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**Irony Approach to the American
Dream in the Life and Work of Hunter
S. Thompson**
Bachelor's Diploma Thesis

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*I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently,
using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.*

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Author's signature

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INTRODUCTION

"The working title was The Death of the American Dream. I had no idea what it meant. I didn't care what it meant," wrote Hunter S. Thompson in his book *Songs of the Doomed* (115). Yet, while reading his works I have the feeling that Thompson knew quite well what the American Dream was and how to approach it.

Not surprisingly, the American Dream is present, widely depicted, and dealt with in the American literature from the very beginning. However, the attitude towards the American Dream has changed over the years. Each generation (not only in literary sense, i.e. generation of writers) has approached this concept differently. Therefore it is impossible to cover the development of the attitude or define what the American Dream means for all Americans. Hence I decided to deal with a particular approach towards the American Dream – the ironic one. This will be, in my thesis, represented by the peculiar journalist Hunter S. Thompson. Is his point of view unique? What have shaped his view? Why does he use the irony? These will be some of the questions I will deal with. I will concern with some of the numerous newspaper and magazine articles that Thompson wrote and primarily with his non-fiction books and the short stories that have usually originated on the basis of these articles. The books include *Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gang*, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream*, and *The Rum Diary*. The newspaper articles which I use were reprinted in such compilations as *Gonzo Papers, Vol. 3: Songs*

of the Doomed: More Notes on the Death of the American Dream and *Gonzo Papers, Vol. 4: Better Than Sex: Confessions of a Political Junkie*.

I have divided the thesis into several sections; each of them is connected (as I believe) with Thompson's attitude towards the American Dream. I have included a section on his writing style which defines Thompson's Gonzo style in the context of the New Journalism; a section on his life; and a section which covers the allusions on the American Dream in Thompson's works.

The aim of the thesis is to introduce Thompson's life and work and on the samples from his work delineate his attitude towards the American Dream. I have decided to cover Hunter S. Thompson, because despite his popularity in Anglophone world, he is not widely known in Czech Republic.

THE YOUTH OF HUNTER S. THOMPSON

What is this guy? A drug dealer?

—Rakish¹

The work of Hunter S. Thompson is autobiographical to the extent that it seems inevitable to include his biography in the thesis. Also the attitude towards the American Dream and one's life are interdependent. The person's experience shapes his attitude and the attitude is usually reflected on his life and behavior. From this point of view Hunter S. Thompson is no exception; he is, in fact, a very good example, if we consider that the more radical one's posture is the more visible it is. This chapter will not deal with the exact dates of Thompson's life (although some most important ones will be given), but rather with the organizations he was a member of, the people he came in touch with, the situations he was involved in, and the other influences he was shaped by.

Coming of age

Most people's characters are shaped above all in the childhood; not any differently in the case of Hunter S. Thompson. He was born on July 18, 1937, in Louisville, Kentucky (biography.com). From the very beginning, he was an energetic child; today, he would probably be labeled "hyperactive", he was one of those with natural authority and he read a lot. "We would go play football, or basketball, or go to the movies, but going to the library and reading books was

¹ Rakish, Indian astrologer who had never heard of HST, after looking at his astrological chart for three or four seconds (qtd. in Carroll 151).

always given equal billing. Hunter would say let's go to the library and seven or eight of us would grab our bikes and ride down. We sat there and read for a couple of hours." (Tyrrell, qtd. in Carroll 6) He was most likely influenced in this by his mother who brought home the books for her sons such as *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *White Fang*. Literature and sports were his major areas of interest. Therefore the logical step was joining the Castlewood Athletic Club and later the Athenaeum Literary Association. As early as in the Athenaeum years he published the essay called "Security" in which he expresses (probably under the influence of writers such as Jack London²) his non-materialistic and adventurous nature:

Where would the world be if all men had sought security and not taken risks or gambled with their lives on the chance that, if they won, life would be different and richer? ... so we shall let the reader answer this question for himself: who is the happier man, he who has braved the storm of life and lived or he who has stayed securely on shore and merely existed? (Thompson, 1955)

Unfortunately he did not grow enough to be good at sports and also has a bit of deformity with his legs, and therefore haven't become the athlete he wanted to be. Instead, although he remained interested in sports and later often worked as a sport editor, he became a heavy drinker and smoker. He loved gathering; he acted exactly the way he later described in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.³ "The important thing wasn't that we had beer, but that we had *seventy-one*

² "The proper function of man is to live - not to exist." See e.g. <<http://www.quotes.net/quote/15238>>

³ See p. 27

beers, and we had two and a half quarts of bourbon and we had a pint and a half of gin, and were going to have a big party.” (Tyrrell, qtd. in Carroll 54) It is not difficult to understand why he drank – “Athenaeum was oldest literary society, it was a social group and it was also a drinking group” (Semonin qtd. in Wenner 12), and also at that time there were two main industries in Louisville, the tobacco and the bourbon industry. In fact, these fields remained important economic factors of the area to these days. The University of Louisville Economist Dr. Paul Coomes says, “We produce 95 percent of the world’s Bourbon” (qtd. by bourbonblog.com). Thompson drank, because the alcoholic beverages were easily accessible and also because he didn’t have the authority above him who could moderate him. His father died, when he was fourteen years old and by the time, his mother became a heavy drinker herself. (Whitmer 25) This absence of the “iron hand” also caused that Thompson tended to get in trouble. He broke into the liquor stores, did some night gas station robbery, and other things which he and two friends of his were put in a trial for. The other two boys’ fathers knew the judge, but Thompson was taken into custody. From there he wrote letters to his mother in which he “exudes the desperation of a young man in jail looking for his freedom as well as contemplating how the rich get away with dastardly things and the poor don’t” (Brinkley, qtd. in Wenner 19-20). This was probably the first time when he came into conflict with the *Equal Opportunity*.

