

“Buy the Ticket, Take the Ride: Hunter S. Thompson’s Gonzo Journalist in the Movies”

By Maya Meinert

Hunter S. Thompson created and embodied what is called “Gonzo” journalism, an account of events with the journalist as protagonist telling the story from his experience as opposed to a fly-on-the-wall account of events. The idea is that even if some parts of the story aren’t strictly factual, the mixture of fact and fiction as told from the journalist’s point of view is somehow more accurate than a third-person, or “objective,” account. According to Thompson, 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.”¹

Thompson, a self-proclaimed doctor of journalism, started this journalistic movement with an article he wrote for the sporting publication *Scanlan’s Monthly* called “The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved.” It was an account of the Derby from the infield, a place most people never see on television. Thompson became more interested in the people surrounding the race and the process of getting the story than in the story itself.² However, what became known as the Gonzo style³ wasn’t something Thompson had planned; the Derby piece was actually unfinished. Thompson, at a loss as to how to write the piece and on deadline, sent in his notes as they were, hoping he wouldn’t be fired when the editor saw them.⁴ The final product ended up giving birth to “a whole new style of journalism which now passes for whatever Gonzo is...accident and desperation.”⁵

The image of the Gonzo journalist in what is deemed Thompson’s fiction is the one most people know today: the drug-addled, paranoid, borderline-psychotic journalist who, despite his outlandishness and blatant disregard for rules, somehow comes up with a story for publication. The most well-recognized character in Thompson’s fiction is Raoul Duke, the crazy Gonzo

journalist who often travels with his attorney, Dr. Gonzo (based on Thompson’s real-life attorney, Oscar Zeta Acosta).⁶ Both these characters appear in the two films based on Thompson’s work, though under different names, making them the most accessible and easily recognized Gonzo images.

The Gonzo approach to journalism is obvious in Thompson’s pieces written as articles for news publications. But as popular culture has embraced Thompson’s work and style, Hollywood has adapted some of his work into film. *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998) stars Johnny Depp as Raoul Duke, the Gonzo journalist, and Benicio Del Toro as Duke’s attorney, Dr. Gonzo. *Where the Buffalo Roam* (1980) stars Bill Murray as the Gonzo journalist Thompson and Peter Boyle as Thompson’s attorney, Carl Lazlo.

The film *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is based on the book of the same title, which was based on actual events but written with Raoul Duke as the journalist. This film is probably the most well-known of any of Thompson’s Gonzo journalist images because it was popularized by the well-known actor Johnny Depp. (The film was largely panned by critics and didn’t even break even at the box office, but it has since become a cult classic.)⁷ The big-screen version of *Fear and Loathing* brings to life Thompson’s drug-fueled story of misadventures in the pursuit of writing a story on the Mint 400 motorcycle desert race. All the major themes are the same as in the book, just portrayed on a larger-than-life scale so the audience could actually *see* the image of the Gonzo journalist.

Where the Buffalo Roam adapts multiple pieces of Thompson’s work for the big screen, including *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail ’72*,⁸ and his attempt to cover the 1974 Super Bowl for *Rolling Stone*.⁹ The movie shows the image of the

Gonzo journalist who does not follow any rules except his own, especially when it comes to any ethical standards of journalism.

The major recurrent themes in the films based on Thompson’s works of fiction as they relate to the image of the journalist and journalism are the law-breaking journalist, the lying journalist, the drunken/drug-addled journalist, the poor journalist, the lustful/violent journalist and journalism as a higher calling.

THE LAW-BREAKING JOURNALIST

Though the journalist in *Where the Buffalo Roam* does things his own way and on his own terms, disregarding the rules and laws of the land, he is still very aware of the laws and social norms he breaks. He may be an “outlaw journalist,” as a sign announcing his speech at a university calls him, but he seems to know what he is doing, even though it may not look like it. This is only compounded by his frequent swearing and almost constant use of drugs and alcohol. In one scene, Thompson even types and smokes while driving a car through the streets of San Francisco.

In *Fear and Loathing*, Duke is also very aware of the laws and rules he breaks, but as long as he can get away with it, he doesn’t seem to have a real problem. Toward the end of the film, when all the debauchery has been said and done, Duke says, “It was all over now. We’d abused every rule Vegas lived by. Burning the locals. Abusing the tourists. Terrifying the help.”¹⁰ But this acknowledgement doesn’t stop him from breaking more laws, such as turning off the highway and driving across all lanes of oncoming traffic to get his attorney to the airport on time.

