

Broadening the Focus: Women's Voices in the New Journalism

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BROADENING THE FOCUS:
WOMEN'S VOICES IN
THE NEW JOURNALISM

by

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ABSTRACT
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Mary C. Wacker, B.A.

Marquette University, 2018

The New Journalism Movement chronicled a decade of social turbulence in America by breaking the rules of traditional journalism and embracing narrative elements in the writing and publication of literary nonfiction. The magazine publishing industry was controlled by men, and the history of this transitional time in journalism has been chronicled by men, neglecting to recognize the significant contributions of women working in their midst. This study shines a light on the historical narrative that defines our understanding of the significance and key contributors to the New Journalism Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

To better understand the way social change was defined by the writing of New Journalists, a more inclusive history of those who contributed is essential. This study provides a narrative analysis of representative magazine writing by Joan Didion, Gail Sheehy, and Gloria Steinem to recognize their contributions and to illustrate how gender influenced the style, content and perspective of the New Journalism Movement.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2016, The Brattleboro Reformer reported an exchange between Poet Verandah Porche and literary journalist Gay Talese. As the keynote speaker at a conference for women writers, Talese was asked which women writers of his day had inspired him the most. It had been noted that he worked in an industry of male writers who were “guys’ guys” (2016). Talese repeated the question, paused, and stammered that there were, “um . . . of my generation . . . none.”¹ Porche later stated,

Whether he was confused by my question or not, a certain clarity emerged. . . Women in the room got the clear message of the old straight guy pattern of exclusion, indifference, the idea that women are meant to be muses, not narrators of important or gritty stories. I felt there are so many brilliant women who could have been part of that conversation (2016).

It is not a surprise, but it ought to sound an alarm, that a prominent writer credited by many as a pioneer of the New Journalism movement could not identify an inspirational female writer of his era. The historical canon of New Journalism has been written by men, about men who wrote largely about other men, and worked for men in the magazine industry of the sixties and seventies (Steinem, 1994, Roberts, 2012, Sheehy, 2014). Yet if we look beyond the narrow focus of the anthologies that chronicle the emerging genre of literary nonfiction that took the name *The New Journalism*, it is easy to find where the women were. They were working on gritty stories of real life, politics,

¹ Talese’s follow up drew a terse reaction and a Twitter storm from the audience of female authors he was addressing. “It probably isn’t true anymore, Talese continued, but when I was young, maybe 30 or so, and always interested in exploratory journalism, long-form, we would call it, women tended not to, even good writers, women tended not to do that. Because being, I think, educated women, writerly women, don’t want to, or do not feel comfortable dealing with the strangers or people that I’m attracted to, sort of the offbeat characters, not reliable. I think educated women want to deal with educated people.”

drug abuse, racial violence, crime and the emerging liberation of women seeking to change the course of their previously restricted lives. The women were being published alongside Talese and his colorful male colleagues in the popular magazines of the day. They built successful writing careers and expanded their scope of influence to multiple genre, advocacy for social causes, and provided the stories that have informed our understanding of contemporary culture from a marginalized point of view. Our understanding of this movement in the field of literary nonfiction needs to be reframed, because the significant contributions women writers have made to the emerging style of the New Journalism has been overlooked by editors and anthologists whose work became the historical record of the era (Roberts, 2012).

To broaden the canon of New Journalism, this thesis examines the lives and key contributions of Gail Sheehy, Gloria Steinem, and Joan Didion, three prominent woman journalists whose names should be as familiar as Wolfe, Capote, Thompson and Talese when the history of New Journalism is discussed. Their published works of nonfiction embraced the style of New Journalism through the lens of the female subculture, and the unique perspective women brought to their work in a male-dominated industry expands our understanding of society at a time of dramatic change.

Humans develop culture through narrative, and a broader and more inclusive understanding of the narrative of events provides a clearer view of culture (Bruner 1991, Riessman, 1993). This thesis provides narrative analysis of the lives and representative work of writers Joan Didion, Gail Sheehy and Gloria Steinem to inform the greater narrative of the New Journalism movement and its impact as a mirror of societal change. Broadening our exposure to and recognition of their work provides a more robust and

accurate portrayal of history. The work of women writers, and their influence on the genre, embodies a point of view largely absent from previously published histories of New Journalism (Roberts, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Narrative as Cultural Historical Record

According to cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner, it is human nature to turn experiences into an understanding of reality through narrative.

We organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative—stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on. Narrative is a conventional form, transmitted culturally and constrained by each individual's level of mastery and by his conglomerate of prosthetic devices, colleagues, and mentors (Bruner, 1991, p.4).

Bruner offers ten features of how narrative operates, “as an instrument of mind in the construction of reality” (1991, p.6) More simply, human beings make sense of their own experiences through the employment of narrative (Bruner 1991, Riessman 1993).

Significant to this study, narratives do accrue, and that accrual of narratives serves to create what we understand to be our history (Berger and Luckmann 1975; Bruner 1991). Bruner describes the development of culture and history through narrative as a fluid and changing process, noting that, “The perpetual construction and reconstruction of the past provide precisely the forms of canonicity that permit us to recognize when a breach has occurred and how it might be interpreted” (1991, p.20). Therefore, where a shift in how the narrative of the New Journalism movement can provide new information, our understanding of our history adapts accordingly.

Cultivating Reality Through Exposure

Stuart Hall defined culture as a collective means of living, interpreting and defining existence (Hua, 2017). George Gerbner developed cultivation theory, expanding

on the work of Bruner and Riessman, in his assertion that exposure to information and experiences cultivates our perception of reality. Gerbner developed the foundational belief of cultivation theory, that human beings assimilate culture through story (Gerbner 1966). Gerbner categorized stories into three types in their ability to link social order and perceived reality (Gerbner, 1966; Morgan, 2012). His research focused on the consumption of media and the impact of messages received on the development of a perception of reality (Morgan, 2012). On the subject of storytelling, Gerbner explains that, “most of what we know, or think we know, we have never personally experienced. We live in a world erected by stories” (Gerbner, 1999).

At a time when stories, especially those works of literary nonfiction told in the pages of mainstream popular magazines, were written and edited by men, it is essential to pay focused attention to the present voices of women in journalism, who provide an expanded breadth of experience by which to craft our understanding of reality. Gerbner defines the link between stories and their contribution to our perception of reality as uniquely human (Morgan, 2012). Socializing human beings by identifying normalized behaviors based on gender, age, class and vocation, stories provide both models of conformity and targets for rebellion (Gerbner, 1999).

We live in a world erected by stories. Stories socialize us into roles of gender, age, class, vocation, and lifestyle, and offer models of conformity or targets for rebellion (1999, p.9)

Gender Perspectives

If Gerbner is correct, it is likely to be equally true that lack of exposure to ideas and experiences creates an impediment to one's ability to perceive reality accurately. Nancy Hartsock suggests that the experiences of women differ from those of men, due in part to their social and cultural place. Thus, the stories they tell will have a perspective that is reflective of their view of the culture. Gerda Lerner explains the marginalization of women simply, "Women, like men, are indoctrinated in a male-defined value system and conduct their lives accordingly" (Lerner, 1979). Lerner points out that women have always been making history – about half the history that is human, but there is, "a built-in distortion; it comes to us refracted through the lens of men's observations; refracted again through the values which consider man the measure" (p.231).

Nancy Hartsock adds that the social order in our male-dominant culture marginalizes women and creates a difference in the way they perceive reality (Hartsock, 2003). The feminist standpoint, then, recognizes that in the culture at large and in terms of power relationships, women exist in a subordinate status to men (Wood, 2009).

Psychologist Carol Gilligan's research on listening and gender communication calls into question this very discrepancy as it applies to perceptions of reality, suggesting that many theories and processes based on men's experiences have come to represent all of human experiences, leaving no room for women's voices (Gilligan, 1993). Gilligan's research on listening to men's and women's voices reveal differences in perspective as well as content. Gilligan defines voice as, "what people mean when they speak of the core of the self (1993, p.xvi). Her findings show a difference between the language and

voice of men and women, making it a challenge to find ways to engage responsibly in human relations. She calls for a greater awareness of the observational bias inherent in a culture that has implicitly adopted male life as the norm (1993).

Men and women make different relational errors – men think that if they know themselves, following Socrates' dictum, they will also know women, and women think that if only they know others, they will come to know themselves. Thus, men and women tacitly collude in not voicing women's experiences (Gilligan 1993).

Women's contributions are further hidden since they come from a subordinate cultural standpoint. Yet the contributions of women writers offer a different view of reality than their male counterparts. Expanded awareness of the collective narrative of a movement requires the inclusion of the voices of those outside of power, those marginalized in society. In the case of gender awareness, it is not enough that women were working in New Journalism, it is necessary that their presence and their work be acknowledged in the historical record of the movement, to right the cultural narrative that neglected to include them. Gerda Lerner illuminates the issue of women in the historical record.

If historical studies, as we traditionally know them, were actually focused on men and women alike, then there would be no need for a separate subject. But traditional history has been written and interpreted by men in an androcentric frame of reference; it might quite properly be described as the history of men (Lerner, 1979, p.xvii).

Because women wrote prominently on many topics in the era New Journalism in a way that reflected their unique standpoint in the culture, it is essential that we recognize their contributions. Jan Whitt argues that history in general, and certainly the history of New Journalism, has not been inclusive of the contributions of women (Whitt, 2008). The history of the New Journalism movement has been written by men like Tom Wolfe,

recalled by writers like Gay Talese, and that the marginalization of women's contributions diminishes our historical understanding of both the movement and the societal change it reflected in the reality they present (2008).

Methodology

Research Goals

It is vital to understand the gender bias that exists in the historical canon of the New Journalism and to celebrate the women writers involved to broaden our understanding of a more accurate history.

Nancy Roberts articulated the lack of recognition of women in literary journalism in her keynote address to the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies:

Do women write literary journalism? It's not surprising that this question is still asked, considering that Tom Wolfe included only two women in his book, *The New Journalism*. This classic 1973 work helped to define the genre of literary journalism as a mainly male province (Roberts, 2012).

To better recognize the connection between women and New Journalism, it is vital to understand the importance of New Journalism as a mirror of cultural change. A history of New Journalism provides insight into the work, the society it sought to describe, and the key writers and editors who both created and defined the genre of literary journalism.

Because New Journalism was a vehicle for female as well as male voices, one only need look beyond Tom Wolfe's anthology to see what the successful female writers of nonfiction in the late sixties and early seventies were doing. The work of three female writers of significance is analyzed here. Their selection was based on the volume of work they published for the popular magazines embracing New Journalism. These three prolific female writers were selected because their early professional success came with the wave of New Journalism. Gail Sheehy, Gloria Steinem and Joan Didion were chasing

stories of social significance, guided by their personal interest in politics, social phenomena, and current events (Whitt, 2008). They were not writing for women's magazines, and therefore were not bound by stories dedicated to housekeeping, cooking, and child-rearing. stories that piqued their interest and brought their ideas to the public (Sheehy, 2014, Steinem, 2015).

Method of Analysis

To understand the gender bias evident in this historical record of New Journalism, it is necessary to define New Journalism and understand its significance in the evolution of literary nonfiction.

Wolfe's 1973 anthology of *The New Journalism* provided the most widely recognized documentation of the genre, prefaced by his own commentary on each essay explaining how it fit the genre (Wolfe 1973; Pauly 2008, Roberts 2012, Felker 1995, Sims 2005, Talese and Lounsberry 1996, Whitt 2008). He used the first section of the book to define the elements of New Journalism. It is those elements that provide the foundational literary elements found in writing that exemplifies the genre, and can be found in the representative stories presented in this thesis for narrative analysis. Popular writing by Sheehy, Steinem and Didion serve as examples of the New Journalism. A narrative review in the context of the writers' lives provides the means to explore their significance in style, content and perspective.

Discussion of the subjects and style of men's writing sets the stage to better understand the difference in tone, content and point of view of men's writing in the canon of New Journalism. Examples of the portrayal of women from *The New Journalism*

anthology provides an understanding of the existing content representative of the genre, and provides context for the narrative analysis of three headline pieces of writing, Gail Sheehy's "Bombing on the Mind," Gloria Steinem's "In Your Heart You Know He's Nixon," and Joan Didion's essay, "The White Album."

The Defining Devices of New Journalism

It has been suggested that the defining elements distinguishing New Journalism from traditional reporting may have less to do with following a defined set of rules than of freeing the writer from conventional rules to create a new way to bring a story to life on the page (Kramer, 1995). New Journalism changed the landscape of literary journalism, despite contempt from the literary community who saw the works of narrative nonfiction to be suspect in terms of their authenticity and factual data, and a cheap imitation of true literature.