Later he had two options – to be imprisoned or to join the U.S. Air Force. Naturally he chose the military. Not that he was a military-enthusiast, but it definitely gave him more freedom than a prison would. Due to the problems

with the Law he didn't go to a college, but the U.S. Air Force served as a substitute for one. "He learned a lot from various military types and used this knowledge in his writing a lot." (Brinkley, qtd. in Wenner 22) He learned the basics of journalism when he worked as a sport editor for the base newspaper, and although he always wanted to be a novelist, he knew he would have to make a living somehow. At that time he began talking (and actually from that time on has never stopped) about Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Salinger who were the great influences on him. "Salinger was one of his heroes. He identified with Holden Caulfield, the rebel in the society, and he was talking about confrontation all the time." (Kennedy, qtd. in Wenner 45) But he also deepened his drinking habit – with his companions from the army he spent a lot of time in the pubs and strip clubs, drinking alcohol. Even though his career in the U.S. Air Force was not important in terms of the length or the rank, it was crucial in terms of his future profession in a newspaper branch, and in terms of the understanding the absurdity of the (military) establishment.

San Francisco and the Hell's Angels

In 1965 Thompson moved with his (then) wife to San Francisco close to the Golden Gate Park. This was when the Haight-Ashbury Scene was beginning. Haight-Ashbury is the intersection between two San Francisco streets – Haight and Ashbury – where there was a great accumulation of young people at that time.

Young generation gravitated to the Haight-Ashbury district, where the rents were cheap. Many were students at nearby University of San

Francisco, UCSF, and S.F. State University. Others were musicians (such as the Grateful Dead), philosophers, artists (such as Alton Kelley), poets (such as Allen Cohen), apartment-dwellers, panhandlers, and even future CEOs of companies such as Pepsi, the Gap, and Rolling Stone magazine. (Bove, rockument.com)

With the Haight-Ashbury is connected the rise of the Hippies, rock and roll music, and also drug culture – something that would be later called “the counterculture”. Thompson himself refers to it as the “Hashbury” and describes it as follows:

It is the new capital of what is rapidly becoming a drug culture. Its denizens are not called radicals or beatniks, but ‘hippies’—and perhaps as many as half of them are refugees from Berkeley and the old North Beach scene ... The word ‘hip’ translates roughly as ‘wise’ or ‘turned-in’. A hippy is somebody who ‘knows’ what’s really happening. (GSH 447)

Thompson used to smoke marijuana earlier in his life but during this period, according to his wife Sandy Thompson, he tried LSD for the first time: “He heard the Jefferson Airplane and got friendly with them, and he took acid for the first time” (qtd. in Wenner 76). It was the time when Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters held their “Acid tests” and LSD was widely available. It was probably the experience with LSD which made him, in addition to smoking and drinking, a heavy drug user. Thompson was, however, not only a user of drugs but also an ardent defender of them. He openly used them, and also wrote about them – from this time on, the drugs played a role in almost all the articles

and books he wrote and it is necessary to claim that often the role wasn't only a supporting one. "Hunter and William Burroughs are about the only two journalists who have openly, without reservation, talked about the situation of drugs that every other journalist has pretended wasn't there." (Felton, qtd. in Carroll 150)

At the same time, Thompson tried to write novels without any significant success. In the interview for *Playboy* in November 1974 he says: "I tried driving a cab in San Francisco, I tried every kind of thing. ... then I got a letter from Carey McWilliams, the editor of *The Nation*, and it said, 'Can you do an article on the Hell's Angels for us for \$100?' I said, 'Of course. I'll do *anything* for \$100'" (qtd. in Carroll 103). The article⁴ made him "visible" – on its basis he got an offer to write a whole book on the Hell's Angels.⁵ Thompson depicted them not only as losers; he idolized them, saw them as a kind of a rebellion against the American establishment and thought they showed where the society was going. In order to write the book he spent with them almost every day for the next year and a half. Although the Hell's Angels were often present at his house and became very familiar with him, he never happened to become the full member. This reality probably caused that the relation of the Hell's Angels and Hunter S. Thompson finished violently: when the Hell's Angels realized that Thompson was actually going to get paid for the book, they concluded that he should give them the share of his profit which he refused. Therefore, they beat him.

⁴ Published in *The Nation* on 17 May 1965 as "The Motorcycle Gangs: Losers and Outsiders." See <<http://www.thenation.com/doc/19650517/thompson>>

⁵ Motorcycle gang, formed around 1948 in California, today worldwide spread.

The reviews of *Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gang* were mainly positive and the book gained him immediately widespread popularity. Although he had written some magazine-articles earlier, this book established him as a writer. Thompson, however, not only introduced the Angels to a wide range of readers; he is responsible for their connection to the peace movement. He introduced them to Ken Kesey who also considered them as rebels and invited them to his house at La Honda, where they met the Merry Pranksters, Allen Ginsberg, Neal Cassady, and other cultural figures of that time. Kesey provided them with an unlimited amount of LSD which they probably didn't try before. This event is recorded in detail in Tom Wolfe's *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*.

Thompson for Sheriff

Later Thompson moved to Colorado, rented the house in Woody Creek, and named it "the Owl Farm". At this time, he became interested in or rather disappointed by the political situation. He was a very sensitive person in terms of the abuse of power. "I saw Hunter cry exactly twice in my life ... the other [time] was the night he got back from Chicago. The police had fired tear gas into the crowd of people demonstrating at the convention, and he was right in there. He talked about people being hit, and brutally hurt, and the violence, the horror of it all." (Wenner 100) In Aspen, Colorado the situation was very much alike. Guido Meyer, the police magistrate at that time put six young people in prison only because they were hitchhiking. At that point Thompson decided to become politically active and started his "Freak Power" sheriff campaign. Some

features of the campaign were a kind of parody but the platform which he published in *Rolling Stone* was meaningful, and in some aspects modern and progressive (no matter how radical and odd it seemed). Among the points of his platform were: "Rip up all the city streets with jackhammer and use the junk asphalt to create a huge parking lot on the outskirts of town—preferably somewhere out of sight ... All public movement would be by foot and fleet of bicycles" (GSH 181). This point is very ecological, in fact, and ahead of his time. Another aim was to "make life in this town very ugly for *all* profiteers—in drugs and all other fields" (GSH 181). In the case of drugs, he didn't mean the suppression of drugs. On the contrary, he wanted to make them legal, but strictly control the sale, and punish the dealers. In the case of all other fields, Thompson believed that the change of the name from Aspen to "Fat City" would prevent the acquisitive people from capitalizing on the city; that the odd name would not interest any commercial companies and "land-rapers". "The main advantage," he believed, "is that it would have no major effect on the town itself, or on those people who came here because it's a good place to *live*." Last but not least: "The Sheriff and his Deputies should *never* be armed in public. Every urban riot, shoot-out and blood-bath in recent memory has been set off by some trigger-happy cop" (GSH 181). Again, this seems very progressive.

