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Hunter S. Thompson and gonzo journalism: A research guide.

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Hunter S. Thompson & Gonzo Journalism: A Guide to the Research

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Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to identify and annotate resources related to Hunter S. Thompson and Gonzo Journalism.

Design: Numerous searches were performed in online library catalogs, online databases, and web search engines to identify monographs, journal articles, multimedia titles, and websites relevant to the topic. Resources located in the searches were then reviewed and annotated by the author and selected for inclusion in the paper based on their relative quality.

Findings: A great deal of popular work has been devoted to Thompson and Gonzo Journalism, but also a surprising amount of scholarly analysis. Most primary source material is now available in monographic form, and critical literature is fairly evenly distributed between journal articles and monographs. Search results for Thompson and Gonzo Journalism are often complicated by a number of factors, but these can be compensated for by using search limiters.

Research Limitations: Because of the sheer volume of work, scholarly and popular, devoted to Thompson and Gonzo Journalism, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive evaluation of all of the materials on the topic. While every attempt was made to be inclusive, the goal of the guide was to include the best sources on the topic, and some resources were reviewed but not included because of quality issues. A number of un-annotated bibliographies are referenced that would be helpful in directing readers to additional resources not included here.

Originality/Value: Although there are bibliographies of Thompson's work, none are annotated or prepared with academic researchers in mind. In addition, none of the bibliographies located in the course of researching the paper attempted to identify academic journal literature related to Thompson or Gonzo Journalism.

Keywords:

Hunter S. Thompson

Gonzo Journalism

Annotated Bibliography

Bibliography

Gonzo

Introduction & Scope

Gonzo Journalism is a style of reporting in which the journalist is far more than a detached observer of the events being recorded. It rejects objectivity in favor of vivid depictions of events experienced, subjectively, by the reporter. The Gonzo Journalist is part of the story, by coincidence, or a conscious choice to participate in shaping the events and outcome. Fictional elements sometimes co-exist with non-fictional elements in Gonzo Journalism. Gonzo Journalism, and the underlying concept of "Gonzo," have become part of our modern lexicon. "Gonzo" has come to mean that the creator is not absent from their creation. Because it adds value for the audience, the creator's role in the story is highlighted rather than marginalized.

Hunter S. Thompson is the father of Gonzo Journalism. The article "The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved," published in *Scanlan's Monthly*, in June of 1970, and illustrated by Ralph Steadman, is often considered to be the first true example of the style. Thompson is a popular author who has not always been taken seriously by academia, but a solid body of critical literature that addresses his work, style, and contributions to literature, journalism, and popular culture has grown over time. Gonzo Journalism, as a form, has also received attention from scholars, but is most often referenced when discussing larger movements, such as The New Journalism.

This guide to research was created to lead students and researchers to the most useful sources available on Hunter S. Thompson and Gonzo Journalism. While there has been a good deal written on both subjects, it can be a difficult topic to research because of varying degrees of

source quality, a wide variety of source types, large search returns, and the interdisciplinary nature of the topic.

Many search terms related to Gonzo Journalism are problematic. While "Gonzo" seems to be a unique word at first glance, it is not as uncommon as one might imagine. Gonzo is also a surname, a Muppet, a Japanese animation studio, and a Japanese Buddhist monk who lived in the Heian Period. To complicate matters further, use of the term "Gonzo" in everyday language has grown and mutated considerably in the past 30 years. The term is now often thrown around quite carelessly by advertisers and writers attempting to evoke a spirit of craziness and unpredictability. Some examples of other "Gonzo" practices include Gonzo Management, Gonzo Religion, and somewhat surprisingly, Gonzo Pornography. Searches for "Hunter S. Thompson" are equally problematic, more so in databases and search engines than in library catalogs. Dr. Thompson's death was widely publicized in the media, so locating information about his later works often requires the use of date limiters to filter out obituaries and retrospective biographical articles.

Bibliographies of Thompson's work exist, but none of those identified in the process of preparing this guide were annotated or prepared for students and researchers. Please refer to the "Bibliographies" section for more information. The materials included in this guide were located by performing searches in online library catalogs, databases, and internet search engines. Materials were then reviewed by the author, firsthand, for inclusion into the guide and to construct annotations. This guide should not be considered comprehensive, but would be helpful for researchers, students, and librarians interested in Gonzo Journalism or Hunter S. Thompson. New titles about Dr. Thompson have been published with increasing frequency

since his death in 2005. Special care was taken to include both new and older titles. This guide includes materials that would be of value to both academic researchers and those with a general interest in the topic.

