears. Nowhere does Didion reveal her true character better than in several interviews. Didion's own statement is one of the best sources into her character.

Published interviews with Joan Didion by radio commentator Susan Stamberg and writers Sara Davidson and Michiko Kakutani give additional insight into Didion's background. In these interviews Didion herself reveals why she likes to work at her parents' home, something of her morally traditional background, her feelings of vulnerability. Like most critics, Sara Davidson asks why Didion frequently returns to her childhood home to complete writing projects. Didion tells us: "It's very easy for me to work there. My concentration can be total because nobody calls me. I'm not required to lead a real life. I'm like a child, in my parents' house" (17).

As she writes in "On Morality," Didion has a clear moral stance. She writes that people who have "abdicated their responsibilities somehow breached their primary loyalties" and act immorally (159). She comments on her sense of right and wrong: "I have a very rigid sense of right and wrong. What I mean is, I use the words all the time. Even the smallest things. A table can be right or

wrong. . . . Behavior is right or wrong" (18).

Reporters are thought of as ruthless and relentless. Yet Didion gives up easily when researching her essay "Slouching Towards Bethlehem." She talks about her shyness:

I like a lot of people, and I'm glad to see them, but I don't give the impression of being there. Part of it is that I'm terribly inarticulate. A sentence doesn't occur to me as a whole thing unless I'm working. (19)

Susan Stamberg interviewed Didion in 1977 on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered." Didion emphasizes again her moral stance:

I am a moralist, but I grew up in such a strong West Coast ethic that I tend not to impose my own sense of what is wrong and what is right. . . . But I myself tend to perceive things as right or wrong, in a very rigid way. (24)

Many people quote Didion's introduction to Slouching Towards Bethlehem where she writes:

My only advantage as a reporter is that I am so physically small, so temperamentally unobtrusive and so neurotically inarticulate that people tend to forget that my presence runs counter to their best interests. And it always does. That is one last thing to remember: Writers are always

selling somebody out. (xiv)

Didion's response to her display of such personally neurotic feelings is this:

Usually I spend a great deal of time finding a tone that is not my own, and then adopting the tone and getting it right. But with this, I just typed it out, very fast, and rather in my own voice. Normally I have difficulty "expressing myself" in any natural way. (25)

Stamberg suggests that Didion will not win the Nobel Prize for literature, not for lack of skill, but for lack of optimism. Didion agrees: "I am more attracted to the underside of the tapestry. I tend to always look for the wrong side, the bleak side. I have since I was a child" (27).

Kakutani's interview published as a feature in a 1979 issue of the New York Times Magazine gets closer to the sources of Didion's voice. Didion is "strikingly frail" Kakutani tells us. Didion is 5 feet 2 and weighs 95 pounds. She wears sunglasses indoors. Her voice is soft and tentative. John Dunne, Didion's husband, fields questions directed at Didion, and screens her telephone calls (30).

Didion portrays herself as one "familiar with the edge." In Slouching Towards Bethlehem: "She wrote of 'bad nerves,' of drinking 'gin and hot water to blunt the pain

. . . and [taking] Dexedrene to blunt the gin" (32). Kakutani proposes that Didion finds parallels between her own experience and the times (1960s). Didion subjects herself and the reader to such scrutiny because ". . . the process of putting her life on paper somehow helps to exorcise private demons. Writing, after all, is a means of creating a momentary stay against confusion, of making order out of disorder, understanding out of fear" (32).

Traveling with Didion to her Sacramento home, Kakutani reports that she displays pictures of her great-great-great-grandmother, a survivor of the Donner party. Didion clings to her western heritage as she tells Kakutani:

"'. . . I myself feel better the farther west I am'" (34).

Kakutani learns that "Joan was a fearful child--scared of ski lifts, of rattlesnakes in the river, even of comic books, filled as they were with violence and monsters" (35). According to Kakutani, Didion was "ill at ease with people, preferring books for company" (35). Didion attended Berkeley and majored in English. She won a Vogue writing contest and moved to New York. There under the tutelage of Vogue editor Allene Talmey, Didion learned "the right adjective, the 'shock' verb, the well-turned caption" (35).

In 1964 Didion married John Gregory Dunne, a writer friend. They moved to California and two years later they adopted a baby girl whom they named Quintana Roo. By 1966

Didion says she became "paralyzed by the conviction that the world as I had understood it no longer existed. If I was to work again at all, it would be necessary for me to come to terms with disorder" (Slouching Towards Bethlehem xi-xii).

Finally, Kakutani quotes Didion telling us what we have now come to understand:

Order and control are terribly important to me. I would love to just have control over my own body--to stop the pain, to stop my hand from shaking. If I were 5 feet 10 and had a clear gaze and a good strong frame, I would not have such a maniacal desire for control because I would have it. (40)

Didion did not choose her background; she must interpret her experience in light of her background. Didion sees the culture of the 1960s falling apart. To understand the chaos of the 1960s, Didion writes about it. Writing helps give shape to experience. Didion begins one of her essays, "The White Album," with this sentence: "We tell ourselves stories in order to live." Isn't Didion saying that we can impose structure and significance on events by writing about them? Giving shape and meaning to our lives through writing is necessary and vital. Didion imposes order on shapeless ideas and turbulent experiences by writing. In "The White Album" Didion says,

We interpret what we see, select the most workable of the multiple choices. We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the "ideas" with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience. (11)

Writing freezes Didion's ideas. As she carefully edits and polishes her work, she can get to the center of things and refine her voice and her sense of self (Clifford and DiYanni 152). Out of this ordering, Didion creates an identity. Writing is Didion's powerful vehicle in her search for greater self-knowledge and her need to define reality.

IV. "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream"

All the works in Joan Didion's book Slouching Towards Bethlehem were written during the 1960s and first published in periodicals. The title Slouching Towards Bethlehem, also the title of one of the essays in the book, is taken from W. B. Yeats' "The Second Coming." Yeats envisions a world falling apart--no messiah, but rather a rough beast "slouches towards Bethlehem to be born." The unifying theme of the essays in Slouching Towards Bethlehem is "social hemorrhaging," the atomization of the culture in the 1960s (Oates, 138). Victor Stranberg says, "Above all, Yeats's image of the dissolving center--'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold'--has proved to be Didion's master metaphor . . ." (147).