In the end, Thompson lost the election, yet his activities had an impact on the situation in Aspen. "The whole tension of harassing the younger people disappeared, and the whole attitude of policing in the community shifted from

beating up people to helping them and seeing what their problem is.”
(Edwards, qtd. in Wenner 115)

During this period, Thompson commonly used so-called Gonzo Journalism in his writings which is his own style that was invented on the basis of the New Journalism.

THE NEW JOURNALISM

I think it is necessary to describe Thompson's writing style and put it into a wider literary context of his contemporaries, in order to clarify the shifts in literature during his time. Hunter S. Thompson is considered to be a part of something that is usually called the New Journalism. It can't be classified, however, as a generation or a 'movement'. As Wolfe claims, "There were no manifestos,⁶ clubs, cliques; not even a saloon where the faithful gathered, since there was no faith and no creed. At the time, the mid-Sixties, one was aware only that all of sudden there was some sort of artistic excitement in journalism, and that was a new thing in itself" (37). However, some common features can be found in the works of the New Journalism.

To avoid ambiguity or vagueness which type of New Journalism I write about, I will use the distinction that Michael L. Johnson made when he claimed, that there were three large categories of New Journalism which developed in 1960s:

- 1) the underground press and publications closely related to it; 2) books or essays written in a journalistic style by journalists and ... by people inside and outside the fields of literary endeavor who have formulated a direct, evaluative, and, usually, participative response to events in the world by using or inventing a journalistic voice; 3) changes in the established media that involve significantly different and fresh journalistic approaches to a reportage. (xv)

⁶ In fact some reviewers called Wolfe's *The New Journalism* actual manifesto. See e.g. Robert Boynton's "The Roots of the New New Journalism."

From this point of view, I will deal with the second category, but it seems rather reasonable to agree with Wolfe who goes even further and claims that there were no connections between the New Journalism represented by him and the other authors (this would suit to Johnson's second category) and the New Left (which was connected to the underground press). The New Left was, according to Wolfe, represented by "the journalists of the technically most old-fashioned sort, such as Jack Newfield of *The Village Voice*, calling themselves New Journalists" (58). At any rate, this paper concerns the New Journalism represented by Wolfe, Thompson, Mailer, and many others.

The Origins

It is not perfectly clear when the changes that later created the New Journalism have started and when the actual term was coined. James E. Murphy cites in his work a personal letter of literary critic Seymour Krim which goes: "I am certain Hamill first used the expression. In about April 1965 he called me at *Nugget* magazine and told me he wanted to write an article about the New Journalism. It was to be about Talese, Wolfe and Breslin. He never wrote the piece, but I began using the expression..." (5). However, one of the first isolated experiments that could be considered to have something in common with the later works appeared already in 1946 in *The New Yorker*. It was "Hiroshima" in which John Hersey "interviewed several survivors immediately after the bombing; He set about writing a sort of novelistic reconstruction of the event as those people experienced it" (Johnson 47). Hersey was a correspondent of *Time* and *Life* during World War II, which gave

him an ideal opportunity to be very close to the event he described in the article.

Wolfe claims that his first touch with the new genre was in 1962 when he came across Gay Talese's article "Joe Louis: the King as a Middle-aged Man"⁷ and in fact, he was perplexed. He didn't understand how anyone could write an article about a boxer including the comments and thoughts of the sportsman's second wife and furthermore make the article look like a short story. Wolfe's first impression was that Talese's article was fabricated, because as he said: "Really stylish reporting was something no one knew how to deal with, since no one was used to thinking of reporting as having an *esthetic* dimension" (Wolfe, nymag.com).

The pieces of nonfiction of this new genre were at the beginning published primarily in the newspaper supplements (as *Herald Tribune's New York* in Wolfe's case) and the magazines such as *Esquire*, *The New Yorker*, *Life*, *Harper's*, and *Atlantic* (Murphy 17). In the case of Hunter S. Thompson it was primarily *Rolling Stone*, which he was for a long time a regular contributor to. The editors of these magazines were "a group of visionaries who were willing to take serious financial and editorial risks" (Boynton, robertboynton.com). It was mainly due to the length of those pieces that they weren't published in the regular newspapers – even in the magazines were the nonfiction stories divided into several parts. Only later, as they (both the authors and their works) gained some popularity, were the works published as the books.

⁷ An article about Joseph Louis Barrow, the world heavyweight boxing champion from 1937 to 1949

No matter how unclear the beginning of the new genre and its label is, it is perfectly clear that “by 1969 no one in the literary world could simply dismiss this new journalism as an inferior genre” (Wolfe 42).

The Authors of the New Journalism

Up to 1969 many works that were later considered crucial and canonical for the new genre were published. The themes the authors of the New Journalism dealt with were as miscellaneous as in any other genre or even more; they covered race, war, politics, crime, sport, art and culture, live-style in America, and many other subjects.

In 1965 Truman Capote published his book *In Cold Blood* in which he detailed the brutal murder of a Kansas farm family. As Howard says, “He spent a good time of six years to dig the roots of every aspect of the Clutter crime, to comprehend the viewpoints of the victims, the criminals and the mourners. He got to know the family better than they had known themselves ... The extraordinary access he gained to their [murderers'] minds is the strongest element of the book” (70).

Three significant works were published in 1966. First, a piece by John Sack with the minimalist title *M*. It originally appeared in *Esquire* with the quote “Oh my God—we hit the little girl” on its cover.

Sack talked the Army into letting him join an infantry company at Fort Dix, M Company, 1st Advanced Infantry Training Brigade – not as a recruit but as a reporter – and go through training with them and then to Vietnam and into battle. The result was a nonfiction *Catch-22*

and, for me, still the finest book in any genre published about the war. (Wolfe 41)

The second was Gay Talese's "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold". Talese was asked to profile Sinatra for *Esquire*. Unfortunately,

the legendary singer was approaching fifty, and unwilling to be interviewed. So Talese remained in L.A., hoping Sinatra might recover and reconsider, and he began talking to many of the people around Sinatra – his friends, his associates, his family, his countless hangers-on – and observing the man himself wherever he could. The result ran in April 1966 and became one of the most celebrated magazine stories ever published. (esquire.com)

And finally, that year was published Hunter S. Thompson's *Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gang*. Thompson spent some eighteen months with the Hell's Angels on their drunken joyrides through the country as a reporter which eventually appeared to be very dangerous: "The Angels wrote his last chapter for him by stomping him half to death in a roadhouse fifty miles from Santa Rosa" (Wolfe 41).