Bibliographies

Unfortunately, no bibliographies exist for Gonzo Journalism, and only a few bibliographies have been compiled that cover Thompson's work. While not all of Thompson's writings are representative examples of Gonzo Journalism, these bibliographies are the best way to identify and track down examples of the style in their original formats. Many of the other items included in this guide contain brief bibliographies, but these three were singled out because of their comprehensiveness.

Winship, K. (1979), "Bibliography of Works by Dr. Hunter S. Thompson", in Thompson, H.S., *The Great Shark Hunt*, Summit Books: New York, NY, pp. 591-597.

Winship, K. (1979), "Bibliography of Works on Dr. Hunter S. Thompson", in Thompson, H.S., *The Great Shark Hunt*, Summit Books: New York, NY, pp. 599-602.

Two bibliographies can be found at the end of *The Great Shark Hunt*. They are excellent sources for locating Thompson's early work in its original format and articles about Thompson. No other printed bibliographies measure up to Winship's. *The Great Shark Hunt* is arguably the best collection of Thompson's work as a Gonzo Journalist, and the inclusion of two bibliographies only adds to the title's value.

"Bibliography of Hunter S. Thompson – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia", available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibliography_of_Hunter_S._Thompson (accessed 20 April 2009).

Wikipedia's bibliography of Thompson's work is extensive and certainly more current than those compiled by Winship in 1979. It includes all of the material he produced while writing for ESPN's Page 2, several other current periodicals, and a list of known but unpublished works. The traditional Wikipedia caveat applies here; while the information is helpful, it should not be considered flawless or authoritative. That being said, this is probably the most extensive Thompson bibliography in existence. The source material for the article is attributed to Joel Parham's *Hunter S. Thompson: A Bibliography*, compiled in 2006. The page also includes references to *Books in Print*, *OCLC Worldcat*, and a few other sources.

Dictionary & Encyclopedia Entries

There are few encyclopedia entries on Gonzo Journalism, even in large general reference encyclopedias. Surprisingly, many journalism encyclopedias do not cover the topic either. Some have entries on Thompson that briefly outline his contributions to the field while others devote a respectable amount of coverage and attention to detail. Many of the entries listed in this section contain brief bibliographies.

Applegate, E. (1996), *Literary Journalism: A Biographical Dictionary of Writers and Editors*, Greenwood Press, Westport, CN.

The most distinguishing feature of this title's entry on Thompson is its adherence to chronology. While its coverage is not as detailed as what can be found in the *20th Century American Literature* entry, it is useful because it tracks Thompson's career and the evolution of Gonzo Journalism. The entry is relatively complete, ending coverage in 1994, and includes a passage from Leonard Downie Jr.'s book, *The New Muckrakers*. It also contains a brief list of major works.

Klinkowitz, J. (1998), "New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel", in Schellinger, P., *Encyclopedia of the Novel*, Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, Chicago, IL, pp. 927-928.

This is a relatively short entry, but it is useful because it provides readers with a concise snapshot of New Journalism as a whole. It is easy to read, and includes references to a number of major works. Klinkowitz has written extensively on the genre, and can be considered something of an expert. The entry also includes references to other sections of the encyclopedia and a list of further readings.

Contemporary Authors. New Revision Series (2005) "Thompson, Hunter S(tockton) 1937(?) – (Raoul Duke)", Vol. 133, Gale Group, Detroit, MI, pp. 410-417.

This entry would be invaluable to researchers searching for an authoritative source of information on Thompson's career. The entry includes information on Thompson's personal life, career, affiliations, major works, film adaptations of his work, and a fairly robust section dedicated to critical commentary of his work and career. The entry also includes a bibliography of biographical and critical materials from other sources.

Paneth, D. (1983), "Thompson, Hunter S. (1939-)", *The Encyclopedia of American Journalism, Facts on File*, New York, NY, pp. 484.

This entry on Thompson provides a brief biography and a few quotes from *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. While short, the style of this entry is especially interesting in that it is written in a rambling, almost incoherent style, similar to some of the works of its subject. This entry is most useful as a quick overview from an authoritative source.

Oxford Dictionary of English (2003), 2nd Ed., Oxford University Press: New York, NY.

While *The Oxford Dictionary of English* entry provides only a brief definition of "Gonzo", having

an authoritative definition of the term could be helpful to researchers writing papers or dissertations.

Databases

The following databases were especially useful in searching for information on the topic. While "Gonzo" is typically the best search term to use to discover information on the topic, avoid performing keyword searches without applying appropriate limits.

