New Journalism refers to a form of news-gathering, writing and storytelling that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, and was popularized by notable writers such as Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, Norman Mailer, Joan Didion, and others. It describes a journalism style that incorporates literary techniques and flourishes that separate it from traditional news writing. Wolfe himself, when asked to weigh in on this new trend in New York Magazine in 1972, claimed that it was not an attempt by him and his contemporaries to create a new style of journalism, but something born out of the literary and novelistic aspirations of the writers who created it to "write journalism that would... read like a novel."

James E. Murphy provides the most thorough and complete definition of the form in "The New Journalism: A Critical Perspective." "New Journalism," he argues, is characterized as an "artistic, creative, literary reporting form with three basic traits: dramatic literary techniques; intensive reporting; and reporting of generally acknowledged subjectivity" (16). The first piece of that definition, the use of dramatic literary techniques, is the core of what makes a piece of New Journalism look and read like a novel. It is marked by, according to Murphy, "an element of drama, or 'story-telling'" that shows up through the use of "irony, rhythm, foreshadowing, characterization, plot, dialect, dialogue, mood, imagery, metaphor and satire" (17-18). An additional piece of the framework of a story's novelistic style is the use of a "third-person" or "chameleon" narrator who allows the reader to get inside the experiences of the subjects of these stories (20).

The second characteristic of New Journalism refers to the concept of "intensive reportage" or "saturation reporting," which is "exemplified in part by the length of time or breadth of research on a topic" (22). This is the piece that creates the foundation of the story's veracity. These journalists embed themselves with the people and in the places that they are covering for significant periods of time. Long and detailed descriptions of real-life events are only possible through a lengthy period of time spent with these subjects, and that is how these reporters create the skeleton on which the narrative is built.

Finally, the third part of Murphy's definition of New Journalism deals with the issue of "subjective reportage," which is, according to Murphy, "the thorniest problem in a discussion of New Journalism's traits" because it highlights the conflict that the New Journalism-style presents to the traditional journalism's expectations about objectivity (23). A traditional journalist is expected to be an objective observer, devoted to a sort of even-handedness, balance, and accuracy in his or her reporting. According to Murphy, New Journalists however, worry less about those established rules and instead...
What results is a reporting style that is deeply personal, and focused around the writer's own point-of-view. It requires trust from the reader in the author's own retelling of the events, which is only achieved through deep and detailed reporting of the incidents that are described. It is also a vividly written form of story-telling that contains both the flowing narrative of a conventional novel, and the traditional sequencing of this, then that, which occurs in news stories. Murphy's three-pronged definition is the tool that On the Road should instead be evaluated by, to show that Kerouac's semi-autobiographical tale satisfies the rules for what constitute a piece New Journalism.

Kerouac's reporter's eye and his literary muscle meet successfully in several passages of On the Road. The first is his initial descriptions of Moriarty and Marx in New York City as they “rushed down the street together, digging everything in the early way they had” and “danced down the streets like dingedodies” (5). What follows is an explanation by Paradise of why he is fascinated by people such as Moriarty and Marx.

I shambled after as I've been doing all my life after people who interest me, because the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing but burn, burn, burn like fabulous roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes “Awww!” (5-6)

This passage also establishes a theme in the novel of Paradise as an observer instead of a participant in these events. The driving force of this novel is Moriarty, and in several places Paradise sets himself apart from the action, much like a reporter might, and allows Moriarty to be the subject of this profile. He finds out about Moriarty for the first time through second hand news passed on to him from others in their group. “First reports of him came from Chad King,” Paradise says (1). Moriarty is the person who drags Paradise back out on the road again in 1948 (109), and the novel ends with the protagonist thinking about his friend, who is now in failing health and can no longer travel with them. Moriarty (or Cassady) is the profile subject that Kerouac is writing about that expands into the complete On the Road story. Paradise even tells Moriarty and Marx at this point, “if you keep this up, you'll both go crazy, but let me know what happens as you go along” (50).

Another example that shows this same combination of Kerouac's keen eye with his gifted writing ability is when Moriarty and Paradise go see jazz musician George Shearing perform at a New York City club called Birdland. This is Paradise's description of Shearing:

Shearing came out, blind, led by the hand to his keyboard. He was a distinguished-looking Englishman with a stiff white collar, slightly beefy, blond, with a delicate English-summer's-night air about him that came out in the first rippling sweet number he played as the bass-player leaned to him reverently and thrummed the beat...Shearing began to play his chords; they rolled out of the piano in great rich showers, you'd think the man wouldn't have time to line them up. They rolled and rolled like the sea (127-128).