Wolfe provided a set of criteria which came to define the genre, in the anthology he edited at the request of E.W. Johnson, *The New Journalism* (1993), pointing to four literary devices used to identify New Journalism. Future scholars would elaborate on these criteria and further define the elements of literary journalism (Murphy 1974; Eason 1984; Kramer 1995; Tilden 2004).

The first device identified was the **scene-by-scene construction of a narrative**. The story could unfold as if the reader was living the experience, and the writer could take creative license with the structure of that narrative, crafting it to have the most meaningful impact rather than adhere to a linear, facts-only download of who-what-

when-where. Such construction required the writer to be immersed in the scene, able to provide observations that allowed the reader to put together meaning as if they were reading a murder mystery or watching a movie (1973).

The second device also involved immersive reporting to provide **dialogue that revealed character**. New Journalists like Wolfe took creative license with the use of punctuation and other rules of writing to allow dialogue to have a more accurate flow on the page – a flow that sounded like the way people really converse and react (1973).

Wolfe identified a third device of New Journalism – the use of a **third-person point of view**, which provided the reader an opportunity to inhabit the story through the eyes of the subjects. Writers using this device conducted extensive interviews over periods of time with their subjects, learning how they thought and felt and incorporating those dimensions in the story to provide a “why” component that went beyond traditional journalistic reporting (1973).

Finally, Wolfe identified the use of **status details** – artifacts of ordinary behavior. It was in these structures and behaviors that personality, emotion, and intent were revealed, creating a world where the reader can connect with the meaning behind the event. Wolfe claimed this was the most misunderstood of the devices (1973).

Norman Sims explains that New Journalism included immersion reporting, accuracy, use of symbolism, and a distinctive voice to describe what it was like to live in a particular time in history (Sims 1995). Literary journalism’s intent was to do more than report facts; to “bearing witness” (1995). Mark Kramer would expand on these defining elements, pointing out that immersion meant not just living in the world of the subject,

but also conducting extensive background research (Kramer 1995). Kramer believed that the writer had to build a credible relationship with the reader writing in a way that develops a relationship with the reader, writing in an intimate voice and including references to routine events to establish knowledge of the story (1995). The personality of the writer was encouraged to shine through, and the writer was given license to turn from narrating the story to addressing the reader directly (1995). The writer had the right to reframe the sequence of events, and was required to build upon the reaction of the reader to create a story that arrived at a destination (1995).

Analysis of the representative feature stories in this thesis includes a review of the elements of literary nonfiction employed in the development of the story, the connection of the contact to the lives of the writers, and the uniqueness their perspective as women brought to the work.

Choice of Subjects

The writers highlighted here each made a unique contribution in three key areas – a distinctive style and voice, content driven by their individual interests and background, and a perspective on culture that can be viewed through a prolific body of work, before, during and after the decade of New Journalism. There are other women whose work is significant, but none match the volume, distinctive voice, or longevity of professional success in the field of magazine literary nonfiction. They share the common experience of having been college educated, and each established herself as a journalist before Tom Wolfe coined the term New Journalism. Each of these writers has enjoyed professional success that was incubated writing about people and politics from a personal, narrative and distinctly underrepresented point of view as women. Whether their gender created

challenges or provided a means to access otherwise inaccessible stories, their choices of subjects opened the door to multidimensional portrayals of women in popular publications targeted at an educated, metropolitan readership eager to hear new voices reflecting the changing face of society.

Together, these three women represent the prolific contributions to mainstream magazines in America during the period of change in the nonfiction world that has come to be known as the era of the New Journalism - contributions to the field that have been overshadowed by the men who wrote the history.

The women have a great deal in common. Each began her writing career in New York, finding work in the male-dominated world of magazine publishers and writers of the New Journalism movement (Whitt, 2008). Each embraced the rule-breaking style of immersion journalism, employing the literary devices that Wolfe and others would later recognize as emblematic of the style (2008). These three white, college-educated, risk-takers began their professional journeys in the same community of writers at the same time, in newsrooms where they were likely to be called smart cookies.

Gail Sheehy, Gloria Steinem and Joan Didion were in their early thirties in the Age of Aquarius, and as women who came of age in the fifties in a culture where women married young and bore children early and often, each established an independent career writing, using her success in the sixties and early seventies as a springboard for a career that has sustained to the present day. They were too old to be part of the youth movement, and too young and hip to be part of The Establishment. This unique vantage point allowed each woman to view and record the seismic shifts taking place in the culture from their view of the crossroads of old and new.

The intersection of the careers of Sheehy and Steinem with Clay Felker, the publisher who wholeheartedly embraced the change that New Journalism, shines a light on their position in the mainstream of the movement.

Didion, already an accomplished writer of nonfiction, had embraced the style of deep research, immersion, and literary devices into her nonfiction writing even before Truman Capote, who is often credited with defining nonfiction as an art form.

A closer look at their lives and work provides a stronger understanding of their contributions to The New Journalism, and how the genre was influenced by women. Certainly, their work does not encapsulate the totality of women's contributions to magazine writing. They do, however, each through a distinctive personal writing voice, come together to provide threads of thematic unity that provide insight into the changes in culture surrounding politics, protest, and the breakdown of the societal rules from a perspective that has been historically overlooked.

This study focused on three women who, in their early thirties, broke new ground in the establishment of independent careers as writers of literary nonfiction. They made contributions not only because of their literary talent and journalistic prowess, but because they represented a point of view outside of the mainstream. The convergence of three women with many similarities of age, race, and privilege, driven to establish themselves as chroniclers of the turbulence that was the social change of the New Journalism era, provides a collective story of overcoming professional obstacles to success in the field of magazine journalism, and using that opportunity as a launchpad for careers in writing that have lasted for more than fifty years. The nonfiction work, and

especially their memoirs, produced since the seventies up to the present day provides an opportunity to contextualize their experiences during New Journalism as women.

Didion, Sheehy and Steinem differ greatly in both message and method as writers of literary nonfiction. Didion is introspective in tone and uses the melding of her internal monologue with her observations of the world. Her writing guides readers through the internal uncharted waters of personal pain, personal growth, and in her later years, personal loss and grief. Through a variety of subjects from the violent to the mundane, Didion writes to make sense of the senseless (Wakefield 1968), searching for order in disorder, and through a decidedly gendered point of view, searches for the traditional ebb and flow of society as a North Star by which to guide her as wife, mother, and caretaker of the routine of daily life and lamenting the inability to find her guideposts.

Sheehy's curiosity-driven anthropological pursuit of the motivations of human beings resulted in immersion into the lives of the rich and powerful as well as those who live on the fringe of society. Sheehy's personal journey as a newly single mother searching for work to pay the rent was a perspective shared by others in society, but no one in the city room at the New York Herald Tribune.

Steinem's social and political advocacy spans a career of more than six decades and has resulted in her reputation as an expert on the subjects of gender equality and social justice. Her ability to question authority and swim against the tide began in childhood and motivated her early years as a journalist, and she persists in raising awareness and promoting involvement in the political process to this day.

The women did not share political beliefs, and the concept of feminism meant something different to each. Didion railed against the notion of the feminist movement

even as she articulated the cultural conflict in her own life and her roles as wife and mother. Sheehy felt the need to “sneak” into the world of feature writing, fully expecting to be ignored by the boys (2014).

There also may have been a healthy rivalry between the women who wrote. Steinem, placing value on the strength of her public persona, was critical of what she perceived as the affectation of frailty prevalent in Didion’s writing. When asked her opinion of Joan Didion by a colleague on his way to interview the writer, Steinem called out, “Ask her how come, if she spends all her time crying and swimming and struggling to open a car door, she finds so much energy to write so much”

Despite their differences, threads of thematic unity emerge from each of the women’s unique approaches to literary journalism. The themes of traditional femininity – dress and decorum, home and family, physical appearances, power hierarchy in the workplace, caretaking – all are themes woven in the text of the women who wrote New Journalism. Fully developed female characters defined by more than their relationships to men populate their work of society.

Journalist Gloria Steinem was in the right place at the right time in history, and her work at New York Magazine coincides with her growing involvement with causes intended to raise awareness and promote women’s rights. Steinem was an early contributor and co-founder of New York Magazine, who came to Felker’s attention after she wrote a piece at Esquire about contraception and the choices that the availability of the Pill was bringing to women (Sheehy, 2014). The trajectory of her career and subsequent writing and advocacy was guided by her early writing in New Journalism and the opportunity provided by New York Magazine.

At the same time Gail Sheehy joined the team at New York Magazine. Her husband was completing his medical residency in New York City, and Sheehy found a reporting job for women's pages and Sunday features with the Herald Tribune. Her interest in politics and desire to pursue more significant stories brought her to the attention of Clay Felker, and she was encouraged by the editor to pursue stories on politics and social upheaval. She took every opportunity to sneak away from the women's desk to produce stories of more social significance, and ultimately chose to pursue a freelance career when the Herald Tribune folded. Her unusual take on New York society was a natural fit for New York Magazine (Sheehy, 2014).

In the same city, but many ways worlds apart, Joan Didion had begun her professional career after graduating from Berkeley with a bachelor's degree in English. She won a fellowship to serve as a research assistant at Vogue magazine in 1956 and took the opportunity to head east. For eight years the California native lived in New York, moving up the ladder at Vogue and serving on the editorial staff (Daugherty, 2015). Joan Didion was one of only two female writers to have pieces included in Wolfe's anthology of New Journalism.

Literature Review

History of New Journalism

I have no idea who coined the term “the New Journalism” or even when it was coined... To tell the truth, I’ve never even liked the term. Any movement, group, party, program, philosophy or theory that goes under a name with “New” in it is just begging for trouble. The garbage barge of history is already full of them. (Wolfe, 1973, p.37).

The New Journalism was more than a style of writing that emerged in the late 1960s. The genre that broke new ground somewhere between creative writing and traditional reporting incorporated narrative elements more customarily found in fiction than in journalism to go beyond the stories and interpret their larger meaning and social significance (Eason 1983; Pauly 2008; Sims 2005; Whitt 2008). Emerging at a time when reading habits were changing in American society, the genre found a home in the commercial magazines of the day. New York was the hub of literary nonfiction, and the writing of New Journalists catered to an educated, somewhat elite clientele (Carmody 1995; Pauly 2008). Those magazines embracing New Journalism included Esquire, the New Yorker, Atlantic, Rolling Stone, The Saturday Evening Post, and New York Magazine (Pauly, 2014). The New Journalism’s emergence is inexorably tied to the business of magazines seeking to usher in new, well-educated audiences who sought a livelier style of writing – a nontraditional style that reflected the public conversations of the day (2008, 2014). The New Journalists embraced a strong narrative focus, immersion reporting, and use of symbols and imagery in the style of novelists (Wolfe 1973; Eason 1984). This readable, engaging style brought stories to life through vivid depictions and personal accounts. As the protests against the Vietnam war drew a political divide between generations, as the traditional roles of women in American society were being

challenged, and as the decade of the 1960s saw new levels of political and social conflict in the way young and old, male and female, black and white identified themselves within the culture, a group of primarily New York-based publishers and writers sought to establish a soapbox upon which journalism could do more than report facts (Pauly, 2008).

While our national cultural norms were thrown into confusion, traditional publications that had seen great popularity found themselves losing what had been a mainstream readership (Pauly, 2008). An emerging youth movement was fueled by dissent against the ongoing Vietnam War, civil unrest was tearing the country at the seams, the assassinations of President Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr. and presidential candidate Robert Kennedy created unsteadiness in cultural beliefs. The advent of the birth control pill and its subsequent rapid rise in popularity was likely both cause and effect of a women's empowerment movement, with many questioning the inequality of opportunity between the sexes. From the kitchen table to Capitol Hill challenges to the status quo resulted in lively discussion at best and violence at the worst. Innovative writers and publishers sought to capitalize on the changes in culture to capture new audiences – audiences looking for more zip and pop in their news, readers who wanted to hear about the changes taking place from a new perspective (2008).

Clay Felker and New York Magazine

New York socialite and editor Clay Felker was in his 30s when he began his tenure as editor of New York Magazine, the Sunday supplement to the New York Herald Tribune (Carmody, 1995). In an attempt to recoup losses sustained in the 1962 New York newspaper strike, the Herald Tribune's leadership brought in established writers like Tom Wolfe and Jimmy Breslin to contribute to the Sunday supplement, edited by

Felker, who encouraged a style of writing that allowed a relaxing of the rules of conventional journalism to create stories that were lively and readable (Kluger, 1986). When the Herald Tribune failed in 1966, Felker and his cadre of writers, which included his friends Jimmy Breslin, Gail Sheehy, Gay Talese, and Tom Wolfe, took over the former Sunday supplement to create the weekly independent magazine, *New York* (Sheehy, 2014). Seeking to profit by catering to a hip, New York, educated readership, the writers produced stories that gave a contemporary, literary voice to the magazine, which enjoyed great commercial success thanks to edgy content that attracted a new audience (Pauly, 2008). Columnist Kurt Anderson describes Felker's vision of New York as a giant novel waiting to be written:

The magazine was conceived as a kind of gleeful, fervid, useful weekly chronicle of social and cultural anthropology, descriptive but also prescriptive. (Anderson, 2008).