Academic Search Premier, EBSCO Publishing, Ipswich, MA.

Coverage Varies - Updated Daily

Academic Search Premier is a general database that is useful when searching for information on Gonzo Journalism because the topic is inter-disciplinary in nature. It is helpful for locating both book reviews and scholarly articles related to the topic. It is often best to select the "full-text" box as it limits results and ensures that returns are available.

Internet Movie Database, IMDb.com Inc.

<http://www.imdb.com>

The Internet Movie Database's filmography of Thompson's work and appearances is extensive and authoritative. It would be helpful for researchers constructing multimedia presentations or for those who are curious to see if Dr. Thompson lives up to his reputation on video.

Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier Inc., New York, NY.

Coverage Varies - Updated Daily

Lexis-Nexis Academic is a useful database when searching for articles related to Gonzo Journalism or Dr. Thompson that have appeared in newspapers, popular magazines, and other

traditional news sources. Dr. Thompson's death was widely covered in the media. Consider limiting the date range when searching.

Literature Resource Center, Gale, Farmington Hills, MI.

Coverage Varies – Updated Daily

The Literature Resource Center includes three bibliographies for Thompson. The bibliographies vary in scope, coverage, and commentary. The bibliography from *Contemporary Authors Online* includes an extensive overview of Thompson's life, a number of suggested readings, and citations for selected periodical articles. The bibliography from the *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 185: American Literary Journalists, 1945-1995, First Series* is largely devoted to a biography of Thompson's life, and provides only a short list of his works and a few suggested readings. Finally, the bibliography from *Contemporary Literary Criticism* includes a brief summary of Thompson's life and critical reception to his writing. It is probably the most useful of the three bibliographies for locating critical commentaries, and has an extensive list of links to critical articles. Literature Resource center also includes a number of reviews and critical evaluations of Thompson's work.

ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, Proquest LLC, Ann Arbor, MI.

Coverage Varies - Updated Daily

ProQuest holds a number of dissertations on Hunter S. Thompson. Some focus on his contributions to literature and others on his influence in American popular culture. While the body of work devoted to Dr. Thompson is small compared to other authors, these dissertations suggest that his life and work have made a significant impact in a number of areas of scholarship.

Worldcat.org, OCLC, Dublin, OH.

<http://www.worldcat.org>

Worldcat is an invaluable tool for locating materials by or about Dr. Thompson because of its comprehensiveness and utility. Worldcat is not particularly useful for finding journal articles, but no other search engine can match its ability to identify relevant books and multimedia titles. Worldcat's ability to locate items at libraries in surrounding communities would be especially valuable for tracking down obscure titles.

Articles

Quite a bit of scholarly work has been directed towards Gonzo Journalism, although article titles often suggest that the work is specifically about Thompson. Some of the articles listed here are more academic, and dry, than others. Not all of the authors portray Gonzo Journalism in a positive light, but they have been included to provide counter-points to the more favorable articles.

Caron, J. E. (1985), "Hunter S. Thompson's 'Gonzo' Journalism and Tall Tale Tradition in America", *Studies in Popular Culture*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 1-16.

This is quite possibly the most enjoyable journal article on the list. It examines Thompson's work from the standpoint of America's tall tale tradition. Many of Thompson's major works are reviewed, most notably, *The Curse of Lono*. Thompson's Gonzo-style is analyzed within the framework of the tall tale tradition and his writing is compared to other famous American authors of the genre, including Mark Twain.

Green, J. E. (1975), "Gonzo", *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 9, pp. 204-210.

This article examines Gonzo Journalism and often draws comparisons to New Journalism and

the writings of Tom Wolfe. It also analyzes the choice of an artist, Ralph Steadman, over a traditional photographer for purposes of visual documentation. Green is often highly critical of Thompson and comes to the conclusion that Gonzo Journalism is losing steam as a style.

Overall, this is a well-detailed evaluation of Gonzo Journalism at the time of its publication.

Hellmann, J. (1979), "Corporate Fiction, Private Fable, and Hunter S. Thompson's Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72", *Critique*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 16-31.

In this article, Hellmann argues that Thompson's works, especially *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*, are unfairly judged by the same standards used to evaluate traditional journalists. He suggests that Thompson's work is something more than pure journalism.

Hellman points out that traditional journalists report only objective facts, but Thompson's work has added value. His conclusion is that Thompson includes personal feelings and experiences, from the narrator's point of view, alongside the events taking place, to give readers a better sense of the situation in question. Hellmann seems to understand and appreciate Gonzo Journalism in a way that most of the other critical authors do not.