Here, Kerouac pairs an adroitly observed description of Shearing, along with a bright and poetic description of his playing style in a marriage of observer and poet. After this moment, Paradise is inspired to go back out on the road with Moriarty to “see what else Dean was going to do” (130). When they get to Tucson, they pick up someone else, a hitchhiker. “This was an Okie from Bakersfield, California, who put down his story” (167). Throughout the novel, Paradise is collecting stories like this – from the Okies, from the migrant Mexican workers he encounters, from Moriarty, and from the women they meet. Paradise (and Kerouac) gathered these stories from 1947 to 1951. In collecting all this material, which Kerouac put into the road journals that he will use to write On the Road, he is filling reporter's notebooks with the people, events and places that he will use to build out his epic story.
This is the second characteristic of New Journalism, according to Murphy, and the one that deals with the concept of “intensive reportage” and “saturation reporting”. *On the Road* satisfies this rule in a few ways, but mostly through the length of time that Kerouac records traveling cross-country in the years between 1947 and 1951. Kerouac takes care to keep the reader aware of when and where the events are taking place at several places in the narrative by making them explicit early on in each of the five parts of the book. In the beginning of part one, Paradise decides to take to the road “in the month of July 1947” (9) at a time when, he says “bop [jazz] was going like mad all over America… somewhere between its Charlie Parker Ornithology period and another period that began with Miles Davis” (12). Here, Kerouac is not only rooting his narrative in a time and place, but speaking in the language of pop-culture to give additional context to the cultural period in which his characters exist. Paradise meets Moriarty again at the beginning of part two, “at Christmas 1948” (109), and he goes to Denver “in the spring of 1949” (179). “Spring [1950] comes to New York” (249) at the beginning of part four. And finally, after Paradise’s trip to Mexico, the last in the book, he says “in the fall [1950] I myself started back home” (303).

A large portion of Paradise’s initial travels in 1947 is spent with a Mexican girl named Terry whom Paradise meets in California. He spends the next fifteen days running into a varied cast of characters. Of these people, Paradise says “I wanted to meet them all, talk to everybody” (87). In this period of the narrative, Paradise (and Kerouac) surrounds himself with Terry’s family and begins to document their experiences living among the other migrant workers in the Mexican community in which they reside. In Bakersfield, he observes “the Mexican fruit-picking families… eating popcorn” along a street that was “one blazing bulb of lights: movie marquees, fruitstands, penny arcades, five-and-tens, and hundreds of rickety trucks and mud-splattered jalopies” (90). At a bar, drinking with Terry and her brother, Rickey, Paradise comments:

> Americans are always drinking in crossroads saloons on Sunday afternoon; they bring their kids; they gabble and brawl over brews; everything’s fine. Come nightfall the kids start crying and the parents are drunk. They go weaving back to the house. Everywhere in America I’ve been in crossroads saloons drinking with whole families. The kids eat chips and popcorn and play in back (92-93).

These lines show that while Paradise (and Kerouac) is having these experiences, he maintains an open reporter’s eye on the details around him. Of an attempt to pick cotton, he says, “this was so much better than washing dishes on South Main Street” (96). He adds, “but I knew nothing of picking cotton… I needed gloves, or more experience” (96). And throughout this period, Paradise is noting “the sere brown cotton fields that stretched out of sight to the brown arroyo foothills and then the snow-capped Sierras in the blue morning air” (96). In these moments, Paradise is going beyond a reporter’s role as an objective observer, and spending time with the people he is gathering stories from to flesh out his narrative with detail. When he puts those stories into his typewriter at the end of his journey, he will offer readers a unique, Kerouacian view of the American West.

It is Kerouac’s point of view that leads to a discussion of Murphy’s third characteristic of New Journalism, and helps refute a key obstacle preventing this novel from falling into the definition of the genre. The biggest barrier to understanding *On the Road* as a piece of New Journalism is not so much that the genre as it is defined did not exist until the decade after the novel was first published, but rather that Kerouac was not a journalist in a traditional sense. It is difficult for a reader to trust his story as true because he does not identify himself as a reporter at any point in the narrative. He is not bound by a traditional code of ethics, and under no obligation to report the facts of these events as they occurred, but only as Kerouac himself saw them. However, that does not mean *On the Road* can or should be dismissed as entirely fiction. Kerouac did make a conscious effort to imbue his story with concrete truth.