Finding a niche with the New York social set, the magazine provided gossipy columns about glamorous lives, but also plumbed the seedier underbelly of the city that never sleeps, with in-depth reports on social issues that provided fodder for the work of New Journalists (Carmody, 1995). Eventually the magazine would expand into more political writing and there would be dissent among the creative team of writers. Managing the egos of his writers would be a challenge for Felker. Breslin left the magazine, complaining that he was, “gagged by perfume and disheartened by character collapse” (Daily Telegraph, 2008), barbs directed at the women on the writing and editing team of *New York*. Ultimately, in the mid-1970s, a time thought to be the end of the New Journalism era, Felker would lose control of the magazine in a hostile takeover by Rupert Murdoch (Sheehy, 2014).

Tom Wolfe described the influence Clay Felker had on The New Journalism in his 2008 extended obituary, *A City Built of Clay*:

Throughout the thirteen years he ran *New York Magazine*, Clay Felker oversaw sociological studies of urban life that academic sociology had never even attempted: the culture of Wall Street, the culture of political graft in New York, cop culture, Mob culture, youth cultures in California as well as New York, New York's self-aborting, dysfunctional, deconstructed power structure, capital-S Society and its discontents. And yet no one ever thought of it as sociology. That was thanks to one of Clay's finest instincts. He demanded—or, better said, inspired as well as required—such depth of reporting that his writers came up with the same sort of scenes, status details, and detailed dialogue that in the past had rarely been found except in novels, short stories, and the most outrageous form of fiction, as Orwell put it, which is autobiography. (Autobiography is like Wikipedia: Some of it may be true.) And although it remains controversial, Clay's writers often used the other favorite device of fiction writers: namely, putting the reader inside the skin, inside the head, behind the eyes of characters in the story. The New Journalism, *c'est moi*, Clay could have easily claimed. (2008)

New Journalism challenged the conventions of popular literary non-fiction writing. Traditional journalists and English scholars each found ways to criticize the new style, and New Journalists were equally willing to assert the emerging genre as superior to novel and short story writing, which was fading in popularity (Pauly, 2008; Whitt 2008; Wolfe 1973). Some believed that New Journalists did not apply the appropriate levels of rigor to the gathering of information and took license with stories for greater impact by consolidating characters, manipulating timelines, and making claims that went beyond the observable facts (Carmody, 1995). But the young genre got people's attention, and its contemporary writers, most of whom were in their 30s and 40s, embraced the readable and in-depth reporting style in magazines, books and essays (Wolfe, 1973; Pauly 2008).

In 1983, Norman Sims would research ways to move beyond the name New Journalism to define the contributions made as the style of writing matured past the 1970s into a dynamic and popular genre that continues to enhance our understanding of the society through the storytelling of journalists (Sims, 2005). Identifying the complexities inherent in renaming something that is neither new nor traditional, Sims considered the history and conventions in the academy that surround both the disciplines of English and Journalism, and ultimately offers the title “literary journalism” to encompass a style of reporting that embraces the devices of creative writing, upsets the fewest constituencies, and remains true to the principles of journalism (2005).

New Journalism provided the foundation for contemporary literary nonfiction writing by those who call themselves journalists and those who do not, but still incorporate the stylistic elements of immersion reporting, descriptive scenic details, structural creativity, vivid characters and a narrative style that allows the reader to behold the life of others through storytelling (Kramer 1995). It is necessary to understand that our ability to behold the lives of others is dependent on those who report the stories, so it is essential to explore not only whose stories were being told, but who was telling the stories.

Wolfe’s anthology remains the primary text proclaiming the historical canon of the New Journalism (Roberts, 2012). The anthology provides examples of the genre selected by Wolfe and includes a personal preface to each with commentary on how that essay or excerpt was illustrative of the new style. Wolfe uses the first section of the book to provide his personal story, offer a reluctant embrace of the name New Journalism, and blast the novel as a genre that has outlived its relevance (Pauly, 2008). The New

Journalism style of reporting was distinguished by writers who believed that reporters should do more than list facts; that there was a call to take a moral stand in their advocacy for social change (Eason 1984; Pauly 2008).

New Journalists embraced the freedom offered by editors and publishers who supported their work (Pauly, 2008). Some found that their presence inside the story brought understanding of cultural chaos through personal experience. Others expanded on the elements of fiction writing and storytelling to add context to their observations. Use of metaphor, class symbolism, and manipulation of the narrator's point of view were New Journalism devices reflective more of fiction writing than reporting before this time (Sims and Kramer, 1995). New Journalism was intended to entice an educated, literate readership. Editors and publishers, seeking new audiences as the mainstream audience seemed to disappear in America, embraced this unbounded style of non-fiction writing, even as traditional journalists and the literary community bristled (Wolfe, 1973). Just as in the age, race, and gender wars that were being waged across the country, so too writers fell upon one another with criticism. Fiction writers called the movement literature light, taking issue with the authenticity of the new journalistic efforts, accusing writers of fabricating events, consolidating characters, and inventing dialogue just to create a more impactful and readable piece (Wolfe, 2008). And while there were writers likely guilty of creating composite characters and manipulating facts, the impact of New Journalists remained as a manner of bringing forward journalism that went beyond ethnography and provided opinion and context as readers looked for new ways to sort out the chaos of a culture in change (Eason, 1984). Nonfiction writer Michael Herr explained the problem with reporting on the Vietnam War: "The press got all the facts (more or less); it got too

many of them. But it never found a way to report meaningfully about death, which of course was really what it was all about.” (Dispatches, 1977)

Women and the New Journalism

There is a need to expand our understanding of those writers who played a key role in the changing landscape of literary nonfiction during the tumultuous cultural shifts of the late 1960s. The boys of New Journalism are familiar to students of 20th century nonfiction writing. Jimmy Breslin, Gay Talese, Tom Wolfe, Truman Capote, Norman Mailer are familiar names when seeking to identify the changemakers. The names of women who led the charge in raising nonfiction reporting to new literary and artistic heights, working for the same publications, telling stories with a depth of purpose and a unique point of view should be just as identifiable. Joan Didion, Gail Sheehy, and Gloria Steinem, as well as others yet to be fully recognized.

It has been documented (Hartsock 2000; Lerner 1979; Roberts 2012; Whitt 2008) that women’s contributions to New Journalism have been widely ignored and their significance downplayed by those who have sought to define the movement. Women who wrote in the style and time of New Journalism had their work and their identities defined by the prevailing gender biases of the era. Clay Felker’s vision of New York Magazine as journalistic provocateur resulted in his willingness to explore stories that were not only controversial but written by those willing to rock the literary boat (Wolfe, 2008,). Although women’s names were a minority presence on the mastheads of mainstream publications, Felker hired women to write stories of interest to them, on topics that went beyond recipes, restaurants and celebrity gossip (Sheehy, 2014). This opportunity

provided a platform for ambitious woman writers to bring their perspective on social change to mainstream publications.

There was plenty of change in the wind for writers of New Journalism, and much of it focused on changes that had an immediate impact on the lives of women. Two significant events in the early 1960s— one medical and the other economic — provided the gateway to second-wave feminism and the women’s rights movement.

In 1960 the Pill was developed, and for the first time safe and effective birth control was distributed to the public in 1961(pbs.org, 2010). A game-changer for family planning, the advent of reliable contraception meant that women had the ability to see motherhood as a choice rather than a likely consequence of sexual activity. This freedom of choice opened opportunities for women to pursue careers outside their homes and beyond their role as wife and mother. The ability to provide for themselves financially and to make sexual choices absent the fear of pregnancy provided women the means to consider their lives in new light. Men and women now needed to navigate relationships under a new power structure.

President Kennedy convened a Presidential Commission on Women, the results of which were released a month before his death in October of 1963. The commission revealed and criticized inequality in the lives of women. The commission’s final report shed enough light on the issue to drive those who had been ringing the bell – Betty Friedan, for one – to greater action (Steinem, 2017). As society saw more women employed outside their homes, calls from women for equal pay in the workplace became louder and more public. As women united in calls for empowerment over their bodies, efforts to criminalize domestic violence against women became part of the national

conversation. In June 1963 the Equal Pay Act was signed into law by President Kennedy with the goal of creating an environment of equal pay for equal work between men and women (Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 1963).

Gender Gaps and Moral Purpose

A close look at the Tom Wolfe anthology as a historical record reveals the limits placed on women as not just writers, but as subjects of the male writers of the time. Wolfe showcased stories in *The New Journalism* by men and about men, most of which have few, if any, significant female characters. In his extensive preface on style attached to each example in the anthology, he fails to identify the issue of gender as either a defining or missing element. If women are present, they exist two-dimensionally in a three-dimensional world, in stark contrast to the vivid detail and internal monologue provided for male characters (Wolfe, 1973).

Hunter Thompson vividly describes himself, other men, and even the horses at the Kentucky Derby, but he fails to notice any of the women as noteworthy. One woman who makes the cut in *The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved* (Wolfe.1973) is the hotel desk clerk, described as, “about fifty years old and very peculiar looking.”

In *Charlie Wilson's War* (Wolfe.1973) Joe Esterhas introduces his readers to a mother and daughter, described with ambiguity and as objects viewed through the lens of male attention: “A 16-year-old dimple-cheeked high school dropout named Robin Armstrong, a strangely vague and muted farmgirl,” and, “Her mother, (named only Mrs. Armstrong), 40ish and sagging but dressed as if she still knew how to please”.

Wolfe provides an example of female character development in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (Wolfe.1973) in two female characters defined as objects and by function in relation to men. The first is: “a good looking gringa muchacha padding along the side of the road with honest calves . . . and he says, ‘Shall we get her over and ball her, man?’” The more prominent female character, Black Maria, is defined by purpose and through the eyes of a man, “in many ways she is so great. She is quiet and has a kind of broody beauty. She cooks.”

In the single story whose title bears a woman’s name, Robert Christgau’s “*Beth Ann and Macrobioticism*”, the title character is a set piece around which male observations are made. The story of Beth Ann’s deterioration and death is really a story of the men around her and their inability to do more than observe her decline in weight and health. The elements of character, status, and dialogue are devoted to the men in the story, and Beth Ann is described by what can be seen by the men, or as half of the couple, Beth Ann and Charlie. Although she reportedly drops to eighty pounds as the story unfolds, there is no more than a fleeting reference in a footnote suggesting that she may have suffered from anorexia nervosa, and no real exploration of her motivations, past, or personal feelings. The story is told through the eyes of husband Charlie, and we struggle with him through his own feelings as he experiences his wife’s decline. We learn status details of the other men in Beth Ann’s life - her father is a lawyer, her father-in-law a dentist, and even the male founder of the macrobiotic diet, who espouses opinions that equate strength with masculinity and describes leg hair on women as appalling (Christgau, 1973). The felt experience is Charlie’s, and his wife is objectified as the observable object.

Gay Talese is credited by scholars of literary journalism and the editors of *Esquire* magazine as having written the one of the best magazine stories of all time (DiGiacomo, 2017) in his 1966 *Esquire* Magazine feature, *Frank Sinatra Has a Cold*. In creating a story about Sinatra built entirely on information received from those surrounding Sinatra and through the keen observations of Talese, it is worth noting that he invests far more status detail and context in his minor male characters than the descriptors offered to females in the piece. In one example, Talese describes Sinatra's valet, George Jacobs:

George Jacobs is a twice-divorced man of thirty-six who resembles Billy Eckstine. He has traveled all over the world with Sinatra and is devoted to him. Jacobs lives in a comfortable bachelor's apartment off Sunset Boulevard around the corner from Whiskey à Go, and he is known around town for the assortment of frisky California girls he has as friends—a few of whom, he concedes, were possibly drawn to him initially because of his closeness to Frank Sinatra (Talese 1966).

Of course, there are significant women in the Sinatra story. Talese tells us about Sinatra's wives as if they are prize cuts of meat, explaining; “Now he has the affection of Nancy and Ava and Mia, the fine female produce of three generations” (1966).