Love, R. (2005), "A Technical Guide for Editing Gonzo: Hunter S. Thompson from the Other End of the Mojo Wire", *Columbia Journalism Review*, Vol. 44 No. 1, pp. 61-65.

Written by one of Thompson's former editors, this article allows readers to see an aspect of Gonzo Journalism that is often overlooked in other works, that of the editor who must deal with outrageous personalities and their demands. It includes some correspondences and gives readers a good idea of what it was like to work with Hunter S. Thompson. Although the article appeared in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, it is more fun than scholarly in tone.

Novoa, B. (1979), "Fear and Loathing on the Buffalo Trail", *MELUS*, Vol. 6 No. 4, pp. 39-50.

This article stands in stark contrast to Green's highly critical evaluation of Thompson and Gonzo Journalism. It includes a thorough analysis of Gonzo and provides readers with an explanation of how the style evolved over time. Novoa analyzes Thompson's writing across multiple works. Of all the journal articles that focus on Thompson and Gonzo Journalism, this is probably the most enlightening from an academic point of view.

Olsen, M. (1998), "The Weird Turn Pro: Fear, Loathing, and Gonzo Cinema", *Film Comment*, Vol. 34 No. 4, pp. 76-79.

In this review, Olsen addresses the film versions of *Where the Buffalo Roam* and *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. His article includes background information on Thompson and Gonzo Journalism, critical analysis of both movies, and musings on Hollywood's commercialization of Thompson and Gonzo.

Sickels, R. C. (2000), "A Countercultural Gatsby: Hunter S. Thompson's Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, the Death of the American Dream and the Rise of Las Vegas, USA", *Popular Culture Review*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 61-73.

This article focuses on the death of the American dream, manifested, in his view, by the success of Las Vegas. The author draws numerous parallels between *The Great Gatsby* and *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, Nick Carroway/Jay Gatsby and Raoul Duke, and West Egg and Las Vegas to construct his argument. Sickels suggests that at the end of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, Duke (Thompson), like Nick Carroway before him, has lost faith in the American Dream over the course of the novel.

Sugden, J. and Tomlinson, A. (1999), "Digging the Dirt and Staying Clean", *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 34 No. 4, pp. 385-397.

This article might seem out of place in this list, but is very enlightening because it argues that Thompson's Gonzo approach to reporting can be applied to sociological studies as an alternative to traditional objectivity. In the study, the authors advocate an investigative framework derived from Thompson's unconventional methods, including direct interaction with study participants. In some ways, it reinforces the idea that a Gonzo approach to journalism actually helps writers to get to the heart of the stories they are trying to cover.

Thompson, Hunter S. (1970), "The Kentucky Derby is decadent and depraved", *Scanlan's Monthly*, Vol. 1 No. 4, pp. 1-12.

Often considered to be the original work of Gonzo Journalism, this article is special for much more than cementing Thompson's somewhat dubious place in journalistic history. Written in the style that would later define his most famous works, *The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved* chronicles Thompson's first encounter with Ralph Steadman. The pair covers the Kentucky Derby in truly Gonzo fashion, by influencing the events of the story and causing as much chaos along the way as possible.

Tomony, P. (1983), "Gonzo", *American Speech*, Vol. 58 No. 1, pp. 73-75.

In this article, Tomony explores the origins and evolution of "Gonzo" in the American lexicon. No concrete conclusions are drawn as to the exact origin of the term, but the article is interesting and worth reading so that one can gain a better understanding of how Gonzo came to be part of our modern vocabulary. None of the dictionary entries or other articles reviewed provided a more comprehensive examination of the term.

Whitehead Jr., R. (1979). "The Gonzo Morality", *Columbia Journalism Review*, Vol. 18 No.3, pp. 71-72.

This article is a review of *The Great Shark Hunt*, but proves to be more than just a review upon examination. The author describes how he comes to view Thompson as something more than his public persona belies. Whitehead suggests that Thompson is a well-rounded writer, capable of employing many literary techniques and forms, and also that *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* can be interpreted as a tribute to *The Great Gatsby*.

Books

Books are the most commonly available sources of information on Gonzo Journalism. Many of Thompson's articles have been collected and reprinted as books, so they are definitely the easiest medium in which to locate actual examples of the style. Please keep in mind that many of these texts exist in multiple editions. Some of the titles in this section are representative of the Gonzo-style or provide insight into the genre. A great number of unauthorized biographies have been written about Thompson. Some of these titles were included here for readers and researchers interested in the man behind the style.