John Romano writes that Didion "comes to judge the Zeitgeist, but is too disgusted to preach" (142). Instead, she writes. Didion says as much: "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means" ("Why I Write" 174). This precisely measured style is characteristic of much of Didion's writing; it is her voice.

"Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream," the subject of analysis here, appeared first in the Saturday Evening Post under the title "How Can I Tell Them There's Nothing Left?" "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" concerns Lucille Miller,

a San Bernardino housewife convicted of killing her husband in 1964 by setting fire to the family Volkswagen in which he was asleep. It is the story of San Bernardino and the Santa Ana wind. It is a tale of dreams gone awry. Didion's way of coming to terms with the horror of the event, and with Lucille Miller's predicament is accomplished partly through tightly controlled writing.

Beginning with the title, Didion is at work interpreting what her eye has recorded. The people are called dreamers--those who live in their imaginations. The characters are attempting to live out the golden dream of a glamorous life in Southern California--conjuring images of beaches, perpetual sunshine, perpetual youth, Hollywood, fame and fortune. The title suggests value and excellence, but as the reader soon learns, the dreamers' gold is false. Perhaps because gold was discovered in California, it has been envisioned by many as the place where dreams come true. San Bernardino, though, lies in the desert far from the gold mines and the glittering ocean, outside the perimeter of the dream, much closer to the San Andreas earthquake Fault.

The first paragraph of the essay sounds its major themes.

This is a story about love and death in the golden land, and begins with the country. The San Bernardino Valley lies only an hour east of Los

Angeles by the San Bernardino Freeway but is in certain ways an alien place: not the coastal California of the subtropical twilights and the soft westerlies off the Pacific but a harsher California, haunted by the Mojave just beyond the mountains, devastated by the hot dry Santa Ana wind that comes down through the passes at 100 miles an hour and whines through the eucalyptus windbreaks and works on the nerves. October is the bad month for the wind, the month when breathing is difficult and the hills blaze up spontaneously. There has been no rain since April. Every voice seems a scream. It is the season of suicide and divorce and prickly dread, wherever the wind blows. (3)

Here Didion establishes her stance. What at first appears to be a matter-of-fact description of the locale, the paragraph is rife with emotionally loaded language. Didion presents an alien dreamland: golden perhaps to outsiders, but "haunted" and "devastated" by desert and the Santa Ana winds. These winds "whine" and "work on the nerves." October, the month of Lucille Miller's trouble, is "bad," "breathing is difficult," and "the hills blaze up spontaneously." October is dry ("no rain"), the "season of suicide and divorce and prickly dread." Didion appears to

give a journalistically objective report, but her word choice gives her away; she is presenting a highly personal view of a real place. This subjective approach to reality intensifies the reader's involvement in and reaction to the place and the characters whose "real-life" drama she recounts.

An analysis of Didion's meticulous choice of words reveals how her prose assumes an aura of objectivity that, in turn, establishes her authority as a writer. Actually her word choices reveal her neurotic view of the world. For instance, how can a desert "haunt" a place? Is October, in fact, the "season of suicide and divorce and prickly dread"? What about "talismanic" fruit in the second paragraph, or the buildings and signs along Foothill Boulevard and Carnelian Avenue being the "flotsam" of this scene? All Didion's words point, as she says, to an "ominous country."

Another objective device Didion employs is the presentation of a massive amount of detail. By bombarding the reader with details, Didion creates persuasive "evidence" which readers cannot refute and eventually are confined by; it is a technique familiar to journalists and courtroom lawyers. In the beginning of the essay, Didion produces detail after detail to construct a seemingly objective base for her interpretation of Lucille Miller's life. The essay's second paragraph is a catalogue of

details that reads like fact: San Bernardino is a place where people haven't eaten artichokes, find it difficult to buy books, tease their hair, name their children Sherry or Debbi, find golden promises because they never look back. In the third paragraph, Didion commands the reader to focus on the details by using the imperative: "Imagine Banyan street first, because Banyan is where it happened." Then Didion gives us a tepee motel, a Nazarene church, Kaiser Steel, a bowling alley and coffee shop (Kapu Kai), subdivision flags and signs. These and other details create an objective quality and the reader quickly forgets that Didion has rigged the account by the use of details. Reading detail after detail is something like connecting dots: if Didion gives enough dots, the reader will eventually fill in the sketchy outline the author has mapped out so carefully. Our "understanding" comes from her orchestration of the details.

Didion's spare style imbues her essays with a feeling of truthfulness and objectivity by the use of many linking verbs, another journalistic technique. Here is a sampling from the second paragraph:

This is the California where it is possible

. . .

This is the California where it is easy . . .

This is the country in which a belief . . .

The future always looks good . . .

Here is where the hot wind blows . . ., where
the divorce rate is double . . .

Here is the last stop . . .

Here is where they are trying to find . . .

The case of Lucille Miller is a tabloid . . .

(4)

By using linking verbs to connect the details, Didion strips away everything but "facts." Didion's paring away of frills creates a "bare bones" style that seems objective. The fourth paragraph, a continuation of the list of details, deviates from the objective-seeming quality of the first three paragraphs, but by this time the reader is hooked. Now Didion is openly subjective: "Banyan street suggests something curious and unnatural" (5). To whom is this suggestion made? Didion is the recorder; Banyan must suggest this unnatural feeling to her. Then she writes that the foliage of the lemon trees is "too lush. . . ." How can foliage be too lush? Didion makes subjective judgments also when she says that the "eucalyptus bark is too dusty . . ." and the mountains "loom too high and too fast." Can mountains do this? Didion won't even allow stones to be stones. She says they "look not like natural stones but like the rubble of some unmentioned upheaval." Didion ends the paragraph with reference to barking, but she writes that

the barking "may" come from a kennel or that "the dogs may be coyotes." All these observations are personal ones, and they manipulate the reader by their suggestiveness. The details also become Didion's defenses against the world; she seems to be battling with her neuroses. The details in this paragraph take on a presumptuous interpretation.