Even the most significant women in Sinatra's life - his mother, Dolly, “a large and very ambitious woman . . . possessing a round red face and blue eyes, was often mistaken for being Irish,” (1966), and his first wife, Nancy Barbato Sinatra, “The first Mrs. Sinatra, a striking woman who has never remarried . . . Nancy, the good Italian wife, would never complain – she'd just make everybody a plate of spaghetti.” (1966)

These descriptions of women come from writers whose style in New Journalism was to observe, to get inside a story, to embrace the vivid description and character development of fiction writing. That their portrayals of women were two-dimensional, or that women were defined in the context of their role in a men's lives (wife, cook, dressed to please) exemplifies the inherent bias in the level of observation and detail used by these male writers regarding the world which they set out to record.

New York Magazine ran a story on the death of Norman Mailer in November of 2007. Reporter Mary Reinholz asked Gloria Steinem for her thoughts on her former colleague and fellow New Journalist at the National Women's Conference at Hunter College. Steinem reported that Mailer was not her enemy as might have been expected, given his reputation for anti-feminist rhetoric. "He wasn't hostile like the ultra-right-wing anti-feminists — he just didn't get it" (2007, Reinholz)

Contrast this portrayal of women to the complexity teased into the introduction of main character Lucille Maxwell Miller in Joan Didion's *Some Dreamers of the Gold*

Dream:

Of course she came from somewhere else, came off the prairie in search of something she had seen in a movie or heard on the radio . . . By the time Lucille Maxwell enrolled at Walla Walla College. She was an eighteen-year-old possessed of unremarkable good looks and remarkable high spirits. Lucille wanted to see the world, her father would say in retrospect. And I guess she found out (Didion, 1966).

Contemplate the purpose of literary journalism as it emerged in the sixties. Literary journalists were not simply reporting facts. They sought to "capture social complexity in all its richness and nuance" (Pauly, 2014). John Pauly explains that scholarly review of literary journalism, especially in the landscape of the late sixties and

early seventies, needs to acknowledge more than just style and technique. It is important to understand that New Journalism writers set out to do more than report facts – their purpose was to interpret the significance of their stories as a narrative of social and cultural change (2014). Subjectivity is the goal when a writer is embedded inside a story, and the point of view of the writer informs the reader’s understanding beyond the immediate event. Thus, the choices made about stories told become the chronicle of social and cultural change, and the perspective from which those stories are told informs the reader’s view of culture. It is that significance that necessitates a deeper exploration into not only what was recorded by New Journalists, but the way The New Journalism movement is recorded in all its gendered complexity.

Pauly offers a reminder that the significance of the movement was about more than the stories, but about why stories are told. “The New Journalism was significant because it made the interpretive work of the profession visible, palpable, and available for comment. The history of the New Journalism tells us something important about the social construction of moral purpose” (Pauly, 2014). The style defines the genre, but the content of those stories, and the perspective from which they are told contextualizes the writing for the reader, creating the stories that, as stated by Gerbner, fit human reality to the social order (Gerbner, 1986).

ANALYSIS

Terrorism Up Close: Gail Sheehy and Bombing on the Mind

Gail Sheehy was born and raised in Westchester County, twenty miles north of New York City. Raised under the influence of her grandmother as her parents' marriage disintegrated, she developed a love of telling stories. Her grandmother bought her a typewriter at the age of seven, and her interest in writing grew. She would pursue a degree in English from the University of Vermont, while also completing a degree in Home Economics at her father's insistence, so that she would have a marketable skill. It was home economics that landed her first real job for JCPenney in New York. Committed to having a career for two years before marriage, she met and married Albert Sheehy at the age of 23. Albert was in medical school at the University of Rochester, so the couple moved to New York City and Sheehy got a job at the local newspaper to pay the bills while her husband attended school (Sheehy, 2014).

The couple would return to New York City in 1963 to begin their lives and careers. Sheehy was not interested in the stay-at-home life of a doctor's wife and found work in newspapers before joining the staff of the New York Herald Tribune as a feature writer. She managed to keep the job throughout an unexpected pregnancy, and gave birth to her daughter in early 1964, working right up to the hours before she delivered. The features she wrote were intended for the women's pages of the Herald Tribune, but she found ways to sneak down to the office of Editor Clay Felker to pitch a story about social life on Fire Island. Felker was interested and told her to write as if it was a scene, not as a typical story. Sheehy embraced the freedom in this new style of literary journalism Felker

was encouraging among the writing team at the Herald Tribune. She continued to sneak down the back stairs of the Herald Tribune to pitch stories, a trip she described as “the longest walk of my life” (2014).

Sheehy’s marriage ended in 1968, just as the presidential campaign was accelerating. Felker encouraged her to take on a larger project, noting that small stories would not advance her career and get her noticed. He asked her to follow Bobby Kennedy on the campaign trail. She followed the campaign with the press, returning home to New York the night of the California primary before the results were announced. She arrived home to learn that Kennedy had been shot that night (2014).

Sheehy would continue to write for Felker at the Herald Tribune and follow him to New York Magazine when the Herald Tribune folded. One of few women in the trenches with Breslin, Wolfe and Felker, Sheehy was in awe of the city room at the Herald Tribune. She had entered a man’s world.

As often as I encountered Breslin in the elevator, he never even gave me a nod. To Breslin, women were irrelevant. Men ran the newspapers and magazines that mattered in those days. Men read the news on TV. Men wrote the editorials that told people what to think. Why should men dictate what women could and couldn’t do? (2014)

She returned to school at Columbia University in 1969 to earn a master’s degree in journalism, where she was mentored by cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead. Mead would prove to be a pivotal influence in her life, igniting her interest in stories of family relationships and the passages human beings experience in the course of a lifetime. Sheehy’s first book, *Passages*, would expand on that subject. Dismissed by some as the pop psychology of a journalist, the book included Sheehy’s findings after conducting

extensive interviews. Published in 1976, *Passages* remained a New York Times bestseller for three years (2014).

Sheehy's ongoing interest in human relationships and the changes that occur in different stages of life have been the motivation for several of her books. She has continued her work as a writer of literary nonfiction, profiling the powerful and famous. The author of seventeen books, including biographies of Hillary Clinton and Mikhail Gorbachev, she most recently published her own memoir, *Daring*, in 2014. An advocate for women's rights and gender equality, she continues to encourage women to tell their stories through the Daring Project, an online platform for women to share their own stories illuminating the ways they are daring to change their lives.

Sheehy credits Felker as her professional mentor, noting that he was unlike his male colleagues, openly recruiting strong writers regardless of their gender. The synergy between Felker and Sheehy would become more than professional over time. Felker and Sheehy married in 1984 and remained married until Felker's death in 2008 (Madigan 2015).

Bombing on the Mind

Protests against the violent war in Vietnam had become violent at home by March of 1970. The fear of terror inflicted by the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was a national concern, especially on college campuses, where organizers joined forces with students opposed to the war. The protests grew beyond the war, to include opposition to the capitalist culture of the United States that the SDS, and their militant faction, the Weather Men, sought to cripple. Sheehy brought the life of an antiwar terrorist to the pages of New York Magazine by following a young man struggling with his involvement

in the protests in her story, *Bombing on the Mind*, which was published in New York Magazine April 6, 1970, in the immediate aftermath of three Manhattan bombings. A student at Columbia at the time, Sheehy immersed herself in the lives of the young rebel and his family, providing an up-close look at the choices, the conflicts, and the decisions made by a young man who might just be in over his head.

The story opens three days after a series of buildings have been bombed in Manhattan. Marc, the central character of Sheehy's story, knows the perpetrators. We encounter him in the opening sentences of the story, as if a camera is panning in on his Army surplus jacket and reedy silhouette. Described in detail as thinner and paler than their last encounter, Sheehy establishes that she has known him for a while, dropping the reader into the middle of an existing relationship by noting the changes in his appearance and demeanor. She describes Marc through a vivid series of status details that evoke empathy and humanity, even as he is identified as a vilified member of the violent protest movement of the day; someone to be feared. Marc is mild-mannered, smart, and scared. He is dedicated to "the liberation of practically everybody," and is ready to start the revolution. Although he is possessed of a face, "any Jewish mother would love to have in a frame on the bedside bureau," he is preparing to die.

Sheehy offers the gauntlet of questions she is put through before she can be trusted. Using dialogue coupled with her internal thoughts, the reader is at the table as the two discuss how terror cells are created and why violent overthrow is necessary, even it means, "you die." The slightly terrified Sheehy feigns calm as Marc suggests that explosives have been concentrated in specific locations around the city, confirming that

the goal is to create chaos. Asking about the people who may be in the buildings, Marc says that perhaps they deserve to die.

The story moves quickly from this discussion of necessary death by violence to Marc's home, and his running battle with his four-year-old daughter about the perils of Sesame Street. The child loves the show, Marc believes it is her choice, but argues with the toddler that she is a victim of consumerist culture. Marc confesses he hopes to blow up the TV when the child is at school. More bombing on the mind.

Enter Patty, Marc's wife, a feminist poised to "overthrow the male power structure." She's ready to embrace the bombing, except that she believes the leadership of the Weathermen are sexist. She has read the Jerry Rubin book, *Do It*, but draws the line at compliance with the male anti-war organizers because they are part of the male-dominated problem. "They're still doing it to me. I can't join the revolution."

Amid the plans to overthrow the government, Marc's family has joined a commune and gathers their food from a local co-op. They are preparing for a post-government world after the planned overthrow. Sheehy slams together the details of a nonviolent daily life with the plans for violence, creating conflict in the reader's mind.

Marc believes the possibility of his death is a "fairly real scenario," The lyrics of Blood, Sweat and Tears, who are not scared of dyin', play in the background.

Marc is responsible, and heads off to work his shift at the local food co-op. He's doing what he is supposed to do, which seems to be where Sheehy takes the reader. The white kids at Columbia are protesting comfortably. "It's fun to bust windows but it's a drag to be in jail. We want to do things without going to jail. Why don't we call a general strike because nobody wants to go to classes anyway." There is discussion of throwing

rocks, of trashing a building. But in the end the war council exits the building without trashing it, leaves without having raised the bail money they sought to spring their fellow part-time rebels already in jail.

Sheehy draws a bright line between the leaders and the led in this revolution. She exposes the rich white kids for whom, “it is enough to participate in the chic of rage and the ecstasy of despair,” and the disappointed revolutionary who notes that their efforts will fail because “too many people are happy.”

Abbie Hoffman was on campus Friday the 13th of March, organizing a rally to raise bail money for those accused of the latest bombing. The leadership is seeking the support of the masses, but the masses aren’t uncomfortable enough to rebel. They aren’t uncomfortable enough to die.

Marc remains a cultural enigma and a symbol of the ambivalent rebel. He’s left school, he’s avoided the draft. He’s married and does his part to be an awakened partner and parent. Yet he is, perhaps, not sufficiently qualified for rebel status.

Marc is bombarded by feminists for being a male sexist . . . by his parents for not being Norman Thomas . . . by the Panthers for not being black . . . by PL for not getting chummy with cafeteria workers . . . by ultra-militant friends for not being Ready To Die. Scorned on all sides for not being poor enough, liberated enough, violent enough, Marc is deprived of being genuinely deprived (p. 15).

Sheehy finally poses a more provocative question regarding violence – is this a white man’s game to want to bomb things? It is white radicals recruiting in black communities, white leaders profiting from books that tell people to “Do It” and put their lives on the line, white organizers recruiting dispassionate college kids looking for a thrill? Sheehy questions the fomenters of violence for their need to manipulate the vulnerable, well-intentioned radical wannabes like Marc, who may not really have much

to rebel against. “Marc is a weathervane. The way he goes, so go the prevailing ideological winds of radicalism.”

Sheehy hits the mark with the elements of New Journalism, incorporating strong visual imagery, attention to status details, popular song lyrics and direct dialogue, vivid character descriptions, knowledge that could only come from longstanding immersion with the subjects, and scene-by-scene construction building to a strong close.

Without judgment she takes the reader inside the world of home grown terrorism through the character of Marc, and shows the reader a young man taking extraordinary risks that he may not be prepared to take. She opines that those radicals condemning the capitalist empire may be just as commercially motivated, and willing to take advantage of thrill-seeking suburban college students looking for a thrill rather than a cause. She provides a glimpse of the children of privilege who are trying on rebellion to see what it feels like to get tough, to stand up, to throw bombs. Just as long as they aren't the ones who get blown up.

Personal Politics: Gloria Steinem and *In Your Heart You Know He's Nixon*

Gloria Steinem's name is not often linked to New Journalism, even though she embraced the narrative style in her work even before she made her mark at New York Magazine. Best known for her political activism on behalf of women and children, her career began as a writer of nonfiction (Steinem, 1994, 2015).