Carroll, J.E. (1993). *Hunter: The Strange and Savage Life of Hunter S. Thompson*, Dutton, New York, NY.

This book is an example of Gonzo Journalism, and also provides firsthand accounts of Thompson from many of his friends, family, and colleagues. Carroll attempts to provide insight into Thompson's personality and events that shaped his style. The writer created her own alter-ego, similar to Thompson's relationship with Raoul Duke, to narrate the story.

Dickstein, M. (1977), *Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties*, Basic Books, Inc., New York, NY.

Dickstein's book would be of interest to readers looking for insight into the culture of the 1960's, and especially valuable for researchers interested in New Journalism. The book's fifth chapter, *The Working Press, the Literary Culture, and the New Journalism*, provides a good explanation of the catalysts that led to the formation of New Journalism and in-depth analyses of some of the genre's most influential works and figures. Some attention is devoted to Thompson, but the chapter is more useful for gaining a sense of the larger movement that encompasses Gonzo Journalism.

Hartsock, J.C. (2000), *A History of American Literary Journalism: The Emergence of a Modern Narrative Form*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, MA.

This book is devoted to the history of American literary journalism, but spends a fair amount of time covering New Journalism. This title would be more useful for researchers looking for critical interpretations of New Journalism than those specifically interested in Gonzo Journalism, but the author does address Thompson's contribution to the genre. Hartsock suggests that the satire present in much of Thompson's work is so overt that it widens the gap between nonfictional subjective reporting and fiction rather than creating a synergy between observed factual information and subjective experience, the goal of other New Journalists. The author also draws parallels between Thompson and earlier writer E.E. Cummings.

Hellman, J. (1981), *Fables of Fact: The New Journalism as New Fiction*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, IL.

Hellman is one of the few critical writers who seems to fully understand Thompson. An entire chapter of the book, titled "Journalism and Parody: The Bestial Comedies of Hunter S.

Thompson", is devoted to an analysis of Thompson's work. Hellman examines Thompson's stylistic relationship to other new journalists and spends a great deal of text evaluating the significance of Thompson's on-page persona in various works. This book also includes a list of related primary and secondary sources, and should be considered invaluable to any Thompson scholar.

Klinkowitz, J. (1977), *The Life of Fiction*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, IL.

One chapter of Klinkowitz's book is devoted entirely to Thompson. While it is only a few pages long, the chapter is extremely detailed and complete, in terms scope and coverage, for the time it was written. This chapter draws from many different sources and provides insight into Thompson and Gonzo Journalism from the point of view of a literary critic. Klinkowitz argues that Thompson is not a journalist, or even a New Journalist, but a Superfictionalist.

Klosterman, C. (2005), *Killing Yourself to Live: 85% of a true story*, Scribner, New York, NY.

This book was included as an example of a contemporary Gonzo writer. As suggested by the title, this book is 85% true, with the other 15% devoted to something else. There are a number of similarities between Klosterman and Thompson. Klosterman is primarily a music critic for Spin magazine, but like Thompson, has covered sports for ESPN. His articles and books frequently incorporate quotes and imagery from other media, personal accounts of drug use, and he is never completely removed from the stories he tells.

Perry, P. (2004), *Fear and Loathing: The Strange and Terrible Saga of Hunter S. Thompson*, Thunder's Mouth Press, New York, NY.

Perry was Thompson's editor in 1981 for a story on the Honolulu Marathon, eventually published in *Running Magazine*. The events depicted in the article formed the basis for *The*

Curse of Lono. Perry's decision to write the book poisoned his relationship with Thompson who never contributed so much as an interview. This title does a very good job of covering all periods of Thompson's life in chronological order, from 1939-1955 in Louisville, through his formative years, to his time working with Perry in Hawaii. The book ends with a description of the court case involving Gail Palmer-Slater.

Steadman, R. (2006), *The Joke's Over: Bruised Memories: Gonzo, Hunter S. Thompson, and Me*, Harcourt, Orlando, FL.

Written by Thompson's long time partner in crime and illustrator, Ralph Steadman, this work provides a different point of view of many of Thompson's most famous works. The book includes quite a few plates of old photos and artwork, and a forward written by another old friend of Thompson's, Kurt Vonnegut. The book opens with a quote from Thompson, "Don't write Ralph. You'll bring shame on your family." This quote is quite an ironic choice as reviews of the book varied. Steadman's narrative begins when he first meets Thompson at the Kentucky Derby and covers their relationship through their last encounter.