Throughout the movie, Duke and Dr. Gonzo break rules and laws everywhere they go: they trash rental cars and hotel rooms; they park on sidewalks; they weasel their way in to a Debbie Reynolds concert only to cause a commotion and get thrown out. Duke also steals everything he can get his hands on from his hotel room before he skips town. He is then caught speeding on the highway by the police, but instead of pulling over, Duke speeds up and beats the officer to the next exit. Duke is nonchalantly leaning against his car, waiting for the officer when he finally arrives.¹¹ He has not only refused to pull over when he was supposed to, but he is also driving with an open beer in his hand and two cases of it in the back seat. When the officer asks him what he thinks he is doing, Duke replies, “I know, I’m guilty. I understand that. I knew it was a crime; I did it anyway. Shit, why argue? I’m a fucking criminal. Look at me.”¹²

THE LYING JOURNALIST

The Gonzo journalist has no qualms about lying to either gain access to a story or to cover himself in the event he has done something wrong. The real Thompson talked about this in 1977: “I managed – by using almost any kind of valid or invalid journalistic credentials I could get my hands on – to get myself personally involved in just about everything that interested me...”¹³ In *Where the Buffalo Roam*, Thompson gives a *Post* reporter, Harris, some pills Harris thinks are aspirin but are really something more potent. When Harris is in a state of oblivion, Thompson steals his clothes and identification. He then poses as Harris in the men’s restroom and interviews President Richard Nixon. This was apparently the only way for Thompson to talk to Nixon, as Nixon had refused to speak to him before.

The journalist Duke in *Fear and Loathing* also lies his way through the story. As they are on their way to cover the Mint 400, Dr. Gonzo asks Duke, “Are you ready for that?”

Checking into a Vegas hotel with a phony name with intent to commit capital fraud and a head full of acid? I sure hope so.”¹⁴ After they trash their hotel room, Dr. Gonzo books another room at a different Las Vegas hotel under the guise of covering the district attorney’s conference on drugs. “If the pigs were gathering in Vegas, I felt the drug culture should be represented as well,” Duke says. “And there was a certain bent appeal in the notion of running a savage burn on one Las Vegas hotel and then just wheeling across town and checking into another.”¹⁵ When Dr. Gonzo picks up a teenage girl, Lucy, on a flight and brings her back to the hotel room, Duke knows this is a bad situation and calls the Americana hotel to arrange a room for her to get her off their hands. He tells the desk at the Americana that Lucy is his niece and that he would rather not give his name because his brother is in politics. When she continues to call their room looking for them, Dr. Gonzo stages a fight over the phone to scare her away.

THE DRUNKEN/DRUG-ADDLED JOURNALIST

One of the most obvious traits of the Gonzo journalist is the use of alcohol and drugs. The entire plot of *Fear and Loathing* is fueled by drug and alcohol use. Duke and Dr. Gonzo bring a suitcase full of different kinds of drugs with them to Las Vegas, and they always order bottles of hard liquor when they check into hotels. They are also frequently drinking while driving. The opening scene of the movie is a good example: Duke and Dr. Gonzo are driving through the desert to Las Vegas while drinking beer, snorting cocaine, eating acid blotters and sniffing amyls. All this follows the opening line, “We were somewhere around Barstow at the edge of the desert when the drugs began to take hold”¹⁶ – the audience doesn’t even know what other drugs he means or how much they’ve taken before this. At the Mint 400 race, Duke gives up on covering the race after the start and retreats back to the press tent bar. When he decides to

go back out, he brings a mug of beer with him, only to have the beer ruined by the sand kicked up by the motorcycles.