Steinem's upbringing in a less-than-traditional household, described by her as a traveling road show, served as an influence that led her to travel a nontraditional road through college and career. Her father never held down steady work, and the family traveled across the Midwest chasing money and sustenance. Steinem did not attend formal school until the age of ten, when her parents separated, and a permanent home was established with her mother and older sister. After her parents' divorce and in her teens, Steinem found herself in the role of caretaker for her mother, who suffered an emotional breakdown and would later be institutionalized for mental illnesses. Steinem believed that a contributing factor to her mother's emotional decline was an understandably profound sadness at having given up her professional independence to stay at home as wife and mother to her two daughters. Steinem attended Smith College, graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1956 with a degree in government and a plan to travel and work (2015).

Steinem attributes her desire to travel rather than settle down was deeply influenced by the devil-may-care spirit of her father. She traveled in India in pursuit of stories after college. Upon her return to the US in the early sixties her career careened head-on into the tumultuous social changes taking place (2015).

Steinem gained notoriety for an in-depth feature she wrote in 1963 for SHOW magazine, embedding herself as a Playboy bunny and exposing the sexist and physically demanding working conditions for women in the Playboy Club. Although many misunderstand her involvement with the story, it was immersion journalism with the goal of infiltrating the working world of Playboy bunnies, and the expose was not flattering to the Playboy empire (Steinem, 1963). While *A Bunny's Tale* put her name on the map in the New York magazine community, she found it difficult to obtain work for a few years until Clay Felker brought her in to the writing team at New York Magazine in 1968 (Sheehy, 2014). Steinem had the writing chops to chase stories on a variety of topics from presidential politics to working mothers, and would ultimately find her niche exposing instances of gender inequality and pursuing stories that put the quest for equal rights for women front and center in the cultural noise of the time. In 1972, Felker gave her the opportunity to create an "all-woman" landmark issue of New York Magazine that became the pilot for her spinoff publication, Ms. Magazine (Sheehy 2014; Steinem 2015).

"A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle" is a phrase often attributed to Gloria Steinem (Sheehy 2014). Although the phrase did not originate with her, she did co-opt it as a way of describing her personal philosophy during the 1960's and 1970's. She describes herself as not rejecting marriage and motherhood but postponing the decision on a regular basis. She did enough caretaking of her mother in her youth and chose not to continue in the caretaker role with a husband and children (Steinem 2017). It would be much later in life that she would decorate the apartment that she used as a home

base between travels for six decades. She married environmental activist David Bale when she was 64 and remained married for three years until Bale's death.

The introverted Steinem never intended to serve as a spokesperson for the causes she supported but took advantage of the platform she had in Ms. Magazine to work on behalf of progressive politics, global peace and issues of gender inequality. Her interest in politics and issues that affected women and children's health, child care, and equal pay led her to write nonfiction, often adopting a travelogue style of storytelling that reflects primary elements of The New Journalism. According to her website, Steinem is the author of eight books of nonfiction and numerous essays and magazine articles, she is recognized as a political activist and continues to work on behalf of global peace initiatives and women's rights (2017).

In Your Heart You Know He's Nixon

The New York Magazine piece, *In Your Heart You Know He's Nixon*, was published October 28, 1968, days before Richard Nixon would win his first term as president. The Democratic Party struggled through a bitter primary race among candidates Eugene McCarthy, vice president Lyndon Johnson, Robert Kennedy, and later George McGovern. Steinem walks the reader through a brief history of 1968 that includes the implosion of the Democratic party's efforts to unite behind a presidential candidate, the withdrawal of Lyndon Johnson from the race, a fierce convention in Chicago marred by bloody violence outside the convention hall as anti-war protesters clashed with the Chicago police, and the assassinations of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. and presidential candidate Robert Kennedy. The selection of Hubert Humphrey as the

democratic candidate was seen by Steinem as a disappointment and unforgivable compromise to those who sought a candidate ready to condemn the U.S.'s involvement in the Vietnam War (Steinem, 1968).

The reader is inside the mind of Steinem from the first page, weighing the internal battle between the Democrat's "Gutless Wonder" Humphrey and the Republican Plastic Man, candidate Richard Nixon. Presented as a travelogue, Steinem, a self-proclaimed disenfranchised Democrat and one of the only females from the press attached to the story, takes the reader on a ten-day campaign junket inside the Nixon campaign to find out who this repackaged Richard Nixon really is, providing a cautionary tale on the consequences of knowing too little about old enemies.

With her self-proclaimed covert role as "a kind of Manchurian candidate on Nixon's campaign plane" Steinem set out to present an insider's view of the campaign, and perhaps answer the question she and her fellow liberal democrats were asking. Which was worse? A vote for the sellout Democrat or the repackaged Nixon?

There was no equivocating in her belief that Nixon was going to win. Steinem's quest on election eve was to kick around the reader's recollection of the old, bitter Nixon in contrast to the freshly branded candidate on the threshold of the presidency. The journey is as much about distilling her frustration with those on her side of the political fence as it is to expose Nixon's duplicity on the trail.

The story is filled with status details as she paints a vivid picture of each tightly managed campaign appearance. Status details are employed in the description of each crowd's physical appearance and social makeup. Beyond the crafted view of each event, Steinem brings the reader beyond the fringe, interviewing waiters at pricey Republican

fundraisers, finding the single non-white face in crowds of Nixon disciples at every campaign stop.

The first stop on this journey is a banquet in New York reported to net five million dollars for the campaign. “Middle-aged women who wore wrist watches and dyed-to-match shoes with their evening gowns” cause her to recall her Midwestern roots creating in her “. . . Instant Nostalgia: nostalgia for a Midwestern childhood where my high school mates – football playing, Negro-hating Hungarians and Poles – had gone to work in their factories and filling stations. . . Could they have been flash-frozen since 1952?”

Steinem pokes the reader to recall the anti-communist Nixon repeatedly by comparing his tightly managed stump speech to propaganda that is readily adapted to the crowd of the day, “with the skill of a Kremlinologist.” Offering multiple direct quotations from the mouth of Nixon at his first stop in New York, she puts the reader in the audience, providing statement after statement from *The Speech* in Manhattan is upbeat, focusing on America’s military might and Nixon’s pledge to restore America to a safe place where this rich and successful audience of, “the luckiest people in the world” are going to be represented when he prevails in November. Exuding a confidence, Steinem does a reality check by turning to an event waiter for his review of *The Speech*.

“That guy,” he said contemptuously, heaving a full tray to his shoulder. “He’s such a schmuck he doesn’t know what schmuck means.”

The Speech becomes a living entity in the story, and inclusions and exclusions are carefully noted – the removal of language that could be considered too racially inclusive in the South, and the repetition of stock phrases that capitalize on the Democrats

ambivalence about Humphrey, and massaging the egos of the \$1000-a-plate guests at fundraisers. The Speech itself becomes a symbol of the tightly controlled persona of this re-imagined Nixon as he is presented to the public by his handlers.

Steinem chronicles the absurdist moments of the event – the iconic hands-in-the-air Nixon victory stance and the cultural throwback of the 1950’s soundtrack of the evening, *This Could Be the Start of Something Big*.

She would expand on this feeling of being thrown into the past after day two, returning to her hotel, “dragged down by an unreasonable, unshakable depression. We were going back to the ‘50s again, back to Martinis and anti-Communism and Madras minds. It hadn’t been very pleasant at the time, and having come so close to basic social changes made it, as Bobby Kennedy would have said, *unacceptable*” (1968).

The campaign trail swung through suburban shopping centers where the crowds were made of the Silent Majority, typically white and conservative. The press had created a game of offering “\$1 for the first black face” in the crowd, a bet no one had paid off to date. So, when the Nixon parade passed through a few blocks of anti-war protesters in Philadelphia, Steinem ditched the press bus and took the street to walk the route in search of the untold stories of the well-mannered crowd on the street. She approached a black man “with his arm around his girl, smiling and waving a placard at the crowd.” Asking to see the sign, he obliged happily, revealing a sign that said, “NIXON IS A RACIST.”

Observations on race and the absence of a civil rights platform from Nixon’s agenda are used to illustrate the larger narrative revealing the disconnect between the Republicans and the social issues surrounding them. Nixon’s team has carefully crafted his appearances in each new city, and most include a television interview between Nixon

and a panel of citizens intended to seem representative of the local community, “doctor, worker, housewife, Negro, etc.” which keeps him away from press conferences and more in-depth questioning. He prepares in privacy before each appearance, and Steinem evokes his disastrous 1960 televised presidential debate against John Kennedy as the reason why, “he has learned to be respectful of television’s power . . . and he’s taking no chances.”

Steinem’s immersive journey on the campaign trail was intended to find the old Nixon peeking out from behind the mask of the new candidate. She reports one glimpse on day three at a campaign stop where, “the old shaky-jowled Nixon came through,” before shifting into *The Speech* and regaining his composure.

Several observable tells are reported when the Nixon bus revises the schedule to include a stop at a black owned office and retail complex where an uncomfortable candidate, “rubbed his sweating palms together,” eager to offer some advice to his host, a local member of the clergy on hand to provide a tour of the new project. When Nixon did speak, he seemed unaware of the irony of explaining the need for blacks to achieve economic power. “. . . the Reverend just smiled and let The Man stand in the middle of a multi-million-dollar black-owned shopping center and deliver his high school civics lecture. ‘There’s one door you people haven’t gone through yet – and that’s the door of black capitalism.’” Steinem uses Nixon’s own words to create a palpably awkward interaction where the candidate, to connect with a new constituency, is clearly unaware of his inability to do so.

Steinem holds back no criticism of her colleagues in the press, who create stories of how Nixon visited “the slums” but not about the content of the interaction, therefore missing the real story. Editorializing about the need for perspective among her fellow

journalists, she reminds, “We expect a Kennedy to go to the slums, we don’t expect it of Nixon, but the needs of the slums remain the same.”

There is a day of respite in the travel tour, and Steinem uses the hiatus to provide her analysis of the candidate as over coached down to his hand gestures that do not always sync with his words. She reports that he is an intelligent man who works hard to become, “his idea of what a public man should be,” and in the process, has lost his interactive instincts. She asks, tongue in cheek, “if Nixon is alone in a room, is there anyone there?”

It is the travelogue, scene-by-scene style of Steinem’s narrative that causes the reader to feel as worn down as Steinem, who has moved from, “first re-entry phase emotionalism at slipping back into the past,” into academic anticipation of what a Nixon presidency will look like. And as the Nixon entourage travels west Steinem identifies those in the crowd who are still shopping, still deciding if Nixon is “really worse than Humphrey” or if he’s a “good, dependable American men can trust to keep down all the crime and violence.” She points out a lesson that may still not be fully understood by the press – which social identity of the candidate can be more memorable to a crowd than the political stand he takes. She notes an elderly Negro man who is carrying a Wallace sign. Apparently, the racist Wallace is his candidate because, “he can talk to back-country folks. At least we know where he stands.” In the clash between class and content, voters will sometimes choose the person they understand the best.

At this stage of the campaign the entourage is often greeted by a group of young women dressed patriotically who serve as The Nixonettes, providing cheerleader-type chants before and after Nixon speaking engagements, and are sometimes used to drown

out antiwar chants that emanate from the crowd. When the shouting breaks through at a Seattle rally, Nixon momentarily loses his composure in response to the protesters. Afterward the protesters will tell Steinem that they aren't wasting a lot of time trying to get through to Nixon, "He doesn't know what it's all about."

There is a team of handlers making sure that there is support for, "programming the candidate" in ways that were not present in the 1960 failed presidential bid. A team led by attorney John Mitchell managed the messaging to and from the campaign, and the campaign stops are mapped, "like the Tulip Route through Holland." This team of handlers keeps the press comfortable as they travel, updating schedules and answering questions so that the candidate does not have to be bothered. None of these press folks seem to get access to the candidate. Steinem reveals that in the press pool, the candidate is not a popular guy. Yet the press, the majority of whom Steinem reports are not likely to vote for Nixon, keep their opinions out of their reporting, and sometimes overcompensate to balance their personal preferences. Steinem's condemnation of this practice is a clear justification for her work in the style of New Journalism:

In a way, both (Bobby) Kennedy and Nixon have been written about inaccurately because of reporters' discomfort with personal feelings. Many of them loved Bobby, and so took care to conceal that fact with criticism. Many of them dislike Nixon, and so give his viewpoints their maximum weight. This desire to balance may be inevitable, but it's misleading. As we who learned who Kennedy was only after he died, we may find out who Nixon is only after his is President (p. 19).