Thompson, A. (2007), *The Gonzo Way: A Celebration of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson*, Fulcrum, Golden, CO.

This title was written by Dr. Thompson's widow, Anita. It includes a forward by Douglas Brinkley, editor of three of Thompson's collected works and a long-time friend. The book recounts many anecdotes, but the main thrust of the book is devoted to explaining the lessons related to writing, politics, and life learned by the author while living around Thompson. It includes many quotes, from Thompson and others. As a whole, the book is fairly short, but good reading for fans of the man and his philosophy.

Thompson, H.S. (1973), *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*, Straight Arrow Books, San Francisco, CA.

This book is a collection of articles, originally published in *Rolling Stone*, which chronicles Thompson's coverage of the 1972 U.S. presidential campaign. It was written over the course of a year, and is special because it marks the beginning of Thompson's obsession with American politics in print. Arguably, it is second only to *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* in terms of popularity.

Thompson, H.S. (1971), *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream*, Vintage Books, New York, NY.

Anyone interested in Gonzo Journalism or Thompson should read this book, as it is his most famous and widely-read work. Paradoxically, it is not the finest example of Gonzo Journalism, as the book is closer to a novel than a work of journalism. Nonetheless, it is the pinnacle of the Gonzo writing style, and is loosely based on actual events of a trip that Thompson and his lawyer, Oscar Zeta Acosta, took to Las Vegas.

Thompson, H.S. (1967), *Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga*, Random House, New York, NY.

While not the most famous, *Hell's Angels* is quite possibly Thompson's greatest work as a journalist. It is possible to argue that the book was the catalyst for Thompson's eventual fame as a writer, and it is certainly one of his best. Thompson covered the Angels for over a year and was often drawn into their misadventures. An active participant in almost every aspect of the story, Thompson was eventually "stomped" by several members of the gang.

Thompson, H.S. (1979), *The Great Shark Hunt: Strange Tales from a Strange Time*, Summit

Books, New York, NY.

The first volume of a series titled, "The Gonzo Papers," this book is a collection of Thompson's early work, mostly in the 1960's and 1970's. It is special because it draws from many sources, including magazine articles and personal letters, to provide readers with an overall picture of Thompson's earliest writing. Articles in the collection include, "The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved," "Fear and Loathing at the Super Bowl," "Strange Rumbblings in Aztlan," and "The Great Shark Hunt." This work is especially important because it includes two bibliographies, both compiled by Kihm Winship.

Torrey, B. and Simonson, K. (2008), *Conversations with Hunter S. Thompson*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, MS.

This book does an excellent job of collecting previously published interviews with Thompson from a variety of sources. The interviews took place between 1974 and 2003 and are arranged in chronological order. The book would be helpful for locating quotations, but also for examining the evolution of other writers' perceptions of Hunter over the span of his career. Some of the interviews are written in prose, others are transcripts, but all of them are entertaining and provide insight into Thompson and Gonzo Journalism. Also included are a chronology of Thompson's life and an up-to-date list of his work that appears in book form.

Weingarten, M. (2006), *The Gang That Wouldn't Write Straight: Wolfe, Thompson, Didion, and the New Journalism Revolution*, Crown Publishers, New York, NY.

This book is primarily about New Journalism, the larger genre under which Gonzo Journalism is often classified. In the book, Weingarten traces the origins of New Journalism, evaluates Wolfe's conceptualization of the genre and theory of its origin, and then suggests other

historical antecedents. It is suggested that Thompson played a prominent role in the movement, and the book devotes a respectable amount of coverage to his contribution. This book would be useful for fans of Thompson interested in learning about writers with a similar style or for those who desire an understanding of the larger stylistic movement that encompasses Gonzo.

Wenner, J and Seymour, C. (2007), *Gonzo: The Life of Hunter S. Thompson*, Little, Brown and Company, New York, NY.

This biography is different in a variety of ways. First, it is an oral biography, a collection of quotes, organized chronologically. Because of this, no single point of view predominates and the book feels more objective than other biographies. It is a good deal more readable than some of the other biographies, especially for those who are not fans of the genre. Each section consists of quotes by friends and acquaintances of Dr. Thompson that, when combined, gives readers a picture of a particular time in his life.

Whitmer, P.O. (1993), *When the Going Gets Weird: The Twisted Life and Times of Hunter S. Thompson*, Hyperion, New York, NY.

This is probably the best biography for readers interested in Thompson's early life. It includes background information on his parents and goes into a fair amount of detail about his childhood and high school years. The book covers events up until 1992, and it includes an index, bibliography, and source notes.