Thompson is constantly drinking in *Where the Buffalo Roam*, often bringing his own alcohol and ice bucket along with him to cover stories. He always has a cigarette in his mouth, aided by a cigarette holder. He also takes unidentified pills and snorts cocaine. Thompson writes his stories while under the influence, drinking Wild Turkey Bourbon while typing. He pours alcohol into his grapefruit. Thompson even gives his dog whiskey. When giving a speech to university students, the journalist tells the crowd, “I’d hate to advocate drugs or liquor, violence, insanity to anyone – but in my case, it’s worked.”¹⁷ This sentiment is echoed in *Fear and Loathing* when Duke says, “My attorney had never been able to accept the notion, often espoused by former drug abusers, that you can get a lot higher without drugs than with them. And neither have I, for that matter.”¹⁸

THE POOR JOURNALIST

The Gonzo journalist also never pays his own way. Of course he works for publications that pay him for his work, but he often goes overboard with expenses. In *Where the Buffalo Roam*, when Thompson attempts to cover the 1972 Super Bowl in Los Angeles, he orders all his supplies from the hotel’s front desk, including a Xerox machine, a Sony voice recorder, an IBM word processor, heavy-bond white paper, medium-point blue pens, a quart of Chivas Regal, a quart of mescal, three Crab Louis salads, 16 grapefruit and lots of ice. He also tries to get a video recorder to watch slow-motion instant replays, but his editor, Marty, tells him to watch the game from the press box like the other reporters. Thompson also tries to get more money from Marty, but Marty just tells him that he wants 10,000 words by deadline. Thompson replies with,

“You don’t want any bogus journalism, do you?”¹⁹ In general, Thompson will only give up his stories to Marty when he is paid.²⁰

In *Fear and Loathing*, Duke and Dr. Gonzo are running behind schedule on their way to Las Vegas. Duke emphasizes that “it was absolutely imperative that we get to the Mint Hotel before the deadline for press registration. Otherwise, we might have to pay for our suite.”²¹ After the two trash their first hotel room, Duke says, “The decision to flee came suddenly. Or maybe not. Maybe I’d planned it all along, subconsciously waiting for the right moment. The bill was a factor, I think, because I had no money to pay for it.”²² As he gets in the elevator to leave the hotel after having this epiphany, Duke’s statement perfectly exemplifies the Gonzo spirit: “No cash, no story for the magazine, and on top of everything else, I had a gigantic goddamn hotel bill to deal with. I didn’t even know who’d won the race. Maybe nobody.”²³

THE LUSTFUL/VIOLENT JOURNALIST

The Gonzo journalist is also lustful, and sometimes violent. He never really hurts anyone, but he talks about it often enough. In *Where the Buffalo Roam*, Thompson shoots his fax machine as he freaks out about meeting his deadline. He orders his dog to attack a dummy of Richard Nixon. He also ends up with a half-naked nurse in his room at a mental hospital. Upon arriving in Los Angeles to cover the Super Bowl passed out in his chauffeured limousine, he can’t remember where he is or what he is doing, so he attacks his driver to get answers. Thompson also yells and screams at people throughout the movie.

Talk of violence is more prevalent in *Fear and Loathing*, especially talk of lustful violence toward women. Duke will say things to distract others, such as, “Look, it’s two women fucking a polar bear.”²⁴ When Dr. Gonzo becomes convinced that Duke’s photographer has

something going on with a pretty broadcast reporter he likes, Duke jokingly asks, “Do you think he sodomized her?”²⁵ The worst of this talk comes after Duke finds Dr. Gonzo and Lucy in his hotel room. To get Dr. Gonzo to get rid of her, Duke suggests they pimp her out to the cops at the convention, who he says will “pay 50 bucks apiece to gang fuck her.”²⁶ Though these statements sound horrible, the Gonzo journalist doesn’t act on them, nor does he sound entirely serious when he says them. But his mind does come up with these things, which suggests some pent-up lustful, violent feelings toward women.

JOURNALISM AS A HIGHER CALLING

A redeeming quality the Gonzo journalist has is that of seeing journalism as not merely a means of earning income, which he does, but also as a higher calling. The real Thompson expressed this in 1977: “I have never had much respect or affection for journalism, but for the past ten years it has been both a dependable meal ticket and a valid passport to the cockpit(s) of whatever action, crisis, movement, or instant history I wanted to be a part of.”²⁷ Given Thompson’s stated distaste for journalism, the idea of journalism as a higher calling present in the movies based on his work is probably more fiction than fact. As evident in the previous quote, it seems that Thompson was ambivalent about his work as a journalist – despising it while at the same time not being able to let go of it.