In 1968 there were at least two important events from the perspective of the New Journalism. Norman Mailer wrote "The Steps of the Pentagon" which was published in *Harper's* and later was renamed and published as a book under the title *The Armies of the Night* which integrated him among the New Journalists, although he was previously known for his novels such as *The Naked and the Dead*.⁸ Mailer dwells upon the Pentagon demonstration which took

⁸ First edition published in New York: Rinehart, 1948

place in October 1967; this book “earned” him the Pulitzer Price for General Nonfiction in 1969.⁹

Only some three months later, Tom Wolfe published *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* in which he covered experiments with LSD and the road-trip of Ken Kesey and the Marry Pranksters across the United States. Wolfe made interviews with the Marry Pranksters and used Ken Kesey’s notes. In the chapter where he described the meeting of the Marry Pranksters and the Hell’s Angels, he used the notes that Hunter S. Thompson took earlier when he worked on his book on the Hell’s Angels.

This “list” of the authors and their works is just a fragment of the whole New Journalism. There are other authors, such as Jimmy Breslin, Dick Schaap, Terry Southern, Larry King, Joan Didion, Pete Hamill, and many others (Murphy 16). Those highlighted here are probably the best known examples.

Features

The list of the authors given above not only introduces their works, but also says something about the technique these authors used in order to create their writings. This would be, as Murphy calls it, “intensive reportage”. Authors of the New Journalism spent often long time (and in some cases *very* long time) gathering the information they needed for their books. “Talese worked on his book *Honor Thy Father* throughout the seven year period, from 1965 to 1971, Wolfe spent months with Ken Kesey and his Pranksters before writing about their escapades ... and Hunter Thompson ‘ran’ with the Angels for a year and a

⁹ pulitzer.org/awards/1969

half to write *Hell's Angels*." (Murphy 22) Similarly he spent a year covering the story of the presidential campaign of 1972 for *Rolling Stone* which ended up as *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72* published in 1973. This method gave the authors the opportunity of a deep understanding of their characters' thoughts and opinions and enabled them to write from the characters' perspective. This is exactly what Wolfe did in his article about Phil Spector¹⁰ "The First Tycoon of Teen".

One of the news magazines apparently regarded the story as an improbable feat, because they interviewed him if he didn't think this passage was merely a fiction that appropriated his name. Spector said that, in fact, he found it *quite accurate*.¹¹ This should have come as no surprise, since every detail was taken from a long interview with Spector about exactly how he had felt at that time. (Wolfe 33)

The method of the intensive reportage made possible for the authors to fulfill the four common features of the New Journalism which are, according to Robert Boynton, following: "complete dialogue, rather than the snippets quoted in daily journalism; proceeds scene by scene, much as in a movie; incorporates varying points of view, rather than telling a story solely from the perspective of the narrator; and pays close attention to status details about the appearance and behavior of its characters" (Boynton, robertboynton.com). As Murphy observes, "the skilled novelist allows his characters to develop the action, the plot and themselves in dialogue more than in description. The New Journalists capitalized on this tactic and began to allow the character's words to carry a

¹⁰ Harvey Philip "Phil" Spector, an American record producer and songwriter.

¹¹ Italics mine.

portion of the story" (19). And he comments on another feature as well: "Though the short story and the novel have relied heavily on the [scene by scene] technique, its role in journalism has been minor. In the new nonfiction,¹² however, story telling by building scenes is paramount" (18). Although some authors stressed themselves in their writing (e.g. Thompson), and the New Journalism has been therefore characterized as subjective, the conception of the New Journalism as a first-person journalism is misleading. It can be demonstrated on the examples of Tom Wolfe who said about his own article called "The Girl of the Year":

Three points-of-view are used in that rather short passage, the point-of-view of the subject (Baby Jane), the point-of-view of the people watching her (the "flaming little buds"), and my own. I switched back and forth between points-of-view continually, and often abruptly, in many articles I wrote in 1963, 1964, and 1965. Eventually a reviewer called me a "chameleon" who instantly took on the coloration of whomever he was writing about. He meant it negatively. I took it as a great compliment. (Wolfe, nymag.com)

In *The New Journalism* he claims that "most of the best work in the form has been done in third-person narration with the writer keeping himself absolutely invisible" (58) and points on the works of Talese, Breslin, Sack, and others. In fact, his *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* is a perfect example on its own. The reader has an impression that the narrator must have been present in every

¹² Another name for the New Journalism

single moment of the road-trip, but he never mentions himself – precisely as in fiction.

These four Boynton's features were previously considered to be linked exclusively to fictional genres and that was what the New Journalists were often reproached for. "Critics argued that the reports could not be realistic, because they violated the conventions of nonfiction." (Eason 142) Some critics seemed even offended by the new genre: "It might be called 'parajournalism,' from the Greek *para*, 'beside' or 'against': something similar in form but different in function. As in parody, from the *parodia*, the satyr play of Athenian drama that was performed after the tragedy by the same actors in grotesque costumes. It is a bastard form" (MacDonald). On the other hand, Talese defended the New Journalism in the Author's Note in his *Fame and Obscurity*: "though often reading like fiction, is not a fiction. It is, or should be, as reliable as the most reliable reportage although it seeks a larger truth than is possible through the mere compilation of verifiable facts, the use of direct quotations, and adherence to the rigid organizational form of the older form."

Influence

Wolfe said about the New Journalism when it began to gain the power and have some readers that "the situation was somewhat similar to the situation of the novel in England in the 1850's. It was yet to be canonized, sanctified and given a theology, but writers themselves could already feel the new Power flowing" (42). He referred to the situation when the status of the novel became higher than the one of a poetry and verse-drama which were

until then the reigning genres. With this situation is connected the reason, Wolfe said, why Mailer subtitled his *Armies of the Night* "History as a Novel/The Novel as History" and why Capote didn't call his *In Cold Blood* the New Journalism but rather said that he invented a new genre which he called "the nonfiction novel". Mailer and Capote didn't want to have their works connected with journalism because at that time the status of the journalism was as low as the one of the novel prior to the 1850s. This situation has, however, later changed. Wolfe and most likely also other authors of the New Journalism believed they were creating something so powerful that it would later become the model and would be considered as a higher form of art than the novel.