Wolfe, T. (1969), *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Bantam Books, New York, NY.

Like many other works, this book is not typically classified as an example of Gonzo Journalism, but is characteristic of the style. It chronicles the adventures of Ken Kesey and The Merry

Pranksters, but also includes some sections related to the Hell's Angels, from Wolfe's point of view. Wolfe's account of the Hell's Angels was written using information and recordings provided by Thompson.

Wolfe, T. (1973), *The New Journalism*, Harper & Row, New York, NY.

This work is primarily a collection of articles, but also includes a section outlining Wolfe's views on New Journalism and the novel as an art form. Wolfe addresses some of the genre's conventions, but resists explicitly defining the style. The book includes *The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved* and an excerpt from *Hell's Angels*. This would be an excellent reader's advisory tool for fans of Thompson's style or the literature of the period. It would also be beneficial to students interested in the history New Journalism.

Films & Documentaries

These films are either adaptations of works of Gonzo Journalism or provide insight into Thompson's career and motivations. Care was taken to include only the most comprehensive or recent version available. While not strictly academic, these films would be useful to anyone studying the topic because they provide another point of access to the subject. These films represent a wide spectrum of artistic styles and perspectives on Thompson and Gonzo Journalism. Most of the films are available in multiple formats and editions, should the version listed not be available.

***Breakfast with Hunter* (2003), DVD, Directed by Wayne Ewing, Wayne Ewing Films: Gonzo International, [United States].**

Of all of the documentaries reviewed, *Breakfast with Hunter* was the least polished but most personal. It is fair to say that this documentary does the best job of immersing viewers into

Thompson's life. The filmmaker captures Thompson's interactions and adventures in a variety of locales. Some of the events portrayed include clips from an appearance at The Viper Room, a meeting with a would-be writer director team for the film version of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, and numerous chat sessions between Hunter and his friends, including: Johnny Depp, Benicio Del Toro, Ralph Steadman, Laila Nabulsi, George McGovern, and many others. This film is relatively rare in libraries, but should be considered a must-watch for any Thompson devotee or scholar.

Buy the Ticket, Take the Ride (2007), DVD, Directed by Tom Thurman, Starz Home Entertainment, Englewood, CO.

At its most basic level, *Buy the Ticket, Take the Ride* is both a tribute and love letter to Thompson. Many long-time friends of Thompson contributed interviews for the film, which often makes it feel like a promotional video for the inclusion of Thompson into the canon of popular culture. That being said, the film is not without value for more critical audiences. The documentary covers all of Thompson's life and does a good job of including archival footage, film clips, and interviews from a wide variety of sources and time periods. One of the most insightful conclusions of the filmmakers is that the film, *Where the Buffalo Roam*, solidified Thompson's position as the action hero of the counter-culture and secured his place in popular culture history.

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, (2003/1998), DVD, Directed by Terry Gilliam, Criterion Collection, Irvington, NY.

Packed with features, the Criterion Collection version of Terry Gilliam's "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" should be seen by everyone interested in Gonzo, even those who know the original

version by heart. Shot in a highly kinetic style, this movie will leave a lasting impression on all viewers through a combination of excellent acting and unforgettable visual imagery. The Criterion Collection version was selected because it includes numerous commentaries, extras, and two documentaries: *Fear and Loathing in Gonzovision* (again, incorrectly titled: *Fear and Loathing on the Road to Hollywood*) and *Hunter Goes to Hollywood*.

Gonzo: The Life and Work of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson, (2008), DVD, Directed by Alex Gibney, Magnolia Home Entertainment, Los Angeles, CA.

Gonzo is the newest documentary on Thompson and certainly one of the best. It provides a comprehensive picture of his life and career. This film includes a balanced mix of archival footage and original interviews, and is as entertaining as it is educational. Thompson's family and friends appeared to have given the filmmakers their full support. The DVD includes deleted scenes, extended interviews, and a plethora of additional materials.

Omnibus: Fear and Loathing in Gonzovision, (1978), Producer Nigel Finch, British Broadcasting Corporation, in Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, (2003/1998), DVD, Criterion Collection, Irvington, NY.