In *Where the Buffalo Roam*, Lazlo is always showing up to take Thompson away from his work. By the end of the movie, when Thompson is trying to cover the campaign, Lazlo tries to get Thompson to leave with him to create a desert paradise. But at this point, Thompson is sick of Lazlo’s crazy ideas and refuses to go with him. His refusal comes too late, however. The press plane leaves without him, and Thompson stares longingly at it as it taxis down the runway.

Duke also knows he has a job to do, even though he often doesn’t do it, like Thompson in *Where the Buffalo Roam*. But Duke is keen on emphasizing his position as a journalist. When Duke and Dr. Gonzo pick up a hitchhiker on their way to Las Vegas, Duke explains the situation to him: “This is a very ominous assignment, with overtones of extreme personal danger. I’m a doctor of journalism, man. This is important, goddamnit!”²⁸ Duke then asserts his position as a doctor of journalism throughout the rest of the movie, reminding people in case anyone forgot. When Duke finally makes it to the Mint 400 race, he gets down to business: “It was time to get grounded. To ponder this rotten assignment and figure out how to cope with it. It was time to do the job.”²⁹ When he feels himself getting out of control or off track, Duke tells himself to “get a grip – maintain.”³⁰ Duke also carries his tape recorder with him often, recording everything, even if it has nothing to do with the story he is covering.

PUTTING THE GONZO JOURNALIST IN CONTEXT

The historical image of the journalist in film is generally an unflattering one. Movie journalists usually have some flaw. They are depicted as wise-cracking, fast-talking, often drunken weasels; they are often deadbeats.³¹ They are also often concerned with making money because they don’t have much, like reporter Peter Warne, played by Clark Gable, in *It Happened One Night* (1934).³² But whatever fault he or she has, the most important thing is to get the story (and file it on time). For these journalists, it is all right to lie, steal or cheat as long as the end result is for the greater good.³³

Thompson’s Gonzo journalist is like the flawed male journalists of other popular films. Matthew C. Ehrlich even describes Richard Boyle in Oliver Stone’s *Salvador* (1986) as “the prototypical outlaw: a cynical, gonzo reporter.”³⁴ Boyle has a “‘reckless’ and ‘devil-may-care’

attitude” with “disrespect toward official codes of law and morality.”³⁵ But the difference between Thompson and Boyle is that Boyle casts aside his devil-may-care attitude to get to the truth, while the Gonzo journalist would never do this.³⁶

The typical flawed male journalist lies or cheats to get a story,³⁷ but Thompson’s Gonzo journalist’s flaws do not necessarily provide the means to an end, the end being the story. The flaws are just flaws, and the end result of such flaws, including drunkenness, is not always the story intended for publication. The end result usually is a story that is far more interesting to readers.³⁸

The image of the drunken journalist is not something new to film. As Howard Good said, “From the 1920s through the 1990s, the journalist has been identifiable in Hollywood films as much by the drink in his hand as by the cynical gleam in his eye.”³⁹ Good also said that throughout these films, “heavy drinking came to seem part of the job description of a newspaperman, like typing with two fingers or wearing a hat indoors.”⁴⁰ Joe Saltzman aptly explained the image of the drunken journalist in his book, *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film*:

Journalists drank because of the pressures of the job, or to have a good time, or because they were hopeless alcoholics. They frequented neighborhood bars, often called “press bars,” kept open bottles in their desk drawers, and boozed together after work. It was their primary source of recreation and relaxation...Real-life journalists who wrote these films were drunk more often than not, and they didn’t see anything wrong in journalists using whiskey and beer to anesthetize themselves against the horrors and injustices they saw on a daily basis.⁴¹

The Gonzo journalist fits this description well: Both Thompson in *Where the Buffalo Roam* and Duke in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* drink almost all of the time, especially when writing their stories, and they drank with their colleagues. As Thompson’s editor in *Where the Buffalo Roam*, Marty knows Thompson is likely to be drinking when he can’t find him and

instructs an aide to “check the bars” for him. In *Fear and Loathing*, Duke drinks not only by himself but also with other reporters covering the Mint 400 race. Good also describes Duke as embodying the drunken journalist stereotype:

Duke combines many of the previous incarnations of the drunken journalist within himself. He is the comic drunk, unaware in his stoned state that his cigarette is bent; the literary drunk, hands poised over the typewriter keys, a bottle nearby for inspiration; the outlaw drunk, destroying public decorum, private property, and just about anything else that crosses his path.⁴²