Although Steinem concedes it is unlikely she will get any personal access to the candidate on this trip, she does manage to snare an interview with Pat Nixon. Steinem offers a detailed description of Mrs. Nixon, including her sanitized personal history and her prim posture. Her press colleagues had found it impossible to crack her boring, standard replies about her unflinching endorsement that her husband would be an excellent

president and deferring questions of policy to a quick, “You’ll have to ask Dick about that.” Her goal was to break through the polished veneer and find out what was beneath the surface. Steinem creates this scene with dialogue as the reader observes every smile, every gesture to smooth her skirt in her lap, every platitude that she loves the “ladies of the press” and that reporters have been “very kind” when writing about her. When Steinem expresses surprise that anyone would be universally pleased with their portrayal in the press, she notes, “a flicker of annoyance behind the hazel eyes; the first sign of life.” The reader has been given a glimpse that a minor eruption is imminent. After a litany of safe answers to repeated prodding for anything beyond her enjoyment of the theatre (provided it’s not too serious) and the close-knit nature of her family, Steinem asks what woman in history she most admires, and is told that she’d like to be like Mrs. Eisenhower because of her influence on “the youth.”

Steinem presses now, explaining that she was a young person during the Eisenhower years and that she felt no influence on the youth by Mrs. Eisenhower. Pat paused before defending her position, noting that the former first lady was, “so brave all the time her husband was away at war.” The tension mounts as Steinem reports, “We eyed each other warily” before, “The dam broke. Not out of control but low-voiced and resentful, like a long accusation, the words flowed out.” In a lengthy monologue describing the hardships of her life – the early death of her parents, working her way through college and working while her husband was in service instead of, “doing nothing like everybody else. I haven’t just sat back and thought of myself or my ideas or what I wanted to do. . . I don’t have time to worry about who I admire or who I identify with. I’ve never had it easy. I’m not like all you . . . all those people who had it easy.” The

window to Pat Nixon's inner thoughts closes as abruptly as it opened, the campaign staff intervenes, the plane has landed, and Mrs. Nixon offers a cheerful goodbye and thank you for an enjoyable talk.

The Pat Nixon interview provides Steinem with the insight into the close connection between the Nixons – they have both cast themselves as outsiders in a world full of people who have had an easier road than theirs. Later Steinem and her press corps friends would jokingly try to identify humanizing characteristics of the candidate. The fact that this was difficult continued to trouble Steinem.

On the final leg of the journey, Steinem found herself in Tampa at a campaign rally where the usual montage of Nixonettes, balloons and confetti preceded Nixon and The Speech. As an ovation followed to the smiling, nodding candidate, a choir sang *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*.

This proved to be Steinem's watershed moment in the struggle to come to terms with her opinion of Nixon and the outcome of the election. As a colleague whispered that they shouldn't be playing that song because "it doesn't belong to them," the reader is reminded that just a few months before, the song became a touchstone to what had been lost. Reportedly Bobby Kennedy's favorite hymn, his widow had asked that it be sung at the memorial service in June of 1968. Steinem, in the auditorium, scanning the signs extolling policies that she holds in disdain as the crowd ignored the significance of that iconic anthem of loss, made her decision.

I discovered that, to my humiliation, I was crying. It suddenly seemed that we were surrounded by the enemy – by anti-life, conserving, neighbor-fearing people; or rather by good people whose neighbor-fearing instincts were being played upon – and that the enemy was going to win. Not just the election, which might not matter much, but the power to impose themselves, here and in many other countries where waves of reaction were beginning, for a long dark time to

come. I had got through funerals, Chicago, and most personal sadnesses dry-eyed, but this ridiculous rally in Tampa was too much. . . It wasn't the victory of one man or the death of another. It was the death of the future. And our youth, because we might be rather old before the conservers left, and compassionate men came back. (p. 25)

Steinem provides prime elements of New Journalism in the telling of this story, building the travelogue, adding a cast of characters with vivid dialogue, status details, and observations based on gender and race that create the ironic shift between the campaign and the mechanics of a campaign. Her characters are richly defined, and her stories within the story, especially notable in her embedded mini-interview of Pat Nixon, provide context to not only tell us what she sees, but what she believes her male colleagues do not see. The story is built to an emotional and evocative climax, providing both a personal and more global conclusion foreshadowed in the title of the article – he's still the old Nixon.

Beyond the elements of style, Steinem's choice of this story is personal, as illustrated by her opinion and journey to the conclusion. Her perspective permeates the story – we know early on that she is in the minority as a woman, if not as a democrat in a world of republicans. The reader is given the opportunity from this point of view to be an outsider peeking behind the curtain of the private world of a public figure.

Steinem continues to use literary journalism as a platform for her activism on behalf of issues of importance to her. Jane Kramer asked Steinem how she believes she can bring change to the causes that inspire her. "It's making connections, and using myself to listen, because you can't empower women without listening to their stories" (Kramer, 2015).

New York Magazine would be her primary publication outlet, until Ms. Magazine allowed her independence and editorial freedom. It should be noted, however, that Felker and company not only provided a medium for Steinem, but also for the sexist responses they generated, and Steinem was the recipient of sexist criticism that also made for interesting reading. Following are two letters sent to the Editor of New York:

July 29, 1968, reader Milos Dobroslavic of Manhattan wrote the following letter to the Editor:

Caught Gloria Steinem's appearance on the Tonight Show, and am forced to conclude that you're committing a personal bit of sadism upon we the faithful followers of NY mag. That anyone so visually tempting, appealing and satisfying should be limited to appearing in public (print, that is) in the Neanderthal guise of mere words is tantamount to an horrendous aesthetic crime. Please, Mr. Felker, unbend. Treat us to a centerfold, pull-out version of La Belle Steinem without words. It just so happens that I consider Miss Steinem a damn fine writer, but that, obviously, is a secondary consideration. (1969)

In early 1972, Manhattan socialite and advertising executive Phyllis Cerf would write to the Editor:

The composition by little Gloria Steinem (Ralph Nadar for President?" December 21) has all the brilliance of Nixon's Checkers Speech, but unfortunately Nixon had more influential friends. Isn't there some way to keep Miss Steinem out of trouble? She is nice-looking and does no harm so long as she doesn't take her little pen in her little hand; but she must not worry her pretty little head about matters like who is going to be President. Otherwise, *New York (magazine)* will look even less civilized than it does now. (1972)

Order and Chaos: Joan Didion and *The White Album*

Joan Didion is recognized as the only woman writer consistently included in studies of New Journalism (Hinrichs 2017). Marc Weingarten suggested that Didion's lack of recognition as a major contributor to New Journalism was due to her lack of exposure in publications best known for nonfiction (Weingarten 2005). While she wrote primarily for the Saturday Evening Post in the 1960s, her work encompassed the style of what came later to be known as New Journalism, and her female voice provided a unique perspective on the content she covered. Weingarten points out that New York Times reviewer Dan Wakefield, makes exactly that point in his 1968 review of Didion's collected essays, *Slouching Toward Bethlehem*:

Joan Didion is one of the least celebrated and most talented writers of my own generation. Now that Truman Capote has pronounced that such work may achieve the status of 'art,' perhaps it is possible for this collection to be recognized as it should be: not as a better or worse example of what some people call 'mere journalism,' but as a rich display of some of the best prose written today in this country (2005, p.123).

While present in the Tom Wolfe anthology, the artistry of her prose transcends the multiple genre of her work, providing a unique voice to each period of her life with honesty and clarity. Her use of literary devices in nonfiction writing is at the heart of her personal style. Perhaps New Journalism didn't influence Didion so much as the Didion style came to define New Journalism.

Didion was born in Sacramento, California in 1934 and her career would become inextricably linked to her California roots, even though she spent the first ten years of her life moving frequently because of her father's military service. The frequent relocations

left her with the lifelong feeling of being an outsider, as well as an unobtrusive personality that gave her an advantage as an interviewer. “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” (Ulin.2011).

Didion earned a Bachelor of Arts in English in 1956 at Berkeley and was selected to serve as a research inter at Vogue magazine as recipient of a college writing award (Houston and Lombardi, 2009). Didion left California to launch her professional career in New York City. For seven years she worked her way up the ladder at Vogue. During her time in the New York literary world, where she continued to feel like an outsider, she was introduced to John Gregory Dunne, a reporter for Time Magazine who would become her husband, muse and writing partner for almost forty years. Her work was published in Esquire, where it came to the attention of Clay Felker.

Didion’s unique literary style and use of the elements of fiction in her non-fiction writing made her a significant contributor to the New Journalism movement. One of the most productive writers of the time in multiple genre, she wrote in the style of New Journalism long before the movement was born. Didion’s work was frequently published in the regionally-focused New York Magazine, even after her departure from the East Coast. It is said that she spent her life explaining New York to Californians and California to New Yorkers. Felker would continue to publish Didion’s work in New York Magazine long after Didion and Dunne moved back to California. When Felker launched

New West Magazine in the style of New York, Didion would continue to be a frequent contributor.

It would be difficult to extricate the influence of the Dunne/Didion writing partnership from Didion's career in literary journalism. The couple worked together on projects that ranged from fiction to screenplays to works of political nonfiction and served as each other's primary editor. A prolific essayist, Didion is both praised and criticized for being self-focused in her writing, but her introspective view of the changing culture of the 1960s and 1970s is reflected through the literary devices incorporated in her interviews with celebrities like the Doors and July Collins, political activists, and offbeat characters that she found in her travels.

Didion's writing style can be traced back to her love of Ernest Hemingway and the time spent, as a reclusive child, studying words. Her literary career expanded far beyond her work in magazine writing, to novels, screenplays, essays and later in life, two highly successful memoirs, *The Year of Magical Thinking* and *Blue Nights*, which chronicle the journey of grief she traveled after the sudden death of her husband and her loss of her daughter.

Didion wrote a series of essays in the late 60s published later in the anthology, *The White Album*. This collection of personal stories about her encounters (more than interviews, they were in-depth encounters in the style of literary journalism) with newsmakers and celebrities juxtapose against the tapestry of her domestic life, marriage, and search for identity at a time of seismic cultural change. Just a little older than the youth generation that fascinated her, she clung to the orderly norms of homemaking,

entertaining, and genteel existence ingrained by her upbringing and customary in her generation, but the subject of her internal drama was the through line in her storytelling.

In keeping with the style of literary journalism, her stories about celebrities were not about celebrity, but about the ordinariness of the lives of the famous. She introduces the reader to Judy Collins fighting a municipal battle for land. She presents John Wayne as masculine icon through her star-struck observations of the ideal man. She visits The Doors as a gang of rag-tag, drugged up musicians wasting time and eating fast food. We follow stories of criminals like the Manson family, all the while aware of how surreal it is to be live a life that moves in such close proximity to violence – to touch such terror, such ugliness, such non-genteel stories.

Her words are creative and descriptive. Her narrative is personal. She begins in media res – always. Didion’s writing is a journey from her mind to the page via the pen; sharing doubts, fears, and sometimes with callous regard to others, behavior.

A student of words and language, her singular literary style incorporates the devices of New Journalism, but goes far beyond the customary definitions of the genre. Ultimately, her greatest successes and notoriety have come late in life, through her memoirs, as she poignantly chronicled the experience of loss at the death of her husband, and then her daughter, in “The Year of Magical Thinking” and “Blue Nights.” From 1963 to the present day Didion has produced works of fiction, nonfiction, screenplays and a Broadway play based on her 2005 memoir, *The Year of Magical Thinking*. Sorting through personal and environmental chaos are themes that run through her collective works. Now in her eighties and a resident of New York, Joan Didion remains both a recluse and a fertile writer.

Some claim that her timid and misanthropic personality type resulted in her subjects sharing intimacies just to break the awkwardness of experiencing an encounter with her as interviewer. Gloria Steinem questioned her public perception of frailty in a noted exchange with a friend on the way to interview Didion. Steinem, in an acerbic swipe, suggested that the interviewer ask Didion how, “Ask her how come, if she spends all her time crying and swimming and struggling to open a car door, she finds the energy to write so much?”

Didion eschews labels. She is a writer who refuses to parse her identity as just a novelist, just a playwright, just a journalist. The fact remains that during The New Journalism she was a successful and frequently published writer of literary nonfiction – well researched stories of real life filled with artful elements of style. She follows stories that engage her curiosity, if only out of fear: “I myself have always found that if I examine something it’s less scary.” (Dunne, G. 2017)

The White Album

The White Album is a masterpiece of contradiction – of the explicit in conflict with the implicit. Joan Didion uses several literary devices – dramatic tension, status details, metaphor, dialogue, song lyrics and immersion into her story - to weave together seemingly unrelated events, linking her observations and her personal struggles in this forty-page essay illuminating the experience of cultural change in California in the late 1960s. The fifteen-segment story is woven together in both content and style by a writer whose work serves as a remarkable model of literary nonfiction in the style of New Journalism.