Cunnell writes that in early attempts to create *On the Road*, “Kerouac is consciously trying to write a novel the way novels had always been written, fusing what he remembers with what he can make” (4). That approach evolves after each trip Kerouac makes with Cassady. Then, Cunnell explains, Kerouac takes the material that he “faithfully records in his travel journals” to tell their story. “The places where the imagined book and the lived experiences intersect are the places where what the book is to become are negotiated,” he writes. “What is being negotiated is the relationship between fiction and truth, where truth is understood by Kerouac to mean, the way consciousness really digs everything that happens” (5).
The final product, published years later in 1957, is a story that is part-novel and part-memoir and that offers a glimpse of what America looked like for characters Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty, as well as Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady, from 1947 to 1951. It was a glimpse of an America that no longer existed, claims Terry Dunford. “In 1947 trains still rattled above on the Third Avenue El (torn down in 1955),” he writes. “1957” according to him, “was the first year in which more New Yorkers traveled trans-Atlantic by plane than by sea… That same year the Brooklyn Dodgers played their last game at Ebbits (sic) Field and moved to California with the New York Giants following in trucks being them.”

Even if there is no evidence to suggest that Kerouac was trying to create a piece of journalism with the writing of *On the Road*, there is evidence that he was trying to create a different literary form that expanded on the conventional definition and structure of the novel. The narration in *On the Road* is focalized through the first-person retelling from Paradise, who stands in for Kerouac himself. While Paradise's narration is not by definition a third-person account of these events, his identity as the author himself creates a hybrid between a third-person narrator and Kerouac's first-person voice. Additionally, *On the Road*, as well as a dozen other works by Kerouac, make up what is called his “Duluoz Legend” – an autobiographical series covering the author's life beginning when he was a boy and following him up until a few years before his death. Kerouac said this about the legend, “because of the objections of my early publishers I was allowed to use the same personae names in each work.” That's how in *Maggie Cassidy*, for example, the character Jack Duluoz takes the place of Kerouac himself, while Ti Jean stands in for Kerouac in *Visions of Gerard*, and Paradise is the voice of Kerouac in *On the Road*.

*On the Road*'s open ending does not resolve the narrative because Kerouac's real-life experiences on the road did not tidily fit into a standard novelistic structure. It is at times incoherent and contradictory because, admittedly, the lens through which Kerouac viewed America was not a traditional one. But his subjective view of American life was the bones on which the body of New Journalism was built. Eleven years after *On the Road* was published, Burroughs (Old Bull Lee in the text) was hired by *Esquire* magazine to cover the 1968 Democratic National Convention. In an interview with *The Paris Review* in 2000, Hunter S. Thompson, one of the wildest and best-known writers of the New Journalism genre credited Kerouac as an influence. “Kerouac,” he said, “taught me that you could get away with writing about drugs and get published.” It is possible that Thompson was being facetious or irreverent, but it is also possible that he was crediting the author for creating a bridge between fiction and nonfiction where New Journalism could flourish.

Works Cited


There is much about the Beat Generation that is shrouded in confusion. Oftentimes it ste...


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A collection of English ESL worksheets for home learning, online practice, distance learning and English classes to teach about on, the, road, on the road. A worksheet for students to focus on reading skills with the focus of the Silk Road, a positive way to look at China and it's a rich hist 197 Downloads. On the road in the USA. By nathalielecate. Here is a worksheet of vocabulary about places to see in the USA. It can be used as a matching exercise while working on road trips. Very 65 Downloads. Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both And be one traveler, long I stood And looked down one as far as I could To where it bent in the undergrowth; Then took the other, just as fair, And having perhaps the better claim, Because it was grassy and wanted wear; Though as for that the passing there Had worn them really about the same, But perhaps most problems reading On the Road exist because this real-life tale, the story of Kerouac and his friend Neal Cassady, is not best served by seeing the work through a literary lens, but instead by embracing the idea that On the Road occupies a unique space between memoir and fiction. More accurately, On the Road is a story that fits into a literary genre that would eventually become New Journalism, a style of non-fiction writing that's characterized by literary gymnastics and intense, immersive reporting delivered to the reader through the subjective prism of the author's own point Today, India, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Kenya, Ireland, South Africa and many more countries that were at one time a colony of Britain still drive on the left. Countries Drive On The Left Elsewhere, Too — The Other Lefties. There are also a handful of countries and territories that were never part of Britain, and yet people still drive on the left. For some, there's a logical explanation for why they have left-hand driving. In Japan, for instance, the country's first railway line was built during the Edo Period (early 17th-mid 19th centuries) with assistance from the British