Though the Gonzo journalist is a lot like his drunken counterparts historically, he takes drunkenness a few steps further into drug frenzy. And like other drunken journalists, such as Diz Moore⁴³ in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), the real problem isn’t drinking but the impending doom of missing a deadline, something the Gonzo journalist deals with frequently.⁴⁴ This is clear in the opening of *Where the Buffalo Roam* when Thompson is writing a story on deadline. He starts to freak out when his fax machine starts receiving and won’t stop: Thompson pulls out a gun and shoots the machine. He calls his deadline situation a “nightmare.”⁴⁵

In *Fear and Loathing*, the press tent at the Mint 400 race is full of reporters drinking, smoking and gambling. As he arrives at the race, Duke says, “Those of us who had been up all night were in no mood for coffee and donuts; we wanted strong drink. We were, after all, the absolute cream of the national sporting press.”⁴⁶ However, in both movies, journalists are described as “hired geeks.”⁴⁷ The real Thompson did not have a high opinion of journalists or journalism, either: “I have spent half my life trying to get away from journalism, but I am still mired in it – a low trade and a habit worse than heroin, a strange seedy world full of misfits and drunkards and failures.”⁴⁸

FINAL THOUGHTS

Thompson has said that “true Gonzo reporting needs the talents of a master journalist, the eye of an artist/photographer and the heavy balls of an actor.”⁴⁹ Thompson had all three, and he parlayed his talents into his fictional characters. Though in true Gonzo fashion, it is hard to pick out fact from fiction and fiction from fact even in his writings that are categorized as fiction.

The book *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is categorized as a novel, but it is not entirely fiction.⁵⁰ Thompson has even said that Raoul Duke “was a vehicle for quotations that nobody else would say. That was me really talking – those are my quotes.”⁵¹ Thompson also has said that “the only real difference between ‘journalism’ and ‘fiction’ in my own mind is *legalistic*: with our contemporary, standard-brand journalism as nothing more than a sloppy lay extension of the Rules of Evidence, rooted in the Adversary Relationship that governs our twentieth-century American trial procedure...”⁵² The “fictional” Thompson in *Where the Buffalo Roam* simplifies this journalism-fiction debate with “So much for the facts!” at the end of the movie.⁵³

Even in 1978, Thompson knew the image of the Gonzo journalist had taken over his own identity.⁵⁴ He said, “I’m really in the way as a person. The myth has taken over. I find myself an appendage. I’m no longer necessary; I’m in the way. It would be much better if I died. Then people could take the myth and make films...but I have no choice. I have to solve this problem. So I suppose that my plans are to figure out some new identity. I have to kill off one life and start another one.”⁵⁵ What stands out in the films about Thompson is more the personality and antics of the Gonzo journalist than the stories he produces, so even in 1998, when *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* was released, nothing much had changed in the 20 years since Thompson made that statement.

Perhaps Thompson said it best himself, as his character did at the end of *Where the Buffalo Roam*: “It never got weird enough for me.”⁵⁶ It seems as though that could have been the whole reasoning behind the creation of Gonzo journalism. Thompson craved something more than just the story he was supposed to cover, observing the circumstances surrounding the story and making a new story out of them, even adding his own, often perverse, twist. What he produced, certainly in his own mind, was a story that more accurately reflected what was happening at the time even if it didn’t contain all the facts (or even the right ones).

FILMOGRAPHY

Where the Buffalo Roam, 1980 (running time 96 minutes), color, Universal Pictures.
Directed by Art Linson. Written by John Kaye. Stories by Hunter S. Thompson.

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, 1998 (running time 118 minutes), color, Universal Pictures.
Directed by Terry Gilliam. Written by Terry Gilliam, Tony Grisoni, Tod Davies and Alex Cox. Story by Hunter S. Thompson.