This BBC documentary includes some early interviews and footage of Thompson. Over the course of the film, Thompson and Steadman travel from Thompson's home at Owl Farm in Colorado to Hollywood by way of Las Vegas. The filmmakers were not without bias. In the first few minutes of the film, an interview with Steadman characterizes Thompson as a sort of dangerous "drug-addled" madman, a view that is reinforced throughout the film. It is difficult to tell if the filmmakers included only the most bizarre footage of Thompson, if Thompson was playing up to their expectations, or both. The most poignant moment in the documentary is

when Thompson admits that he often does not know if people expect to encounter Raoul Duke or Thompson when they first meet him. He also suggests that the filmmakers suffer from the same confusion and do not know which persona they are filming. This documentary is included on The Criterion Collection's release of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, but is incorrectly titled *Fear and Loathing on the Road to Hollywood* in the DVD menus and all of the documentation.

Where the Buffalo Roam (2005/1980), DVD, Directed by Art Linson, Universal Studios, Universal City, CA.

Shot many years before the film version of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, this film is often overshadowed by *Fear and Loathing* but should not be overlooked by anyone interested in a different take on Thompson and the Gonzo style. This film is a good contrast to *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* because it was produced more than a decade earlier and placed no emphasis on special effects to drive the story.

Internet Sources

The following websites were selected on the basis of their quality or comprehensiveness.

Major search engines will return hundreds of hits for Gonzo Journalism or Hunter S. Thompson, but these were among the most useful.

Othitis, C. (2008), "The Great Thompson Hunt", available at: www.gonzo.org (accessed 20 April 2009).

Of the many webpages devoted to Hunter S. Thompson, Christine Othitis has compiled the most comprehensive. This website contains a bibliography, a list of people associated with Gonzo and Hunter S. Thompson, essays, and many pictures. Navigating the site can be tricky at

times, but those who take the time to browse its pages will not be disappointed.

Southern, T. (1968), *Grooving in Chi*, PBS.org, available at:

www.pbs.org/newshour/convention96/retro/southern.html (accessed 20 April 2009).

Usually considered one of the "New Journalists", Terry Southern's article about the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago could be classified as Gonzo Journalism. In the article, Southern describes his personal experiences, and also takes an active part in the of shaping his story. This article is especially relevant because it can be compared, both stylistically and as an alternative account, to Thompson's experiences at the same convention that are included in his book, *Kingdom of Fear*.

Thompson, H.S. (Varies), *ESPN Page 2*, available at:

<http://search.espn.go.com/thompson/hunter-s-thompson/4294789638> (accessed 20 April 2009).

Between 2000 and 2005, Thompson was a frequent contributor to *ESPN Page 2*. The articles are mostly related to sports, but almost always include off-topic musings and commentary. The URL above currently leads to a list of 124 articles that, as of the last date of access, were available on the site. It is also possible to locate Thompson's *Page 2* articles by identifying titles of interest in the bibliography found in *Wikipedia* and then searching for the title in an internet search engine.

Caricatures

It is fair to say that when many people think of Thompson, they are actually thinking of Thompson's alter-ego, Raoul Duke, a caricature in his own right. Whether the following characters are actually caricatures of Thompson, Duke, or, in a way, both, is a difficult question

to answer. Regardless of the source of inspiration their creators drew upon, these characters are a testament to the effect that Thompson has had on popular culture.

Ellis, W. and Robertson, D. (1998), *Transmetropolitan: Back on the Street*, DC Comics, New York, NY.

The first graphic novel in the *Transmetropolitan* series introduces readers to Spider Jerusalem, an anti-hero who bears a remarkable resemblance to Thompson's alter-ego Raoul Duke. The first page of the book depicts Jerusalem in his mountain home, reminiscent of Owl Farm, threatening an editor who calls him in an attempt to persuade him to make good on a contract, the same call many a weary editor made to Thompson. Jerusalem is bad tempered, foul mouthed, frequently armed, and usually under the influence of a complex concoction of drugs. He considers his position as a journalist to render him above the law and society's morals, and covers the events of the story in the traditional Gonzo style, relating and influencing events as they happen.

Trudeau, G.B. (2001), *Action figure! The life and times of Doonesbury's Uncle Duke*, Andrews McMeel Publishing, Kansas City, MO.

At first glance, it is fairly easy to draw a connection between Uncle Duke and Thompson, but a more appropriate connection can be made to Raoul Duke. This title is a collection of all of Uncle Duke's appearances in *Doonesbury* from 1974 to 2001. Uncle Duke continued as a recurring character in the series after 2001, but an update of the collection has not been released since. A number of authors have commented that Thompson was not an avid fan of the character. Uncle Duke differs from Thompson in many ways, but retains many of Raoul

Duke's characteristics including a penchant for drugs and alcohol, a love of firearms, an absence of traditional morals and values, and the tendency to never stay in one place for too long.