The details lend authority to the essay because they demonstrate Didion's thoroughness and her mastery of the "facts." At the same time the details manipulate the reader into accepting them as objective data. Another effect the details have is that they let the reader know Didion was there in San Bernardino; she is the eye-witness, and the reader "sees" through her. By using so many details, Didion achieves detachment from the scene and Lucille Miller. This distancing contributes to the "objectivity" and authority of Didion's voice. The facts are also interesting. Didion selects details to convey the ominous tone she wants to develop. They contribute to a sense of impending doom by slowing down the reader to look closely at the scene she has masterfully written.

The way Didion reconstructs the events connected with Lucille Miller's predicament is also part of her powerful voice. Because Didion begins with a lengthy description of the physical setting, she deflects attention away from Lucille Miller, making her a victim in the story. Didion

blames place for Lucille Miller's troubles: "This is a story about love and death in the golden land, and begins with the country." Didion then proceeds, letting the chronology of the story largely dictate the structure of her essay.

The second section serves the expository function of giving background information about Lucille Miller and her husband. But Didion doesn't have to verify facts when she writes about Miller's marriage this way: "There may or may not have been trouble . . ." or "There may or may not have been problems . . ." (8). Didion's wording lets the reader come to the conclusion that 'Of course there was trouble; the marriage was on the skids.' Then Didion reminds the reader of the dream and the powerful influence of the environment of San Bernardino:

. . . where there are always tricycles and revolving credit and dreams about bigger houses, better streets. That was 1957. By the summer of 1964 they had achieved the bigger house on the better street and the familiar accouterments of a family on its way up: the \$30,000 a year, the three children for the Christmas card, the picture window, the family room, the newspaper photographs. . . . (8-9)

After recounting their meeting and marriage, Didion

writes more detail of the events leading to "Cork" Miller's death and Lucille Miller's arrest. Didion uses irony to explain the horribleness of the murder, and she does this by pointing to the ordinariness of their lives. On the day of the murder Lucille Miller does ordinary things: goes to the drugstore, drops off the ironing, stops at the dry cleaners. In the evening, Cork Miller eats dinner from a TV tray as they watch an old film on television. Later, they get into their ordinary car--a Volkswagen--to go buy some milk. How innocent--buying milk! Cork Miller does not return home because Lucille Miller kills him. Yet the ordinariness of the situation arouses little attention from the authorities who first give the accident only routine attention.

Later Didion introduces Arthwell Hayton and reveals his and Lucille Miller's publicized affair using the journalist's touch to include their recorded conversations and notes. Verifiable bits of evidence like these bolster the objective quality of this essay. They also confirm Didion's statements that the dream controls Miller's fate:

What was most startling about the case that the State of California was preparing against Lucille Miller was something that had nothing to do with law at all, something that never appeared in the eight-column afternoon headlines but was always there between them: the revelation that the dream

was teaching the dreamers how to live. (17)
Here again Lucille Miller is the victim of culture.

In the fourth part Didion takes the reader to the courtroom, introduces Sandy Slagle--a family friend--and reveals Lucille Miller's pregnancy. Didion's control of pacing is particularly evident in this section. She recreates the courtroom scene giving it a cinematic quality by focusing on the crowd of spectators, the defendants, the jury, the lawyers, and the witnesses. Didion makes the scene credible and authentic by quoting directly from court records to recreate her dialogue. She also reminds the reader that Lucille Miller's sin is living her dream. The prosecuting attorney, Don Turner, says of Lucille Miller's pregnancy, "It's unfortunate, but there it is," to each of the twelve jurors "above whom Lucille Miller had wanted so badly to rise" (22). Didion writes:

That was the sin, more than the adultery, which tended to reinforce the one for which she was being tried. It was implicit in both the defense and the prosecution that Lucille Miller was an erring woman, a woman who perhaps wanted too much.

(22)

Similar in this way to the opening, the fifth part begins with a description of place, the Institution for Women at Frontera, the prison where Lucille Miller spent

several years. Miller's kindred souls who took the dream too seriously are here also: Sandra Garner (whose husband died in the gas chamber at San Quentin) for the "soda pop" murders and Carole Tregoff, for conspiring to kill Dr. Finch's wife in West Covina, a place not far from San Bernardino.

Lucille Miller's baby is born outside the prison and her older daughter chooses the name Kimi Kai. The children live with Harold and Joan Lance, the Miller's lawyer and friend.

Finally, Didion takes the reader back to Lucille Miller's home in Bella Vista. "Weeds grow up around the fieldstone siding." Lucille Miller has escaped her fundamentalist upbringing, but where does she end up? Things cannot get any worse. According to Didion, the oppressive culture and climate lead people to such ends. When Didion visits Sandy Slagle, now a student at Loma Linda University, Slagle says, "'I'd rather talk about Lucille and what a wonderful person she is and how her rights were violated'" (27). The dream persists. Writing in typical society-page style, Didion concludes the essay with Arthwell Hayton's marriage to his children's governess, Wenche Berg:

. . . the newlyweds were feted at a reception for seventy-five in the dining room of Rose Garden Village. The bridegroom was in black tie, with a

white carnation in his buttonhole. The bride wore a long white peau de soie dress and carried a shower bouquet of sweetheart roses with stephanotis streamers. A coronet of seed pearls held her illusion veil. (28)

Didion also employs repetition as an emphatic, rhetorical device, particularly in the beginning of the essay when it is essential to win the reader's respect and support. These examples from the first section of the essay attest to the importance Didion places on parallelism:

This is the California where it is possible to live and die without ever eating an artichoke, without ever meeting a Catholic or a Jew. This is the California where it is easy to Dial-A-Devotion, but hard to buy a book. This is the country in which a belief in the literal interpretation of Genesis has slipped imperceptibly into a belief in the literal interpretation of Double Indemnity. . . . (4)

Henderson says that parallelism is one of Didion's favorite stylistic devices and that she sometimes uses it to organize a passage (136). The catalogue of details in the beginning of the essay is held together by repeated word structures.

Didion also uses anaphora, the repetition of beginning

words in her sentences. Still detailing place, Didion uses this form to present her ideas:

Here is where the hot wind blows and old ways do not seem relevant, where the divorce rate is double the national average and where one person in every thirty-eight lives in a trailer. Here is the last stop for all those who come from somewhere else, for all those who drifted away from the cold and the past and the old ways. Here is where they are trying to find a new life style, trying to find it in the only places they know to look: the movies and the newspapers. (40)

Simpler repetition, often the repetition of words, is called *repetitio*, and Didion uses it too: "By July 8, the conventional tensions of love and money had reached the conventional impasse in the new house . . ." (9). "As of that evening Cork Miller was \$63,479 in debt, including the \$29,637 mortgage on the new house, a debt load which seemed oppressive to him" (10). "That kind of motive, during the next few weeks, was what they set out to establish. They set out to find it in accountants' ledgers . . ." (15).