APPENDIX

Other Journalists Found in the Films

Where the Buffalo Roam

1. Marty Lewis, *Blast* magazine editor (Bruno Kirby): *Where the Buffalo Roam* depicts the editor as someone who stays in his office wearing nice suits and practicing his putting. Marty is always looking for Thompson, yelling at people to find him because Thompson, who waits until the last minute, always owes him a story. Marty doesn’t seem to care too much about Thompson’s antics as long as he produces a story: “You are not registered at your hotel. Your rental car is reported stolen. Personally, I couldn’t give a shit, but you owe me a story!”⁵⁷
2. Harris from the *Post* (Rene Auberjonois): Harris is a bit high strung and very bothered by the fact that he gets stuck on the “Zoo” plane with the tech crews. He wears a nice suit and gets a headache from all the noise on the plane.
3. Reporter on press plane sitting next to Thompson: This reporter is similar to Harris. He also wears a nice suit and is uncomfortable with Thompson. He gets even more uncomfortable when Lazlo finds Thompson on the plane and sits between them.

4. Anonymous reporters on press plane: All seem like upstanding citizens and journalists who wear nice suits and behave appropriately. One of them speaks up when the campaign manager orders Thompson off the plane, but he is quickly rebuffed.
5. Sportscaster for Super Bowl

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas

1. Magazine reporter at Mint 400 (Mark Harmon): Duke has a friendly conversation with him at the bar in the press tent for the race.
2. Lacerda, photographer (Craig Bierko): He is on the straight and narrow and does what he is told, i.e., cover the story. When Duke refuses to go on because “the idea of trying to cover this race in any conventional press sense was absurd,” Lacerda pushes back: “We have to go on! We need total coverage!” Duke promptly fires him.
3. TV reporter (Cameron Diaz): She is an attractive woman with blond hair and a big smile who giggles a lot. That is, until Dr. Gonzo threatens her crew and Lacerda, who seems to have become her friend.
4. TV crew
5. Anonymous sports reporters at Mint 400: They drink, smoke and gamble until the race starts. Then they reluctantly leave their vices to cover the story.

¹ Jean E. Carroll, *Hunter* (Penguin Books, New York, 1993), p. 146.

² From *Fear and Loathing on the Road to Hollywood*, BBC documentary (1978).

³ The term “Gonzo” has been attributed to Bill Cardoso, editor of *The Boston Globe Magazine* and a friend of Thompson’s at the time the Kentucky Derby piece was published. After reading the article, Cardoso said he sent Thompson a letter saying, “I don’t know what the fuck you’re doing, but you’ve changed everything. It’s totally gonzo.” Carroll, p. 124. Also refer to [rollingstone.com](http://www.rollingstone.com) <http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/7045675/fear_and_loathing_at_25>

⁴ Carroll, p. 125.

⁵ Hunter S. Thompson, “Never Apologize, Never Explain,” *Songs of the Doomed Gonzo Papers Vol. 3: More Notes on the Death of the American Dream* (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1990), p. 148.

⁶ Refer to [rollingstone.com](http://www.rollingstone.com) <http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/7045675/fear_and_loathing_at_25>

⁷ Howard Good, *The Drunken Journalist: The Biography of a Film Stereotype* (Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Maryland, 2000), p. 145.

⁸ At a birthday celebration for George McGovern, Frank Mankiewicz, McGovern’s campaign manager, said of *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail ’72*: “It was the most accurate and least factual account of that campaign.” From *Breakfast With Hunter* documentary by Wayne Ewing (2004).

⁹ *Rolling Stone* magazine was changed to *Blast* magazine for the film.

¹⁰ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

¹¹ Duke’s explanation for his actions: “Few people understand the psychology of dealing with a highway traffic cop. Your normal speeder will panic and immediately pull over to the side. This is wrong. It arouses contempt in the cop heart. Make the bastard chase you. He will follow you. But he won’t know what to make of your blinker signal that says you’re about to turn right. This is to let him know you’re pulling off for a proper place to talk. It will take him a moment to realize that he’s about to make a 180-degree turn at speed. But you will be ready for it. Brace for the Gs with a fast heel-toe.” Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

¹² Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

¹³ Thompson, “Memo to Jim Silberman on the Death of the American Dream,” *Songs of the Doomed*, p. 199.

¹⁴ Dr. Gonzo (Benicio Del Toro) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

¹⁵ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

¹⁶ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

¹⁷ Thompson (Bill Murray) in *Where the Buffalo Roam* (1980).

¹⁸ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

¹⁹ Thompson (Bill Murray) in *Where the Buffalo Roam* (1980).

²⁰ When Thompson finally shows up at the magazine with his story – the cover story – two hours before the magazine goes to print, Thompson still will not give his story to Marty until Marty agrees to pray with him for Lazlo and Marty gives Thompson his paycheck.