This title chapter of *The White Album*, published in 1979 and drawn from six previously published magazine articles and columns she wrote for *The Saturday Evening Post*, reveals Joan Didion as a conflicted reporter of culture, tenaciously seeking a means to put in order a disordered culture, and finding none. Her personal struggles, woven throughout the piece, become the metaphor for the social revolution she seeks to put in order. Didion's essay coalesces around the question of chicken or egg -have her personal battles been complicated by the world, or is teetering on the edge of breakdown the only fitting response to a world gone mad? She captures the spirit of New Journalism by reporting on the elements of chaos but offering her observations on the connective tissue that would ordinarily illuminate meaning but sees none.

Her timeline jumps back and forth between events taking place primarily in the period of 1967 to 1969. The non-linear story line is just the first of many stylistic obstacles the reader must navigate in search of the expected narrative. That it is difficult to find is precisely the intent. Artistically, Didion creates a play on the theme of chaos by chopping the narrative flow into bits that the brain strives, but fails, to easily put together sequentially.

Writer and critic Hilton Als, interviewed in the 2017 documentary, *Joan Didion: The Center Will Not Hold*, described Didion's take on culture as complex. "You couldn't make a cohesive narrative about the times, because the times weren't cohesive. So, she found this way to make a verbal record of the times" (2017).

The essay opens with personal expectations based on experience. The narrative is about survival, but it isn't working out that way. Reality has let her down during the period of 1966 to 1971, when the observable world fails to provide a coherent narrative.

Through vivid description, first from a distance, proceeding into details of her nervous system and the subsequent breakdown of her physical and mental health, Didion creates the dissonance that is both real and serves as a metaphor for the inexplicable societal chaos she observes in subsequent sections of the essay. The impulses of her nervous system fail to connect successfully. The center will not hold. The body and mind become representations of cultural disorder. The reader sits with the writer as she reviews the results of her own psychological tests juxtaposed against her experiences in the world, teasing out her hypothesis that illness seems an understandable response to chaos:

By way of comment I offer only that an attack of vertigo and nausea does not now seem to me an inappropriate response to the summer of 1968” (p 15). It is later in the essay that the illness will be named as multiple sclerosis, a disease “usually associated with telethons” (p. 47).

Didion introduces her home as a character in the story. The big house on Franklin Street has a history, and the reader begins to understand that the house she lives in, like the body she lives in, like the world she lives in, was built for a purpose other than what it now serves. In minute detail we learn of the broken windows, abandoned tennis court and peeling paint as signs of decay in the house, and we learn that the decay is not just internal, it is external. The neighborhood has changed from a once prestigious ambassador’s row to, “a senseless-killing neighborhood.” (p 15). Didion has set the stage for terror and violence, even as she suggests that the assets of the house (many rooms, high ceilings) call to her in a way that makes her feel that she should live in the house indefinitely with her husband and small child. She takes us out the door on a tour of the neighbors, into the story of the 1968 Ramon Novarro murder, which took place “not too

far from my house”. Readers of Didion know (and she explains in the remote language of her psychological test results) that murder is a frequent topic of writing; a topic that fascinates and ignites her desire to get inside a story. The reader is with her as she clips news stories and reads court accounts about the Ferguson brothers, Robert and Thomas Scott, who are accused and ultimately convicted of the crime. She reveals that she never met the Ferguson brothers, but:

I read the transcript (of the murder trials) several times, trying to bring the picture into focus which did not suggest that I lived, as my psychiatrist report had put it, ‘in a world of people moved by strange, conflicted, poorly comprehended and, above all, devious motivations’ (p. 18)

It is here that Didion lays down the silk thread – the fiber that is both tenuous and connective of the stories in *The White Album*, by telling us of her connection to a principle witness in another gruesome and seemingly random murder of higher profile – the Tate/LaBianca murders, which had happened in the same neighborhood just a few months earlier. She is connected to that story, but the connective tissue is tenuous, and the ability to craft a meaningful narrative, she claims, escapes her. Even as she claims an inability to put the pieces together, she is doing so for the reader, left to conclude that it is not crazy to feel crazy when crazy things happen. She spins from the murder trials to a personal observation, noting that, although she reads gruesome murder trial notes, it is the Irish blessing in the home of her mother-in-law that gives her “a physical chill” (p 19). The verse invites us to “. . . bless each door that opens wide, to stranger as to kin.” (p 18), presenting the contrast of the intruders, the Ferguson brothers, who were the strangers at the door of Ramon Navarro. Of Charles Manson and his minions, who were the strangers at the door of Sharon Tate. And of the strangers who visit and sometimes inhabit her 28-

bedroom decaying house: “In the big house on Franklin Avenue many people seemed to come and go without relation to what I did. I knew where the sheets and towels were kept but did not always know who was sleeping in every bed. I had the keys but not the key.” (p 19).

The reader is invited on a trip to interview the band The Doors. It is spring 1968 – the murders have yet to happen for those keeping a timeline. Her interest in the Doors – a band she finds interesting because of their professed embrace of sex and death in lyric poetry – subjects her psychological profile indicates serve as obsessions for her as well. She is waiting for the arrival of Jim Morrison, and the account by Didion of the anticipation and the anticlimax is a *Waiting for Godot* experience. She now sits uncomfortably on the floor in a rehearsal room filled with band technicians, “a couple of girls”, and three of the four band members. “There was a sense that no one was going to leave the room, ever.” But she finds The Doors engaging, from their sexualized doom-filled lyrics, to Jim Morrison’s uniform of vinyl pants with no underwear – a detail repeated on multiple occasions. She describes Morrison, as well as the scenic details of a too-cold and too-bright room filled with half-eaten bags of, “hard-boiled eggs and chicken livers and cheeseburgers and empty bottles of apple juice and California rose”, the dialogue that expresses a laid-back yet frustrated group getting tired of waiting, and a lack of conclusion, in such vivid detail that the reader can almost smell the room. Didion positions herself in the background, but nevertheless in the room, recorder of the strangely ordinary yet compelling experience. As in the rest of the essay, the reader is left to draw her own conclusions.

After claiming to like the Doors, and leaving an unfinished story, the reader is left to find meaning in the encounter. Didion talks about the distance she observes between reality and the world of musicians, who are now a part of her social circle. Musicians are a breed apart. Musicians have no sense of time. Musicians have no sense of purposeful action and live as a pack, rarely traveling without an entourage – an entourage that she sees from the inside of her own home, while remaining an outsider in spirit. Didion, with a lack of judgment but a sense of disdain, describes how John and Michelle Phillips stop to pick up a friend on their limo ride to the hospital for the impending birth of their daughter.

The arrest of activist and Black Panther Huey Newton catches Didion's fascination in the media in late 1967 and remains a fascination through his trial in 1968. Newton was charged with the murder of an Oakland policeman in an incident that also put Newton in the hospital with a gunshot to the stomach. Rather than an account of the incident (which remains an issue of contention even after Newton's death in 1989)² Didion focuses on the pomp and circus that surround Newton because of his larger presence as a leader of the Black Panthers, and the contrast between the revolutionary rhetoric he espoused in public with the smiling, soft-spoken, educated 25-year old man she observed when she visited the Alameda County Jail, where Newton was held

² Huey Newton was convicted of voluntary manslaughter for the death of officer John Frey. A second officer was on the scene and wounded by three non-fatal gunshots. Two years after Newton was sentenced to prison the conviction was overturned, and after two hung juries Newton was acquitted of the charges. Reports of what happened in the early hours of October 28, 1967 remain a question. Newton reported that the two officers got into one another's line of fire, and that the second officer fired the fatal shots at Frey during a scuffle. Newton biographer Hugh Pearson asserts that shortly before his death, Newton claimed to have intentionally shot John Frey. Newton earned a Ph.D. in social philosophy in 1980. In the early morning hours of August 22, 1989, he was found dead of a gunshot wound in the Oakland neighborhood where John Frey was killed. (NY Times obituary)

awaiting trial. “He seemed . . . an extremely likeable young man, engaging, direct and I did not get the sense that he had intended to become a political martyr” (p.29).

Didion describes an orchestrated political swirl surrounding the young Newton. The protests surrounding his arrest are managed by his attorney and the other leaders of the Panthers for a calculated purpose – a manipulation of narrative picked up later in the essay. As often is the case, Didion fixates and concludes on an element of the court testimony where she finds dissonance between the language and reality. In the court record, the witness testimony of the intake nurse in the emergency room on the night of the Frey shooting, which seems to establish the dissonance of a young “Negro fellow” (p.33) becoming agitated when asked for an insurance card before being seen for his own gunshot wound – a clash of class and culture the young man as an outsider to the system. The mythology of the narrative is shattered for Didion when she learns that Newton had a health insurance card and the clash was for show.

Didion pursues another interview with Black Panther leadership when she visits the home of Eldridge Cleaver in 1968. Screened before entry to the apartment, an invasive process described in detail, Didion finds the Eldridge home not unlike her own in many ways – filled with the sounds of food being prepared, music, and filled with people in conversations over the phone and with one another. Perhaps she expected otherwise. Cleaver’s memoir, *Soul on Ice*, was to be released that day, and Didion describes chatting with Cleaver as a, “not unusual discussion between writers, with the difference that one of the writers had his parole officer there and the other had stood out on Oak Street and been visually frisked before coming inside” (p.34).

Didion jumps to a personal disclosure that she has difficulty keeping track of time. She details her reporter's packing list which she tells us prepared her for any audience and ready to move at a moment's notice but failed to remember to pack a watch. She recounts obsessive behavior calling family and hotel clerks to tell her the time. Drawing the reader to a conclusion while claiming to draw no conclusion, she offers a revealing look at herself through minute detail, where once again the reader sees the image of the key and time,

I had skirt, jerseys, leotards, pullover sweater, shoes, stockings, bra, nightgown, robe, slippers, cigarettes, bourbon, shampoo, toothbrush and paste, Basis soap, razor, deodorant, aspirin, prescriptions, Tampax, face cream, powder, baby oil, mohair throw, typewriter, legal pads, pens, files and a house key, but I didn't know what time it was. This may be a parable, either of my life as a reporter during this period or of the period itself. (p.36)

Didion's account of her own anxiety moves from time to place as she recounts an emotional breakdown while driving. It is illustrative of the breakdown described in the opening piece of the *White Album*, as she takes the reader across the Carquinez Bridge, driving with eyes closed to impel herself forward out of professional obligation and seeing no alternative. Inside the car with her, the reader is offered minute detail of the loud music on the radio, the rain outside the rented car, and her internal battle to keep at bay an anxiety attack prompted by her fixation on a line from a poem by Ezra Pound³. Didion describes the words as having "no significance" (p.36) but nonetheless works to drive them out of her mind as if waking from a stubborn nightmare. The scenic details, the songs on the radio, the landmarks passing by, place the reader inside the car. Her fear

³ The Pound poem is only two lines long: "The apparition of these faces in the crowd: Petals on a wet, black bough." Didion has become fixated on the second line.

of an inability to drive across the upcoming bridge creates a tension. Didion moves forward because she sees no option to abandon the trip and has promises to keep, and because no other choice makes any more sense.

When race-motivated protests transform to the issue of “Disorder (as) its own point,” (p.37) Didion travels to San Francisco State College, the destination of her trip across the Carquinez Bridge. Expecting to cover a bit of the revolution in November of 1968, she reports up front that, “in some not at all trivial sense, the set is wrong.” (p.38) She suggests that Evelyn Waugh might be better suited to the dissonance of the place.

The Waugh reference serves as both a status reminder (like the Ezra Pound reference earlier) of her own upper-class education, but also allies her with a fellow writer whose own life was defined by examples of dissonance and cynicism. Contrasts abound in the physical description and full dialogue in this recounting of a college campus that has been shut down due to planned protests and talk of a student takeover of yet another California college campus. Yet here the mood is calm, the scenery described as a “pastel campus” and the actions of individuals “off key” for a revolution (p.38). She describes the atmosphere at the college not as a dangerous powder keg, but as a place of collegiality between administrators and “radicals” – a place whose climate “was that of a musical comedy about college life,” (p.39) staging scripted press conferences featuring attractive and affluent young California kids in a wealthy town who took up the revolution in solidarity with the Black Student Union. Start the revolution.

The ground shifts under Didion’s feet in August of 1969, when her amid her ordinary goings-on, cooking and entertaining and music – a life she thought was “simple and sweet” (p.41), the news breaks of the murders of Sharon Tate Polanski and others. As

the facts emerge about the number dead, the perpetrators, and the motivations, her greatest impression is the most unsettling. No one seems particularly surprised.

Didion, ever the chaser of gritty crime stories, visits the Sybil Brand Institute for Women to visit Linda Kasabian, who is being held in protective custody as a key witness in the murder trial of Charles Manson and the others accused of the 1969 Tate-LaBianca murders. Kasabian, a member of the Manson family who was present at the brutal murders, became a witness for the state. From the time of her incarceration through the time of her testimony she was interviewed by Didion, who reports that she went to I. Magnin to purchase the dress Kasabian wore to testify. Clothing once again becomes a character identifier, and from this point forward a more prominent tie that binds together *The White Album*. which came to represent for her the point at which the expected narrative disappeared. It is no surprise that the inspiration for this essay collection came from the Beatles album released in 1968 – an album of dissonance in an amalgam of musical styles, and a character in the Manson murders.