Still another form of repetition favored by Didion is alliteration. Probably an unconsciously used device, alliteration reveals Didion's ear for language:

Every voice seems a scream. (3)

. . . a harsher California, haunted by the
Mojave . . . (3)

. . . the season of suicide . . . (3)

. . . wind . . . whines through the eucalyptus
windbreaks and works on the nerves. (3)

. . . always looks good in the golden land
. . . (4)

. . . unsettlingly glossy, the greenery of
nightmare . . . (5)

. . . migraine and money worries . . . (9)

. . . conventional clandestine affair . . .

(16)

Each instance of repetition has an individual purpose, but taken collectively Didion's repetition alludes to a journalistic style. It establishes a skeleton or framework for Didion's ideas. The repetition, of course, is also a form of emphasis. In "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" the repetition gives texture to the essay. There is a feeling of rhythmic highs and lows, something like the ridges a weaver weaves into fabric to create subtle emphasis. The repetition is also like chanting; it becomes Didion's litany. By repeating details and words rhythmically, Didion gains control over a situation.

In fact, control is the ultimate goal of all of Didion's literary devices: repetition, her seemingly

objective stance, her use of details, and selective use of facts to reconstruct events. This control works on three levels: on Didion personally, on the reader, and on the reality of Lucille Miller's story. Didion takes a moral stand against Lucille Miller and although Didion blames cultural influences, Didion needs to control the story. When reality and the dream don't match, Lucille Miller reacts selfishly and immorally. Didion witnesses Miller's situation as another example of a world off balance. The need for control is characteristic of people who are frightened. Lucille Miller's act is a cultural aberration, but during the 1960s such occurrences seemed to be cultural norms. Such things frighten Joan Didion, and her controlled writing gives her a sense of control over the event about which she writes.

Didion's reconstruction of Lucille Miller's tale, then, is divided into five sections separated typographically by spaces. Didion ends each section with page-turning phrases like these: "A tape recording of the service was made for the widow, who was being held without bail in the San Bernardino County Jail on a charge of first-degree murder" (7). "The man was Arthwell Hayton, a well-known San Bernardino attorney and at one time a member of the district attorney's staff" (16). "'I did that on purpose,' Lucille Miller told Erwin Sprengle later, 'to save myself from

letting my heart do something crazy'" (19).

Didion's tightly controlled style keeps the events from becoming melodramatic. The reader never feels sorry for Lucille Miller even when Didion uncovers gruesome details:

"What will I tell the children, when there's nothing left, nothing left in the casket," she cried to the friend called to comfort her. "How can I tell them there's nothing left?"

In fact there was something left, and a week later it lay in the Draper Mortuary Chapel in a closed bronze coffin blanketed with pink carnations. (6)

Didion's stylistic devices create a cool distance between the main characters, the action, and the reader. The writing also leads the reader in Didion's direction: fascination and depression at the same time.

V. "On Self-Respect"

Another essay included in Slouching Towards Bethlehem that reflects Didion's voice is "On Self-Respect." Vogue magazine published Didion's "On Self-Respect" in 1961. "On Self-Respect" is frequently published in writing anthologies for college students, which is one reason I selected it for analysis. The essay, consisting of twelve paragraphs, is divided into three sections. The middle one is the shortest with two paragraphs.

The most important conclusion to draw from Didion's rhetorical techniques in "On Self-Respect" is that she uses them to create trust between herself and the reader. In this essay, Didion's style is more constrained, and slightly more formal than in "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream." Didion's diction is oratorical in "On Self-Respect," whereas in "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" she employs a journalistic voice. "On Self-Respect" has the didactic quality of a commencement speech; in fact, Didion presents a lesson about self-respect. Her consideration for her audience shows in the organization of her material, the selection of particular words and allusions, and in the very tightly constructed transitions between ideas.

Working her way toward an extended definition of self-respect, Didion begins the first section with a personal narrative employed to demonstrate that the

essential characteristics of self-respect begin with losing one's innocence. For Didion, not having been elected to Phi Beta Kappa marked a rite of passage. Having such an experience is to be "driven back upon oneself" (143). This, she declares, is "the one condition necessary to the beginnings of real self-respect" (143). Didion bumped up against a harsh reality. The truth of the matter is that Didion did not deserve Phi Beta Kappa because she did not have the grades.

Didion goes on to point out that one might easily be fooled by self-deception because it involves pleasing others. But true self-respect "has nothing to do with the approval of others" (143). Then, too, people deceive themselves because they are fooled by the pretense of self-respect. But, according to Didion, those who are aware of their self-deception have trouble sleeping: "To live without self-respect is to lie awake some night, beyond the reach of warm milk, phenobarbitol, and the sleeping hand on the coverlet . . ." (144).

Another point Didion makes is that people with self-respect know what's at stake: "They know the price of things." This, says Didion, takes nerve or courage--what was once called character. The "willingness to accept responsibility for one's own life is the source of self-respect." The first section (seven paragraphs), then,

is basically Didion's definition of self-respect.

At this point the reader encounters a space break. The whole essay is so short that it could include no breaks, but Didion uses divisions to give her readers pause for considering her definition, a pause similar to a speaker's brief silence in consideration of her audience's need to absorb the unwritten. If Didion were addressing a live audience, she might step back from the lectern or take a drink of water.

The second section is background. Didion emphasizes an early concept of self-respect by relating how her grandparents handled Indians. This historical reference lends validity to Didion's definition of self-respect by giving it a past. For our grandparents, self-respect was a matter of discipline, something requiring character, something that involved sacrifice. Didion writes: "A sense that one lives by doing things one does not particularly want to do. . . ." Didion says Indians (or responsibility) are still with us and people with self-respect or character recognize the risk. People with character face up to danger. Didion says that people with character recognize self-respect. She does not say, however, that those who have self-respect also possess character. A logician might find fault with Didion's argument, but Didion herself admits that she works with actual experience rather than abstract

ideas. Didion's subjects are defined partly by what she observes, but also "by what her memory cannot let go" (Kakutani 24). Didion herself explains how her mind works.