²¹ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

²² Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

²³ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

²⁴ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

²⁵ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

²⁶ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

²⁷ Thompson, “Memo to Jim Silberman on the Death of the American Dream,” *Songs of the Doomed*, p. 199.

²⁸ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

²⁹ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

³⁰ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

³¹ Joe Saltzman, *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film* (Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 2002), p. 8, 10.

³² Saltzman, *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film*, p. 26.

³³ Saltzman, *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film*, p. 184.

³⁴ Matthew C. Ehrlich, *Journalism in the Movies* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 2004), p. 140.

³⁵ Ehrlich, p. 140.

³⁶ Ehrlich, p. 141.

³⁷ Joe Saltzman, “Analyzing the Images of the Journalist in Popular Culture: A Unique Method of Studying the Public’s Perception of Its Journalists and the News Media” (Norman Lear Center, Los Angeles) p. 36.

³⁸ George Plimpton is quoted in Jean E. Carroll’s *Hunter* (p. 174) as saying of Thompson that “He wants to write what Hunter Thompson readers want to know, which has nothing to do with the event.”

³⁹ Good, p. 12.

⁴⁰ Good, p. 11.

⁴¹ Saltzman, *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film*, p. 28, 30.

⁴² Good, p. 147.

⁴³ As quoted in Joe Saltzman’s *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film* (p. 28), Moore is always looking for his next drink and says, “I got to go out and drink this over,” a statement that if put in the context of the Gonzo journalist would probably work just as well.

⁴⁴ Saltzman, *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film*, p. 30.

⁴⁵ Thompson (Bill Murray) in *Where the Buffalo Roam* (1980).

⁴⁶ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

⁴⁷ Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998) and Thompson (Bill Murray) in *Where the Buffalo Roam* (1980).

⁴⁸ Hunter S. Thompson, *Generation of Swine: Tales of Shame and Degradation in the '80s* (Summit Books, New York, 1988), p. 10.

⁴⁹ Carroll, p. 149.

⁵⁰ From Jean E. Carroll’s *Hunter* (p. 150), Thompson is quoted as saying, “I warped a few things, but it was a pretty accurate picture. It was an incredible feat of balance more than literature.”

⁵¹ From *Fear and Loathing on the Road to Hollywood*, BBC documentary (1978).

⁵² Thompson, “Memo to Jim Silberman on the Death of the American Dream,” *Songs of the Doomed*, p. 203.

⁵³ Thompson (Bill Murray) in *Where the Buffalo Roam* (1980).

⁵⁴ Thompson was even immortalized in the comic strip *Doonesbury* as Uncle Duke, who first appeared in the strip in 1974. From *Doonesbury@Slate* <http://www.doonesbury.com/strip/faqs/faq_ch.html>

⁵⁵ From *Fear and Loathing on the Road to Hollywood*, BBC documentary (1978). This statement is almost prescient: Thompson took his own life on February 20, 2005, at the age of 67. *Rolling Stone* printed what was believed to be his final written words titled “Football Season is Over”: “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.” From RS 970, March 24, 2005 and [rollingstone.com](http://www.rollingstone.com)

<http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/7605448/football_season_is_over/>

⁵⁶ Thompson (Bill Murray) in *Where the Buffalo Roam* (1980).

⁵⁷ The relationship between Thompson and his editor Marty is one of love and hate, much like the real Thompson and Jann S. Wenner’s relationship at *Rolling Stone*. In Hunter S. Thompson’s *Songs of the Doomed* (p. 174), Thompson recounts the time when he was on his way to Saigon to write a piece for Wenner and found out that Wenner had folded Straight Arrow Books at a time when the company owed him \$75,000. In a fit of rage, Thompson wrote Wenner a “seriously vicious” letter about it; Wenner then fired Thompson in a similar fit of rage. However, Thompson recounts, “The business department [at *Rolling Stone*] had ignored the memo to fire me because it’d happened too many times before. They didn’t want to be bothered with the paperwork, so Wenner’s attempt had been derailed.” Joe Saltzman describes this kind of incident in *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film* (p. 183) in which editors “regularly fire their star reporter (who always comes back for more),” and “almost every media film includes at least one major argument between the reporter and the editor or news director or executive producer.”