Didion returns to unify the piece through metaphor in section twelve, returning to the medical metaphor of the nervous system and its desire to survive. Her tone is explanatory, not conclusive, as she describes how the nervous system is able to rewire itself when there is damage in order to survive. This section, likely written retrospectively in the later 1970s when the essay was readied for publication, reveals the inner process of the writer piecing together the narrative. She identifies descriptions of clothing as a through line that weaves together this tapestry from 1963 to 1970 with status details and imagination in a section that is uniquely multidimensional:

On the morning of John Kennedy's death in 1963 I was buying, at Ransohoff's in San Francisco, a short silk dress in which to be married. A few years later this dress of mine was ruined when, at a dinner party in Bel-Air, Roman Polanski accidentally spilled a glass of red wine on it. Sharon Tate was also a guest at the party, although she and Polanski were not yet married. On July 27, 1970 I went to I. Magnin in Beverly Hills and picked out, at Linda Kasabian's request, the dress in which she began her testimony about the murders at Sharon Tate Polanski's house on Cielo Drive. "Size 9 Petite," her instructions read. "Mini but not extremely mini. In velvet if possible. Emerald green or gold. Or: A Mexican peasant-style dress, smocked or embroidered." She needed a dress that morning because the district attorney, Vincent Bugliosi, had expressed doubts about the dress she had planned to wear, a long white homespun shift. "Long is for evening," he had advised Linda. Long was for evening and white was for brides. At her own wedding in 1965 Linda Kasabian had worn a white brocade suit. Time passed, times changed. Everything was to teach us something. At 11:20 on that July morning in 1970 I delivered the dress in which she would testify to Gary Fleischman, who was waiting in front of his office on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. He was wearing his porkpie hat and he was standing with Linda's second husband and their friend, both of whom were wearing long white robes. Long was for Bob and Charlie, the dress in the I. Magnin box was for Linda. The three of them took the I. Magnin box and got into Gary Fleischman's Cadillac convertible with the top down and drove off in the sunlight toward the freeway downtown, waving back at me. I believe this to be an authentically senseless chain of correspondences, but in the jingle-jangle morning of that summer it made as much sense as anything else (p. 45).

Didion recounts an interaction with a man she only describes as a Mormon hotel manager, who asks her what the point of dying might be if you don't plan to go to heaven in your own body and on a first-name basis will your family. Preserving this interaction to reflect upon later, she suggests that it is a riddle for the times.

Didion finally confronts her diagnosis with multiple sclerosis. She explains the feeling of learning that her body, as well as her mind, were under siege was akin to opening the door to a stranger to, "find that the stranger did indeed have a knife." This account, she asserts out loud, was merely another "story without a narrative" and yet was a link to the entire narrative.

In 1972 Didion and Dunne left the “senseless killing” neighborhood of Hollywood and moved to Malibu, leaving behind her first-hand contact with these stories that defined the late 1960s for her. By way of epilogue she offers that Eldridge Cleaver moved to Algeria, that Linda Kasabian settled in New Hampshire. Convicted murderer Paul Ferguson won a fiction writer’s contest while in prison, noting that writing helped him reflect. She shares that she and Roman Polanski are godparents to the same child.

Didion poses the conundrum of how to make sense of a senseless time through writing, yet she has answered her own query in the often-quoted first sentence of the essay. “We tell ourselves stories in order to live”. In a deftly woven tapestry of seemingly unrelated stories that reflect her experiences in the late 1960s, Didion has used her pen to illustrate the anarchy of cultural conflict. She parallels the disorder inside and outside of her body. She claims to draw no conclusions, taking the reader through a series of observations about her life and work from a point of view that is at the same time remote and deeply internalized. The reader feels the vertigo, experiences the confusion, and considers Didion’s hopelessness as if companion inside the head of a loner.

She immerses herself in each of a wide variety of subjects sought out because of a possibly unhealthy interest in them and taking no responsibility for the selections as more significant than that. Her choices of subject are tied together by personal connective tissue – her home, her family, her phobias. But even as she professes that these threads of stories remain without meaning, and that reflection has not offered an understandable narrative, she has deftly woven together stories compiled independently that offer a collective disorder. It is her attempt to grasp meaning from the meaningless violence, irony and pain of her observations of the late sixties that completes the picture, even as it

is abhorrent. It is that internal struggle that resonates with each reader who seeks to find patterns that provide meaning.

Didion manipulates the time sequence to her advantage, provides direct dialogue and vast status details from the shocking to the ordinary to create lively characters and to tell the reader small things about well-known people that humanize them. There are moments of cinematic detail that provide the reader with a multi-sensory experience – to smell, feel, see, hear and taste the stories side-by-side with Didion. Clearly well-researched and elaborately personal, the essay employs the elements of New Journalism in an artful manner.

Conclusions

“Everyone enters the circle, but from different doors.” (Herr, 1977)

The New Journalism was a movement reflecting cultural change, not just a style of writing. It was not created solely by men. Every writer brought a unique point of view, and it is time that history reflected the history of the movement, inclusive of the women who were there.

The richness of content and style seen in the writing of Gail Sheehy, Gloria Steinem and Joan Didion provides evidence of New Journalism’s rule-breaking narrative-embracing style of writing by women who played a prominent role in the nonfiction magazine writing of the time.

Equally significant, their writing provides a point of view unique to women that has not been well documented in the historical canon of New Journalism.

Recognition of Style

It is because New Journalism provided coverage of cultural change in a new way, to a new readership, and with fewer restrictive rules than traditional journalism that it was engaging and successful. Gerbner reminds us that to live in a world made of stories is to be uniquely human – it is our ability to create narratives that sets us apart from other species (Gerbner, 1999). More than a style of writing, New Journalism engaged, through storytelling, the significance of events during the tumultuous late 1960s and early 1970s, at a time of rapid societal change. Literary elements such as direct quotations of dialogue, cinematic construction of timelines and detailed scene-by-scene story development, status

details, immersion of the writer in the story, subjective points of view, and well-developed characters were employed to bring the reader into the stories, and to create a shared experience between reader and writer. Through these devices, events became stories that provided context to better illuminate the political, economic, gender, racial and generational changes taking place in a tumultuous decade of American history.

Publications featuring New Journalism provided a platform for writers to find stories that resonated with their personal experiences. Clay Felker was notable in his encouragement of all writers to seek the unusual and interesting story, to explore beyond the boundaries of traditional journalism in pursuit of material that would get attention (Sheehy, 2014). The existing history of New Journalism is filled with stories about men and on subjects that have traditionally been part of the male identity. The Wolfe anthology is largely populated with stories of war, drunken men, drugs, crime, and the selling of a president. Where women exist in men's stories, they are portrayed two-dimensionally and defined by their service to men. Two contributions by women writers provide examples of more highly developed and nuanced observations of women, female characters that are multi-dimensional, and the inclusion of status details, dialogue, vivid description of women and men.

Broadening Perspective

Women have always made history as much as men have, not "contributed" to it, only they did not know what they had made, nor did they have the tools for interpreting their own experience. What is new at this time is that women are now fully claiming their past and shaping the tools by which to interpret it (Lerner, 1977)

Verandah Porche was correct. Women in the 1960s and 1970s built successful and significant careers as writers, willing to do the gritty work of chasing the stories of characters both ordinary and offbeat in a quest to bring truth to journalism. They were frequently published, widely read and commercially successful. They managed to do so in a male-dominated field at a time when sexism was open and rampant in the workplace and in society at large. Narrative content analysis of representative writing of three of those women – Joan Didion, Gaily Sheehy and Gloria Steinem, illustrates the style, content and perspective that influence the history of New Journalism.

“Theorists have fallen into observational bias. Implicitly adopting the male life as the norm, they have tried to fashion women out of masculine cloth.” (Gilligan, 1982)

Recognizing the significant participants in the evolution of the New Journalism movement who were women corrects a significant omission and broadens the narrative on which the history of the era has been built. The fight for women’s rights in society and the changes occurring as gender inequality became part of the national conversation were not only different stories, but stories told differently by men and women. Shining a light on these differences provides a more complete view of society and the changes that were taking place in the late 1960s - changes that were uniquely chronicled by the women and men at the forefront of the New Journalism movement. It is important to note the writers who embraced literary nonfiction who have been neglected from history’s light because of gender, but even more significant to note that it is not just that the women were there,

but that they brought different stories than men, wrote from a different point of view in the cultural hierarchy than men, and wrote about subjects overlooked by men. This broader awareness of the writing of female journalists not only provides a fuller view of the world than has been chronicled by the male-reported history of the time, but provides context of the roadblocks faced by women in the workplace, whose contributions have, by omission, been relegated to a less significant, less important, and less powerful influence than was the case.

The fact that these omissions exist reflects historical observational bias – an implicit acceptance of male experience as the norm, and women’s experiences as outside the circle of the mainstream. In fact, according to Gerda Lerner, that mainstream is a mirage:

Everything that explains the world has in fact explained a world that does not exist, a world in which men are at the center of the human enterprise and women are at the margin helping them. Such a world does not exist – never has (Lerner, 1977).

Future Research

This thesis is a small slice of a very large pie. It is beyond the research objective of this thesis to provide an exhaustive list of all women who wrote in the style of New Journalism, or to identify other contributors to the work of the New Journalism who were marginalized based on race. There is more that further research can identify about the contributions of women and men of color in New Journalism and throughout history. There is more to discover about women writing outside of the boundaries of New York-based magazines, writing stories for and about other places and people, both famous and

ordinary. There is more to learn about the history of women who have chronicled history through their writing in other parts of the world, and of those who continue to do so.

The gender focus of this thesis is not intended to presume that all women or all men share uniform perspectives on culture. Prior research on gender voice and history, as well as those who have specifically studied women in New Journalism, supports the goal that additional information highlighting the work of women provides a strong foundation upon which to build a more robust understanding of society from the point of view of those marginalized in the 1960s. There is more that further exploration of the connection between these three women's writing and the timeline of their own liberation and awakening to new social rules of behavior between men and women would reveal about the value of their voices in creating a more complete history.

There is more future researchers can do to broaden our understanding of societal change by cultivating a larger, more inclusive history of writers whose work is not recognized in the historical record of a time, a place, or a movement.

Susan Orlean spoke in 2012 on the ways in which artifacts of literary journalism by women can be found outside of the mainstream media publications that frequently serve as the foundation of media scholars. Diaries, journals, religious tracts, travel writing, and periodicals generated from social movements are filled with the nonfiction stories of ordinary women who serve as chroniclers of societal change that broaden the lens of the public sphere (Orlean, 2012).

Beyond journalism there is more to explore about the role women will play as the balance of power changes in the bedroom, the home, the workplace, and the government. Communication scholars can find avenues of exploration untapped to record the voices of

ordinary women who have come of age in a world where the rules of engagement between men and women continue to evolve. In the past year the “Me Too” movement has changed the narrative of our cultural understanding of sexual harassment and assault to create new norms of more appropriate behavior. Future research may seek to identify other cultural contributions overlooked by the blind eye cast by male writers on all things female. Theorists will continue to explore how men and women process communication differently.

Every writer, male or female, brings a unique voice and a point of view to the work of translating observed experiences into the cultural conversation. Classifying the writing of successful female writers of literary nonfiction, Gail Sheehy, Gloria Steinem and Joan Didion, in the canon of New Journalism alongside the male pioneers of the genre increases recognition and exposure to more diverse points of view, and therefore changes the cultural perception of reality.

It is my hope that by shining a light on their unique contributions, we are reminded that when we overlook the voices of women we are missing half the story. Broader exposure to the writers of literary journalism has a cumulative effect on our perception of reality. Like a drop of water that falls on a flat surface and initially goes unnoticed, the surface has changed.

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ⁱ **The individual magazine articles that provide the content from which The White Album was drawn were published as follows (citations listed above):**

Waiting for Morrison, Saturday Evening Post, 3/9/1968, Vol 241, issue 5

Black Panther, Saturday Evening Post, 5/4/1968, Vol 241, issue 9

Migraine, Saturday Evening Post, 6/29/1968, Vol 241, Issue 13

On Being a Cop Hater, Saturday Evening Post, 8.24.1968, Vol 241, Issue 17

The Revolution Came, Saturday Evening Post, 1/25/1969, Vol 242, Issue 2

Going Home, Saturday Evening Post, 6/3/1967, Vol 240, issue 11