In other words, the sequence of Didion's ideas is based on associations called up partly out of experience rather than from verifiable relations among ideas. Didion is a rhetorician, not a logician. Her argument is rhetorically sound. Her obvious control in moving from one idea to the next makes Didion's writing seem authoritative, yet her reference to personal experience also commands authority based on confidentiality. Didion candidly shares her experiences and the reader invariably likes the subtle involvement of being privy to the writer's personal life.

Didion's masterful control of coherence also gives her voice its authority. "On Self-Respect" is a writing teacher's dream of "tight" transitions. The end of each paragraph is carefully stitched to the beginning of the next--sometimes with a repeated word, sometimes with the same idea. One could impress one's students by flashing a page of Didion's essay on an overhead projector and drawing lines connecting the thought of one paragraph to the thought of the next. This careful stitching of ideas reveals how Didion hones her subject. The constraint imposed by transitions fixes the reader's attention on Didion's definition of self-respect. To connect the points of an

argument so tightly is something like putting self-respect under a microscope, or using the scientific method; there is a constant retesting of the hypothesis. Also, Didion's power over transitions flamboyantly displays her knowledge of the formula: she can write rhetorically. She proves that coherence is one of the cardinal requirements of successfully unified essays.

In the first section, as Didion ends her narrative about not having been elected to Phi Beta Kappa, she compares such an experience to an unexpected encounter with a vampire: ". . . and I faced myself that day with the nonplused apprehension of someone who has come across a vampire and has no crucifix at hand" (143). Carrying this idea into the next paragraph, Didion begins, "Although to be driven back upon oneself is an uneasy affair at best, rather like trying to cross a border with borrowed credentials, it seems to me now the one condition necessary to the beginnings of real self-respect" (143). The two paragraphs are linked by the idea of having to rely on one's own resources. Didion laces ideas together throughout the essay to involve her audience in her argument. This same paragraph ends with reference to the main characters in Gone with the Wind:

The dismal fact is that self-respect has nothing to do with the approval of others--who are, after

all, deceived easily enough; has nothing to do with reputation, which, as Rhett Butler told Scarlett O'Hara, is something people with courage can do without. (143)

Emphasizing what it is like to lack self-respect, the fourth paragraph starts: "To do without self-respect . . . ," the connection being the lack of self-respect. This same paragraph ends with an allusion to the maxim about making one's own bed and then lying in it: "Whether or not we sleep in it [the bed we make for ourselves] depends, of course, on whether or not we respect ourselves" (144). Then, naturally, Didion begins her next main idea with a reference to sleep:

To protest that some fairly improbable people, some people who could not possibly respect themselves, seem to sleep easily enough is to miss the point entirely, as surely as those people miss it who think that. . . . (144)

Didion never misses an opportunity to lead her readers to the next point.

Paragraph five ends with an allusion to Jordan Baker, the heroine in The Great Gatsby, whom Didion believes possesses self-respect because she accepts the consequences of her actions. In paragraph six Didion uses the Baker reference to connect directly to her audience: "Like Jordan

Baker, people with self-respect have the courage of their mistakes." Transition devices like this, which use an example to explain the larger group, mark a quality of good expository writing: the reader subconsciously identifies with what is illustrated to be an outstanding member of a group. In this case, Jordan Baker, one who has self-respect, is the example and the reader tends to identify with the example. "Like Jordan Baker . . ." indicates the connection.

Paragraph seven develops an idea almost exclusively by allusions. The last allusion is a reference to the threat of Indians during America's westward expansion. The Indians represent risk, the possibility of defeat. The paragraph ends, "Indians were simply part of the donnee." Then, in the next paragraph Didion switches to present tense and begins, "In one guise or another, Indians always are" (146). The direct reference to the earlier allusion and the use of present tense serve to focus directly on the reader who applies Didion's allusion to her own life. She has her own "Indians," her own hostilities.

Transition between paragraphs six and seven is also transition between parts one and two. The last important noun of paragraph six is the first important noun of paragraph seven:

. . . the source from which self-respect springs.

Self-respect is something that our
grandparents, whether or not they had it, knew all
about. (145)

Then Didion develops the second section, the background of
self-respect.

Yet another example of Didion's control over the
direction of her essay is at the end of paragraph eight:
"They [those with self-respect] are willing to invest
something of themselves; they may not play at all, but when
they do play, they know the odds" (146).

Paragraph nine, which is also the introductory
paragraph of part three, picks up the idea of the foregoing
paragraph with these words: "That kind of self-respect
[referring to self-respect that knows the odds] is a
discipline, a habit of mind that can never be faked but can
be developed, trained, coaxed forth." Clearly Didion
understands how to control the movement of her ideas. She
continues this pattern between paragraphs nine and ten.
Here the discipline of self-respect is a ritual that later
becomes second nature when one must face oneself: "It
[self-respect] is a kind of ritual, helping us to remember
who and what we are. In order to remember it, one must have
known it." This idea works into the next paragraph where
Didion lists the rewards of having self-respect: "To have

that sense of one's intrinsic worth which constitutes self-respect is potentially to have everything . . ." (147).

These transitions show Didion's stylistic control over the organization of her ideas. Coherence stands out as an element of Didion's convincing voice. Her definition of self-respect is persuasive because it is controlled. This control, however, is more than a stylistic element related to rhetorical organization of ideas. Didion tells the reader that to lack self-respect is to experience failure before one begins. "At the mercy of those we cannot but hold in contempt . . ." and, the last paragraph names this defeat: "It is the phenomenon sometimes called 'alienation from self.'" Such a separation is Didion's idea of the ultimate despair.

Close analysis, such as I have offered here, shows that organizational control demonstrates Didion's need for power over her ideas. Didion's control over transitions is perfected to the point that a net-like constriction of voice subtly works on the reader. He must follow Didion's argument. Her first-person narrative in the beginning creates the illusion that she is freely sharing a personal disappointment. Her self-respect involves control; she uses the word "disciplined." Didion's writing demonstrates the sort of discipline one must also have to achieve self-respect.