Some critics, on the contrary, believe that by the 1980s the New Journalism was dead.¹³ Neither opinion is right. As we can see it today, the vision of the New Journalists hasn't been fulfilled: the novel defended its position of the most prevalent genre. On the other hand, although most people don't even know that something like the New Journalism exists, there are people who consider the books like *Hell's Angels* and *The Electric Cool-Aid Acid Test* to be iconic and who unite themselves on the internet fan-club pages.

Gonzo Journalism

"He liked the idea of being part of the New Journalism, but he wanted more; he wanted to transcend it, and he did. He wanted to be singular, and he was." (Kennedy, qtd. in Wenner 143) The style of Hunter S. Thompson ranks unique in the context of the New Journalism; Gonzo is the New Journalism's

¹³ See e.g. Robert Boynton's "The Roots of the New New Journalism"

extreme version. As Othitis aptly says "one striking difference between Thompson and the New Journalists is that while they seek to be the fly on the wall, Thompson is literally the fly in the ointment" (gonzo.org). Thompson is often called the King of Gonzo Journalism or one of the best examples of Gonzo Journalism.¹⁴ That is, however, quite inaccurate label. Thompson is in fact the only example of Gonzo Journalism, although many people tried to imitate his writing style.

John Sack who was once describing to a class at UCLA what it was like, working as a war correspondent in Korea for *Stars and Stripes*. There was a serious ammunition shortage there which Sack has seen evidences of, but General Taylor said on the press conference there was none. So following the rules of journalism, he wrote that there was no shortage. "Now," he said. "If Hunter Thompson had been in Seoul, he would have written: 'Seoul, Korea. General Maxwell Taylor said today that there is no ammunition shortage in Korea. And the man is a motherfucking liar!'" (qtd. in Carroll 195) That is exactly what Thompson's style is like: rough, unscrupulous, and vulgar.

It is said that the first example of Gonzo is Thompson's article "The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved" which was first published in *Scanlan's*. The article has some 15 pages and the actual derby is summarized in four lines: "Later, watching a TV rerun in the press box, we saw what happened to our horses. Holy Land, Ralph's choice, stumbled and lost his jockey in the final turn. Mine, Silent Screen, had the lead coming into the stretch but faded to fifth at the finish" (209). So he even hasn't seen the race. Something similar happened

¹⁴ See e.g. <<http://www.bookrags.com/biography/hunter-stockton-thompson/>>

in the case of his notorious book *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. He was supposed to cover the Mint 400 motorcycle race for *Sport Illustrated* and ended up with the book in which the race plays but minor role. Thompson is interested in the surroundings and the people present at such events. And primarily he writes about himself and his own state of mind. He said:

It is a style of 'reporting' based on William Faulkner's idea that the best fiction is far more *true* than any kind of journalism. ... True Gonzo reporting needs the talents of a master journalist, the eye of an artist/photographer and the heavy balls of an actor. Because the writer must be a participant in the scene, while he's writing it (GSH 120).

Thompson's aesthetics, drunkenness and the being under the influence of numerous drugs, goes through the whole his work as a red line. The famous quote from *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* would be good example of this:

The trunk of the car looked like a mobile police narcotics lab. We had two bags of grass, seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powered blotter acid, a salt shaker half full of cocaine, and a whole galaxy of multi-colored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers and also a quart of tequila, a quart of rum, a case of Budweiser, a pint of raw ether and two dozen amyls. (3)

It is difficult to say what Gonzo means exactly or where it comes from because the dictionaries refer back to Gonzo Journalism.¹⁵ Thompson's friend Bill Cardoso sent him a letter making a remark on the Kentucky Derby article: "I

¹⁵ See e.g. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com>>: idiosyncratically subjective but engagé <gonzo journalism>; Etymology: origin unknown

don't know what the fuck you're doing, but you've changed everything. It's totally gonzo." Later commenting on this letter he said "I think the word comes from the French Canadian. It's a corruption of g-o-n-z-e-a-u-x. Which is French Canadian for 'shining path'" (qtd. in Carroll 124). Both Othitis and Hirst agree that the Cardoso's letter was most likely the first time someone used the word in connection to Thompson's style but they also agree that no such word as gonzeaux exists in French.

However, some common features can be seen in all the Thompson's works both nonfiction and fiction which is usually at least to some point based on his life. These features are: first-person narration; comments on politicians and the political situation; presence of violence, alcohol, and drugs which the narrator is very often under the influence of; confusing the reality with the author's thoughts and vice versa; usage of quotes of famous people, song-lyrics, and newspaper headlines; usage of vulgarisms and humor. Christine Othitis adds "the tendency for the words to flow and an extremely creative use of English and extreme scrutiny of situations" (gonzo.org).

THE DEATH OF HUNTER S. THOMPSON

As a peak of Thompson's career is considered the publication of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and a year later the publication of *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72* in which he covers George McGovern's presidential campaign. From this and other political writings Thompson did, it is clear that he strongly supported the Democratic Party. According to Thompson, "Richard Nixon represents that dark, venal and incurably violent side of the American character that almost every other country in the world has learned to fear and despise" (Wenner 170).

Later in his life, Thompson became more and more affected by his heavy drinking and drug abuse. Thompson once said: "Does it look like the drugs have fucked me up? I'm sitting here on a beautiful beach in Mexico; I've written three books. I've got a fine one-hundred-acre fortress in Colorado. On that evidence, I'd have to *advise* the use of drugs" (Carroll 201). In spite of his affirmation, it seems the drugs finally destroyed him. He had some health problems partly caused by his constant bending over the typewriter; he had sciatica and the operation was complicated due to the withdrawal symptoms. He wasn't able to stay without alcoholic beverages and drugs.

Towards the end of his life, he almost completely stopped writing; nearly all the writings which occurred in the four volumes of his "Gonzo Papers"¹⁶ had been published earlier as the newspaper or magazine articles. The editor of

¹⁶ Vol.1: *The Great Shark Hunt*. Vol.2: *Generation of Swine*. Vol.3: *Songs of the Doomed*. Vol.4: *Better Than Sex*.