By means of allusion, a rhetorical device previously touched upon, Didion connects with her audience through passing references to a familiar person, place, or thing drawn from history, the Bible, mythology, or literature. Henderson reports that Didion is partial to historical and literary allusions, and that allusions figure prominently in her personal essays (136). No fewer than twelve allusions are to be found in "On Self-Respect," and they are mostly historical or literary allusions. Allusions accomplish several things, all directed toward engaging the reader. First they strengthen the relationship by making connections between writer and reader. The effect of an allusion is shared knowledge between the writer and the reader. Another use of allusion is economy. Because the reference is familiar, the essence of an idea need not be explained fully (Escholz and Rosa 588). Didion's audience (in this case the readers of Vogue magazine) are much closer to Didion because of allusion. Rhetorically, allusion is a convincing device especially for Didion's didactic purpose here; they show her to be knowledgeable--therefore a trusted teacher. Because allusions tend to be familiar references, people learn new concepts more easily when reference to common ideas is made. These allusions also provide evidence for Didion's argument much the same way details do in her more journalistic essays. Didion's allusions make specific connections for

her readers.

Didion's first allusion is a reference to Raskolnikov, the central character in Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment, emphasizing what she means by not admitting truth to herself. On her way to gaining self-respect Didion loses her innocence--not being elected to Phi Beta Kappa. She simply didn't have the grades, but like Raskolnikov, no one knows the truth until she confesses, first to herself. The reader probably calls up his own instances of deceiving himself.

When Didion makes the point that self-respect is not dependent on the approval of others, she alludes to Rhett Butler of Gone with the Wind, a reference most likely familiar to the Vogue audience. This allusion reinforces Didion's point that what others see is not important. Self-respect is not appearances; it is deeper, and more personal. To illustrate that self-respect comes from having the courage to accept one's own mistakes, Didion calls upon Julian English from John O'Hara's novel Appointment in Samarra. English does not achieve self-respect.

The historical allusion to "Chinese" Gordon, the British general Charles George Gordon, is Didion's example of someone from an earlier generation who possessed courage and the ability to put aside personal immediate comfort because he has been taught self-respect through discipline.

Recognizing his duty, Gordon does what "one does not particularly want to do." In 1885, without military support from his superior, Gordon organized the defense of the Sudanese city of Khartoum against Moslem forces. With much the same sort of courage, Narcissa Cornwell, a twelve-year-old immigrant to the West, coolly reacts to a visit by Indians. Risk exists; those trained to confront it learn courage, and they understand the odds.

An allusion to Napoleon--that "Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton is not to say that Napoleon might have been saved by a crash program in cricket" (147)--is further support for Didion's argument that self-respect is related to discipline. The English forces, a product of a disciplined educational system, knew who they were. Their values had been instilled in them long before they encountered Napoleon's army at Waterloo. This allusion also reinforces Didion's belief in traditional values, for they give meaning to people's lives.

Three further allusions work for Didion, and they directly address a female audience because they refer to that cultural habit which assumes that women are accommodating and giving. In the first allusion Didion refers to Jordan Baker of The Great Gatsby. Though dishonest, Baker knows the price of her mistakes:

With that genius for accommodation more often seen

in women than in men, Jordan took her own measure, made her own peace, avoided threats to that peace:

"I hate careless people," she told Nick Caraway.

"It takes two to make an accident." (145)

And later Didion writes, "We flatter ourselves by thinking this compulsion to please others an attractive trait . . . evidence of our willingness to give" (147).

In the second allusion, Didion refers to the tragic adulterers, Francesca da Rimini and Paolo in Dante's Inferno: "Of course I will play Francesca to your Paolo . . ." (147). This allusion allows Didion to speak on at least two levels. Accommodating oneself to become a partner to adultery is serious. This allusion serves as a kind of warning: look what happened to a woman who sacrificed her self-respect for love. Didion's use of allusion suggests her personal feelings: Didion values traditional relationships. She acknowledges adultery, but she doesn't approve of it as this reference indicates.

The final allusion to blind Helen Keller and her teacher, Annie Sullivan--"Of course I will play . . . Helen Keller to anyone's Annie Sullivan"--reinforces Didion's message that although women are taught to please others, by living out their expectations, women must be true to themselves; that is the only real self-respect.

Didion creates an effective voice by affective word choice. Didion's style, according to MIM, "effectively synonymizes the word article with the word essay" (325). MIM means that, like all new journalists, Didion's style establishes a personal relationship with the reader. Didion's style is not factually "dry"; rather, it is interesting. Diction, an important element of style, involves " careful use" of words (Thrall, Hibbard 141). Didion's diction is part of her control displayed in "On Self-Respect" because her consciously chosen words reveal her personal voice and, at the same time, reveal Didion's consideration of audience. The handful of words I refer to in "On Self-Respect" relate to magic, or more precisely, charm. Didion writes of "totem power and amulets, superstition and charm." These words contribute both to Didion's definition of self-respect and to her teaching voice. The first example, found in paragraph two, is really a noun phrase: totem power. Also in the same paragraph is the word amulets. ("To such doubtful amulets had my self-respect been pinned . . ." [143].) At first the words seem to be strange, out of place. Yet, as the reader progresses, they, and more like them, make perfectly good sense.

Didion has just related her disappointment about not being elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and stated that she had

always trusted in some unexplainable power in her innate virtue: that doing what was expected of her would get her almost anything. But a major disappointment caused Didion to look at herself and reality in a new way. Totems (family emblems) and amulets (charms worn for protection against evil and spells) do not always work.

In the third paragraph Didion uses the word tricks when she talks about self-respect being a personal issue: "The tricks that work on others count for nothing in that very well-lit back alley where one keeps assignations with oneself . . ." (143). Then, in paragraph five she writes, "There is a common superstition that 'self-respect' is a kind of charm against snakes. . . ." Didion uses all these words--totem power, amulets, tricks, superstition, charm--in the first section where she defines self-respect. Self-respect is difficult to come by, but it is essential.