Rolling Stone, Jann Wenner recalls Thompson's inability to write: "I made several serious attempts to get him to write a 1,500-word column once a month. I offered him quite a bit of money to do it. Fifteen hundred words for \$10,000. Just sit there and closely consider any subject. But he couldn't do it" (384).

Once more, Thompson got motivated before the 2004 presidential election when he believed Kerry could defeat Bush and he was really disappointed when Bush eventually won.

Hunter S. Thompson committed suicide by shooting himself to the head on February 20, 2005. (Rolfson, airforcetimes.com). He left behind a goodbye-letter which goes: "No More Games. No More Bombs. No More Walking. No More Fun. No More Swimming. 67. That is 17 years past 50. 17 more than I needed or wanted. Boring. I am always bitchy. No Fun—for anybody. 67. You are getting Greedy. Act your old age. Relax—this won't hurt" (Brinkley, rollingstone.com).

THE AMERICAN DREAM

and I am waiting
for the American Eagle
to really spread its wings
and straighten up and fly right

—Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Most people believe that the term was coined,¹⁷ or at least made widely known, by the historian James Truslow Adams in the book *The Epic of America*. In this book, Adams claims that the American Dream is “the dream of land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement.” There isn’t anything controversial in this part, although it is not quite clear what *richer and fuller* mean. But later Adams adds: “It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position” (404).

The later part seems more problematic: Adams coined the term in 1931, but the idea is much older. The concept of a new beginning and a better life was adopted, by all means, already by the Pilgrims who otherwise would not set out for the voyage. Similarly, John Hancock understood it one hundred and fifty-six years later when he signed the Declaration of Independence. At that time it definitely was not a dream of motor cars, but most likely only because the first motor car wasn’t invented until 1885. Otherwise it possibly could be so.

¹⁷ See e.g. Steve Gillman: What is the American Dream, <<http://e-gurukul.com/what-is-the-american-dream-by-steven-gillman/>>

Based on John Locke's theory, the Declaration of Independence could go "...life, liberty and the pursuit of property."

This materialism, which the United States are often criticized for, is just one aspect Thompson is in quarrel with. He criticizes the American social system and he does it through what seems to be the most natural way for him – through irony. He makes fun of such figures as Horatio Alger, Jr., who represents the conservative concept of the American Dream, of J. Edgar Hoover, the first and long-time Director of Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other "symbols" of the United States.

Since he points at the aspects repeatedly in his works, it seems reasonable to divide the chapter into sections rather than analyze a single work of his. Each section dwells upon one aspect, or several closely connected ones. Although the great majority of the quotes in this chapter is from Thompson's two most popular books – *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and *Hell's Angels*, other works of his are also included. I believe this would be the most transparent way to deal with his critical/ironical approach.

Horatio Alger, Jr.

Horatio Alger, the literary symbol of the American Dream, is mentioned by Thompson quite frequently. Horatio Alger lived from 1832 – 1899 and was a prolific author of boy's adventure stories. Alan Trachtenberg says about him: "The material facts of Alger's writing career cannot be stressed enough. The name Horatio Alger has come down to us as *the* synonym for capitalist ideology. We still think of him as an 'apostle of the self-made man'" (vi). His

stories' main characters are down-and-out boys making their living as some boot blacks, newsboys, janitors, or doing other menial works. Most Alger's works are labeled "rags-to-riches" stories which describe how these boys with a deprived or poor background rise on the social ladder by means of a hard labor, sustain effort, and absolute honesty which make them different from the others and gain them the respectable lives in a middle-class comfort. To stress the moral advice and the righteousness of these hard-working characters, there are other boys in Alger's stories. The boys who came from the same deprived background but don't do their best, and therefore don't climb up the social ladder and also the boys with rich, but dishonest parents who are not the good examples for their sons. These are somehow punished at the end of the story (at least they lose their credit). As the books for children, these stories are very simple for understanding, with an uncomplicated plot. Usually it is clear who the bad guy is and who is the good one. His stories are quite naïve – "luck and money run together in Alger's world" (Trachtenberg xix).

The name Horatio Alger occurs in Thompson's work predominantly in connection with drugs, which is quite funny when we consider Alger as an old respectable writer. Thompson mentions him when he describes the Hell's Angels' marijuana-smoking and defend them against the accusation of being dealers. He describes them as ordinary consumers of marijuana with no ready access to it. He refers to Alger's economics in the process and says: "... if people have a serious commercial interest in the stuff they rarely smoke it at all except behind locked doors. A taste for pot is not part of the formula for success in a profit-oriented society. If Horatio Alger had been born near a field

of locoweed his story might have been a lot different" (244). At another time, Thompson mentions him in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. He is under the serious influence of drugs and just sits listening to the radio. He asks himself: "How would Horatio Alger handle this situation?" (58)

Thompson, however, is not the only author who uses Alger's name ironically. Another allusion to Alger can be found e.g. in one of the Norman Mailer's novels – not surprisingly it is his *An American Dream*. The main character Rojack is confronted with the fact that his wife was getting some allowance from her father, a rich politician Kelly. Rojack thought that he was able to support her himself, and he is therefore called Horatio Alger, which indicates his naivety. (156)

When not only the explicit allusions to Alger is considered, it can be seen that there are at least three points reflected in Thompson's works connected with Alger and his writing. The struggling upward which is omnipresent in Alger is criticized by Thompson through Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald depicted the character which struggled upwards and succeeded – held ostentatious garden parties, wore an elegant suit and addressed all the rich "old sport" – but his whole life was extremely shallow. "The nouveaux riches," says Fahey, "are frequently vulgar displayers of their new-won material possession, lacking in culture, sophistication and refinement ... [Gatsby] has an extensive library, but no knowledge of books" (70). Gatsby's life is surrounded by the insincerity to the extend that any of his "old sports" came to his funeral and any of the regular guests of his parties was sorry for him. They simply went to another party. Thompson prefers less pretentious and more sincere relationship

which is, according to him, the case of Hell's Angels: "This was not going to be any Jay Gatsby funeral; the Angels wanted a full-dress rally. Miles' status was not the point; the death of any Angel requires a show of strength by the others" (HA 312). Alger would probably describe them as the worst good-for-nothings but Thompson sees some kind of frankness among them which Gatsby would envy them.