Writing is Didion's charm for coping with the world. Kakutani says that by examining herself through the act of writing, Didion controls her universe:

One suspects that writing holds for her a kind of talismanic power--the process of putting her life on paper somehow helps to exorcise private demons. Writing, after all, is a means of creating a momentary stay against confusion of making order out of disorder. (32)

Didion is intimately familiar with the power of charms, just as she knows her Vogue audience to be. Culture expects American women to be "charming." Some women believe family emblems (their totems) and charms used for protection (amulets) will shield them from having to develop self-respect. They delude themselves that self-respect is gotten magically. Didion herself believed this until she "lost her innocence" (was not elected to Phi Beta Kappa). Such magic protected her from the cause-effect relationships affecting others. Some people might earn their honors, but personal charm seemed to guarantee hers. Didion's use of words mindful of charm is deliberate. She knows that women do sometimes rely on trickery, the shaman's illusion, to command respect; but these are empty resources. Being charming has to do with manipulating others and Didion's experience shows that a person cannot manipulate herself. Self-respect is a lonely job, one to be worked out individually.

Carrying the analysis further, I want to think about the context of these words. Because the specific words--totem power, amulet, etc.--stand out so obviously, it is clear that they were deliberately chosen. These particular words are code words readers of Vogue magazine are likely to understand, and they foster Didion's authority because of their inherent "weaving" capacity. These "charm"

words demonstrate Didion's point that self-respect is personally earned while at the same time calling up another meaning of charm. Didion correctly assumes that the readers of Vogue magazine know well another sort of charm. Isn't the purpose of Vogue to instruct women in methods to make them charming, particularly to men? The readers of Vogue know about our culture's "amulets" and "charms against snakes"; they bring this background to the article. Didion's use of these words ties her point of view to the audience's point of view--not necessarily opposing views, but Didion plays with different contexts of words. Didion's consciously chosen words connect and interweave the two contexts. Didion's key words also encourage the reader to trust her authority, for she relates to them with words they understand.

There are two additional ways Didion reveals herself and makes connection with her audience. One is the use of concrete images that strengthen her didacticism and the "grabbing" power of her voice. Didion's first image is a frightening one: "To such doubtful amulets had my self-respect been pinned, and I faced myself that day with the nonplussed apprehension of someone who has come across a vampire and has no crucifix at hand" (143). In Didion's experience, facing up to the truth is like confronting a vampire and being unarmed. Vampires are a frightening

prospect to most women, and Didion's point would be clear to a Vogue reader.

Another image is a card dealer: "One shuffles flashily but in vain through one's marked cards . . ." (143).

Connotative meanings of card dealers suggest that they are deceptive but showy, and the point Didion makes with this image is that real self-respect doesn't employ trickery.

A third image may cause the reader to laugh. Didion says one can develop self-respect because it is a form of self-discipline. To overcome crying someone once suggested that she put her head in a paper bag: ". . . the psychological effect alone is incalculable: it is difficult in the extreme to continue fancying oneself Cathy in Wuthering Heights with one's head in a Food Fair bag" (146-147). The image of an hysterical woman with a paper bag on her head makes me laugh, and it would probably make the readers of Vogue help take themselves less seriously as well.

Bringing the focus back to herself is the second way Didion rhetorically identifies her own character. She speaks directly to the reader in first person. Next she switches from singular to the plural we. We engages the reader because she becomes part of the writer's point of view. It is difficult to disagree when Didion writes: "If we do not respect ourselves, we are on the one hand forced

to despise those who have so few resources as to consort with us, so little perception as to remain blind to our fatal weaknesses" (147). Then Didion literally increases the rhythm by this alliterative display: ". . . we play roles doomed to failure before they are begun, each defeat generating fresh despair at the urgency of divining and meeting the next demand made upon us" (14). Finally, Didion makes the final thrust, and if we believe her when she says that she writes what she feels, we must be convinced by her personal knowledge of "'alienation from self' in its advanced stages" (148): we cannot answer the telephone, we cannot say no, unanswered letters make us feel guilty, we are dependent on the opinions of others. We may "run away to find oneself, and find no one at home" (148). Didion knows the consequences.

What is to be remembered here is that the way Didion constructs her message--her absolute control over transitions, images, and allusion--creates her voice. Didion gives the reader the voice she wants to be heard, a voice dependent on her character.

VI. Conclusion

Certain rituals, such as summarizing the main points, are to be carried out in a conclusion, and I will pay homage to them. But I also want to emphasize again the importance of the writer's individual voice.

The decade of the 1960s was not "business as usual." More accurately, "the center was not holding," as Yeats writes in his poem, and Didion makes this her main theme in Slouching Towards Bethlehem. This turbulent decade produced both the need for new voices and the voices themselves. Didion and other new journalists are the products of the "dis-ease" of the 1960s. The dilemma was one of the times, not of the individual. Didion represents the dilemma of the journalist dealing with bizarre and indigestible events.

Didion's voice is the underlying thread that gives the tapestry of her writing its appeal. She personally decries the fact that the center is not holding, and she deals with this by writing--first for herself, then for us--to help us get a "handle" on the meaning of such lopsided events as Lucille Miller's murder of her husband. Her writing is both journalistic in the sense that she writes for herself and journalism in the sense that she writes for us.

As American culture became increasingly homogeneous, writers like the new journalists, and Didion in particular--writers who have a strong sense of themselves

and where they're from have made them who they are--found that their powerful styles helped us to be less willing to accept pre-packaged "truths" as we had come to expect from the media. Didion's writing is an example of a compelling individual style that forces the reader to look closely and which gives her new awareness. By studying how Didion reveals her voice, we learn her view of the truth: that the "Dale Carnegie" approach to life produces people who prove their individuality by selecting mass-produced values. Didion seems to be saying that those who are cut off from traditional values do not find much within themselves to give life meaning.

In the classroom, as students unravel Didion's controlled relationships between the facts of the 1960s, they may be encouraged to experiment with their own writing. They may discover the authority of their own voices. Perhaps student writers will be more willing to let their own individuality dictate the style of their writing.

Perhaps, also, studies like this one will encourage students and teachers to step beyond the guidelines of canonized literary criticism. Different questions--ones that focus on how a writer creates the truth--will help students go beyond the content of the writing model to the process of recreating a particular reality. Ideally, students will recognize that there is more than one truth

and that reality has no particular form. The way the writer makes the connections and understands the relationships between facts exposes different realities. By becoming involved in answering questions relating to a writer's style, students may become more active participants in the quest for truth.