There isn't anything wrong in particular with Alger's depend-upon-yourself individualism. In *Ragged Dick* he describes the main character as follows: "Dick was energetic and on alert for business, but Johnny the reverse. The consequence was that Dick earned probably three times as much as the other" (10). Dick's diligence is definitely good for him, but that doesn't necessarily mean Johnny is bad – on the contrary, in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson, the aim should be "to earn a little and to spend a little less" (8). Thompson criticizes this – not only Alger's – approach in his article "Living in the Time of Alger, Greeley, Debs" in which he, on the example of some hitchhikers, describes the paradox of the United States

as a nation that gives so much to those who preach the glories of rugged individualism from the security of countless corporate sinecures, and so little to the diminishing band of yesterday's who still practice it, day by day, in a tough, rootless, and sometimes witless style that most of us have long since been weaned away from.

(SD 440)

The third dispute of Alger and Thompson would be over the stance on the state officials. Alger treats them with respect – he describes a policeman as

"a sensible man and worthy citizen" (96), as someone who can be trusted, and if there is any injustice, the police would rectify it. On the other hand, Hunter S. Thompson sees the police as a corrupted part of the evil establishment.

The Establishment

Thompson does not agree with the system and the condition which the American society is in. He criticizes it through the strictures on the violent methods of the police, allusions to J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI etc. His interpretation of the American society is very similar to the concept which Ken Kesey depicted in his well-known metaphor *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, even though Thompson is much more explicit. Kesey as well as the main character of his book, Chief Bromden, sees the powers that be as "the Combine" – the authorities which have the power to process individuals and manipulate with them. In Kesey's book the authorities are represented by Miss Ratched, "the Big Nurse", and her three aides, Williams, Washington and Warren, "the Black Boys", who were hired for their violent natures. They inform the Big Nurse about any transgression against the ward rules – their behavior and methods are not dissimilar from the ones of the police. The authorities are criticized for their inability to improve the rock-ribbed system which doesn't do any good to those who live by its rules and laws – the patients of the mental ward in the novel and the people in the real life. They are also criticized for the inability to accept anybody who lives his distinctive way – they understand these individuals only as a threat for the system, they don't see them as a potential source of stimulating ideas – the character which represent this type

in the book, R. P. McMurphy, eventually undergo the lobotomy which “liberates” him from his outstanding position of the “troublemaker” and makes less than an ordinary sheep of him.

Kesey describes the authorities in his book through the words of the McMurphy character as “the people who try to make you weak so they change you to toe the line, to follow their rules, to live like they want you to ... If you’re up against a guy who wants to win by making you weaker instead of making himself stronger, then watch for his knee, he’s gonna go for your vitals” (58).

Thompson refers to the ability of society to cope with the problems with the stubborn inadaptable individuals in *Hell’s Angels*. There he describes the situation with slightly parodical tone: “There was clearly no room for this sort of thing in the Great Society, these ruffians were going to be taught a lesson by hard and ready minions of the Establishment” (28).

Thompson’s first encounter with the FBI took place when he was a nine-year-old boy. He refers to this experience in a short story called “The Mailbox: Louisville, Summer of 1946”. He touches upon the way the children were raised and what they were taught. “The Badge was a symbol of extremely high authority. Nobody ever asked *why*. It was one of those unnatural questions that are better left alone. If you had to ask *that*, you were surely as hell Guilty of *something*” (1). The story is about the “crime” Thompson and a couple of his friends committed: they pushed the mailbox into the way of a school bus. It looks trivial, but Thompson was visited by the FBI agents. The whole story ridicules them and the conclusion goes: “I learned a powerful lesson: Never believe the first thing an FBI agent tells you about anything – especially not if

he seems to believe you are guilty of a crime. Maybe he has no evidence. Maybe you are innocent. Maybe..." (5) It actually doesn't matter, whether the story is based on a truth or not. Thompson's point – to ridicule the FBI – is fulfilled.

In other works, he refers to the policemen as to "pigs": "This would be the shrewdest move of my life. Back to Vegas and sign up for the Drugs and Narcotics conference; me and a thousand pigs. Why not?" (FL 81) When he came to the conference, he realized, that although the "drug experts" were expected to be present the speaker behind a reading desk knew nothing about the contemporary drug-culture: "'The reefer butt is called a 'roach' because it resembles a cockroach ...' 'What the fuck are these people talking about?' my attorney whispered. 'You'd have to be crazy on acid to think a joint looked like a goddamn cockroach!' I shrugged. It was clear that we'd stumbled into a prehistoric gathering" (118). Similarly in *Hell's Angels* Thompson refers to the police disinformation in the case of a term that the Hell's Angels use for "a girl who's always available. A widely quoted section of the Lynch report¹⁸ says these girls are called sheep, but I have never heard an Angel use that word. It sounds like the creation of some police inspector with intensely rural memories" (195). In Thompson's interpretation the policemen are in most cases stupid people with no capacity to broaden their horizons and who carry guns with no purpose – except to display their ability to *enforce* the law.¹⁹

¹⁸ California Attorney General Thomas Lynch released this report on six-month investigation of Hell's Angels. Thompson calls it "fuzzy but much-quoted official document titled The Hell's Angels Motorcycle Clubs."

¹⁹ This corresponds with Thompson's sheriff-campaign platform. See p. 14

As opposed to the artificially produced power by the police Thompson speaks about the energy which came into existence as a natural consequence of the association among the people in the Haight-Ashbury and other places. And he speaks about it with a noticeable sentiment:

San Francisco in the middle sixties was a very special time and place to be a part of ...but no explanation, no mix of words or music or memories can touch that sense of knowing that you were here and alive in that corner of time and the world. Whatever it meant... There was madness in any direction, at any hour. If not across the Bay, then up the Golden Gate or down 101 to Los Altos or La Honda... There was a fantastic universal sense that whatever we were doing was right, that we were winning. And that, I think, was the handle – that sense of inevitable victory over the forces of Old and Evil. Not in any mean or military sense; we didn't need that. Our energy would simply prevail. There was no point in fighting – on our side or theirs. We had all the momentum; we were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave. (FL 56-57)

From his nostalgic tone it is clear he prefers the natural creative power of the people who act spontaneously to the police harassment which is, as is the way, often ordered by the powers that be.

Drugs

As far as the drugs are concerned, they were, as was already suggested, the crucial and essentially inseparable part of Thompson's life. It is not

necessary to give the evidence of another quote to support this assertion – his work is filled with the allusions to drugs.