To play out measure by measure the dominant features of Didion's style is to hear her unique voice. All Didion's stylistic devices point to a powerfully controlled and confrontational voice. To note the catalogue of detail she gives us in "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" is to understand Didion's need to name things so that she "owns" or controls them. The naming of details also gives them to us so that they become part of our understanding of reality in the way that Didion wants us to. By using concrete images, Didion shows how the concrete, rather than the abstract, serves both herself and the reader as objective evidence. Didion's images "grab" the reader; they focus the reader's attention precisely where she wants it. Didion's use of repetition--in alliteration, parallel structure, and simple repetition of words--works artistically and personally for her. Rhetorically, Didion's style is more like the repetitive character of ordinary speech where the speaker creates his authority. These repetitive devices ask the reader to take Didion seriously, and they become

Didion's litany so that she has a sense of control over the events she writes about.

Further, repetition adds texture to Didion's writing; it takes the reader into her text. Didion takes the things personally, but she puts distance between the readers' reactions and her own neurotic reactions by revealing them in such a way that the reader automatically accepts them and turns to what Didion has to say. The reader is able to look beyond Didion's migraines (and perhaps her own) to understand the paradoxical aspects of the 1960s. Looking more deeply into the way Didion creates her voice, a student might better understand how her writing reveals her own outlook. Such analysis serves to go beyond the surface qualities of Didion's work, into her view of reality.

Analysis such as I have worked out here contributes to a large body of criticism for teachers to draw upon for valid generalizations about non-fiction prose style. It also helps give non-fiction prose a credible, trusted place in the literary world. But beyond raising its status, added criticism will contribute to the literature in general. Rather than proposing set answers, such studies will hopefully raise more questions about the rhetorical worth of other new classifications of writing.

Works Cited

- Barthes, Roland. "From Work to Text." The Rustle of Language. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1986.
- . Writing Degree Zero. Trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. New York: Hill and Wang, 1967.
- Barthelme, Donald. "Not Knowing." Voicelust. Ed. Allen Wier and Don Hendrie, Jr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985.
- Clifford, John and Robert DiYanni. Modern American Prose. New York: Random House, 1983.
- Davidson, Sara. "A Visit with Joan Didion." Joan Didion: Essays and Conversations. Ed. Ellen G. Friedman. Princeton : Ontario Review Press, 1984.
- Davis, Lennard. "A Social History of Fact and Fiction: Authorial Disavowel in the Early English Novel." Literature and Society, Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1978. Ed. Edward W. Said. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.
- Didion, Joan. Democracy. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984.
- . "Doris Lessing." The White Album. New York: Washington Square Press, 1979.
- . "The Getty." The White Album. New York: Washington Square Press, 1979.

- . "Good Citizens." The White Album. New York: Washington Square Press, 1979.
- . "In the Islands." The White Album. New York: Washington Square Press, 1979.
- . "On Self-Respect." Slouching Towards Bethlehem. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961.
- . Salvador. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.
- . "Slouching Towards Bethlehem." Slouching Towards Bethlehem. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961.
- . "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream." Slouching Towards Bethlehem. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961.
- . "Why I Write." Modern American Prose. Ed. John Clifford and Robert DiYanni. New York: Random House, 1983.
- Eagleton, Terence. Literary Theory. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.
- Eason, David L. "New Journalism, Metaphor and Culture." Journal of Popular Culture (Spring 1982): 142-48.
- . "Telling Stories and Making Sense." Journal of Popular Culture 15 (Fall 1981): 125-29.
- Eschholz, Paul and Alfred Rosa. Subject and Strategy: A Rhetoric Reader. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985.
- Friedman, Ellen G., ed. Joan Didion: Essays and Conversations. New Jersey: Ontario Review Press,

1984.

Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism. Princeton:

Princeton University Press, 1957.

Hellman, John. Fables of Fact: The New Journalism as New Fiction. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981.

Henderson, Katherine. Joan Didion. New York: Ungar, 1981.

Hollowell, John. Fact and Fiction: The New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977.

Johnson, Michael L. The New Journalism. Lawrence:

University of Kansas Press, 1971.

Kakutani, Michiko. "Joan Didion: Staking Out California."

Joan Didion: Essays and Conversations. Ed. Ellen G. Friedman. Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1984.

Mickelson, A[nn]e Z. Reaching Out: Sensitivity and Order in Recent American Fiction by Women. New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1979.

MIM. "Slouching Toward Bethlehem." Commonweal 29 November 1968: 324-25.

Oates, Joyce Carol. "A Taut Novel of Disorder." Joan Didion: Essays and Conversations. Ed. Ellen G. Friedman. Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1984.

Rygiel, Dennis. "On the Neglect of Twentieth-Century Non-Fiction: A Writing Teacher's View." College English 46 (April 1984): 392-400.

- . "Style in Twentieth-Century English Literary Nonfiction: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1960-1979." Style 15 (1981): 127-70.
- Romano, John. "Joan Didion and Her Characters." Commentary July 1977: 61-63.
- Roth, Philip. "Writing American Fiction." Commentary 31 (March 1961): 224.
- Sims, Norman, ed. The Literary Journalists. New York: Ballantine Books, 1984.
- Sims, N[orman]. "New Generation of New Journalists." Quill 70 (July-August, 1982): 9-14.
- Stamberg, Susan. "Cautionary Tales." Joan Didion: Essays and Conversations. Ed. Ellen G. Friedman. Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1984.
- Strandberg, Victor. "Passion and Delusion in A Book of Common Prayer." Joan Didion: Essays and Conversations. Ed. Ellen G. Friedman. Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1984.
- Talese, Gay. Fame and Obscurity. New York: World, 1970.
- Taylor, Gordon O. Chapters of Experience: Studies in 20th Century American Autobiography. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983.
- Thrall, William F. and Addison Hibbard. A Handbook to Literature. New York: Odyssey Press, 1960.
- Weber, Ronald. "Art-Journalism Revisited." South Atlantic

Quarterly 78 (Summer 1974): 275-89.

---. The Literature of Fact. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1980.

---. The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy. New York: Hastings House, 1974.

Wilson, James Q. "In California." Commentary September 1979: 94-96.

Wolfe, Tom. The New Journalism. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.

Zilliagus, C[las]. "Radical Naturalism: First Person Documentary Literature." Comparative Literature 31 (Spring 1979): 97-112.