But I think it will be useful to point out Thompson's attitude to drugs in connection to the mainstream society. The drugs are generally speaking bad and unhealthy. At least we are said so in the primary and high schools. And that is Thompson's point: are drugs that bad? Are they that unhealthy? Why the government tries so hard to repress the drugs? In the article "I Knew the Bride When She Used to Rock and Roll" he quotes the philosopher from Colorado named Ed Quillen:

Our society now judges people not by what they do, but by what they don't do. Any mediocrity who can pass a urine test somehow becomes superior to a talent who can't ... Ray Charles did his most brilliant work during the years he was addicted to heroin ... And it is not just musicians.... Do we want to ignore the contributions that were made by William Steward Halsted to medicine? Sterile operating rooms, thin rubber gloves, residencies for training—most of what we thing of as modern surgery was invented by Halsted at John Hopkins from 1890 to 1922. During that entire time, Halsted had a morphine habit ... Should we go without electric lights, phonographs, motion pictures, fluoroscopes and alkaline batteries? Those were among the inventions of Thomas Edison, a man who slept only two hours a night and gladly endorsed a concoction whose major active was cocaine.

(270)

Quillen basically summarizes Thompson's view.

Media

Finally, I would like to touch upon Thompson's attitude towards the media which are definitely a part of the society. In a democratic society they play a different role than in a totalitarian one – they are not used in favor of a propaganda (at least not so explicitly), but are they objective? Hunter S. Thompson advocates, on the basis of Faulkner's idea, that the best fiction is more truth than any kind of journalism. The problem of the mass media lies in a belief of the masses that it is objective and that anything the media claim is truth. But the media often select what they would cover by unknown key and oftentimes they have connections to the authorities which use them to their advantage.

As Thompson marks, this is the case of the Hell's Angels: "As it turned out, the press was getting the story from the police, by telephone" (HA 133). If we consider the Lynch report mentioned above, the news could not have been much reliable.

Thompson criticizes the American media for being both unreliable and sensationalist, the latter being the cause why such organizations as the Hell's Angels are so widespread and so notorious.

If the Hell's Angels Saga proved any one thing, it was the awesome power of the New York press establishment. The Hell's Angels as they exist today were virtually created by Time, Newsweek and The New York Times. The Times is the heavy-weight champion of American journalism. On nine stories out of ten the paper lives up to its reputation. Yet the editors make no claims to infallibility, and now

and then they will blow the whole duke. The Times took the Lynch report at face value and simply reprinted it in very condensed form. The headline said: CALIFORNIA TAKES STEPS TO CURB TERRORISM OF RUFFIAN CYCLISTS. The bulk of the article was straight enough, but the lead was pure fiction ... A social cancer had been uncovered by the nation's leading news-paper. What followed was an orgy of publicity, and it naturally went to their heads. (HA 37-39)

The news published by the mass media with the best intentions turn out to have the very opposite effect on the society. Instead of warning against the danger of the Hell's Angels the New York Times article caused the notoriety of them which caused that other men joined them and that they became even more savage and cruel.

CONCLUSION

The thesis puts Hunter S. Thompson in a literary context of the New Journalism, which he was a part of, and on the basis of which he invented his own writing style, so-called Gonzo Journalism. Gonzo Journalism is an unscrupulous style of writing which uses sarcasm, humor, hallucinatory descriptions of events, and the method of intensive reportage which provides the author with a deep understanding of a situation he writes about. The aim of the thesis was to interconnect Thompson's writing and his life and to show how he works with the American Dream in his articles and books. The interconnection is demonstrated on the example of the motorcycle gang, the Hell's Angels, which Thompson spent some time with in order to understand properly its hierarchy and its way of life and then wrote a book about it.

In the writing Thompson uses irony in order to criticize the concept of the American Dream and also the Establishment of the United States. He is confronted with Horatio Alger, Jr. whom he often refers to in his writings and whose attitude towards the concept of the American Dream stands in stark contrast to that of Thompson.

The examples from Thompson's life point to the influences that shaped his attitude towards the American Dream. It depicts him as an individual who used to act against the mainstream society from his early youth. However, it is clear that he was not a "rebel without a cause". He knew what he criticized and why did he do so, and he proposed some motions to change the situation. Thompson's motions appeared to be radical, yet they weren't pointless. This

can be seen on the platform of his sheriff campaign which was seemingly mindless but from today's point of view is very progressive.

The thesis also shows that his approach to the American Dream was not unique. Many of Thompson's contemporaries and predecessors (writers and other cultural figures) criticized the American Dream and the society which adopted its values and some of them used irony to criticize it as well as Thompson did. This is demonstrated on the example of Ken Kesey and Norman Mailer. However, in terms of sarcasm he was probably the most explicit one.

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HA – Hell's Angels
SD – Songs of the Doomed
GSH – The Great Shark Hunt

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ENGLISH RESUMÉ

The thesis introduces the reader into the life and work of an American journalist Hunter S. Thompson and it shows Thompson's attitude towards the American Dream. The thesis is divided into three parts. The first one, which deals with Thompson's life, depicts the events he was involved in and other influences that shaped his point of view.

The second one puts Thompson in the context of the authors of the New Journalism which was the literary trend of the time and defines his Gonzo Journalism, original writing style he invented.

The last part describes the concept of the American Dream and on the example of its individual aspects describes the way Thompson criticizes it in his writings. It shows that in order to criticize it, Thompson uses the irony and sarcasm which seems to be the most natural way for him.

CZECH RESUMÉ

Práce představuje čtenáři život a dílo amerického žurnalisty Huntera S. Thompsona a ukazuje postoj, který Thompson zaujímá vůči americkému snu. Práce je rozdělena do třech samostatných částí. První část, zabývající se Thompsonovým životem, poukazuje na události, jejichž svědkem Thompson byl, a na další vlivy, které se projevily při formování Thompsonova životního postoje.

Druhá část zařazuje Thompsona do kontextu autorů Nového žurnalismu, což byl v té době nový literární směr, a vymezuje jeho Gonzo žurnalismus, originální styl psaní, který Thompson na základě Nového žurnalismu uvedl do literatury.

Poslední část práce popisuje koncept amerického snu a na příkladu jeho jednotlivých aspektů ukazuje způsob, jakým ho Thompson kritizuje ve svém díle. Ukazuje, že nejpřirozenější cestou pro kritizování je pro Thompsona ironie a sarkasmus.