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Jiri Starek

M.A. thesis evaluation

An Outlaw Journalist's Journey through an Era Decadent and Depraved: Hunter S. Thompson in the Context of America of the 1960s and Early 1970s

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The thesis aims to explore the artistic personality of Hunter S. Thompson, one of the most distinctive cultural figures of post-war America, and his genesis as an author, journalist, and a counterculture idol of the 1960s. The era is now widely regarded as a turning point in contemporary American history as its deep-rooted values and norms were, over the course of a decade, gradually transformed by the young generation of social and political activists toward allegedly a more tolerant and liberal kind of community. Crucial in such an endeavor was the role of the countercultural movement that produced some of the most capable intellectual minds of the time, including Thompson. The paper thus analyzes the role and nature of the alternative culture in America as perceived by one of its most observant participants. Also, the thesis focuses on the author's role in establishing a new genre called New Journalism which can be linked with the era's countercultural efforts as well. In general, Thompson, in his texts, examines various phenomena surrounding the counterculture and provides us with a distinctive portrayal of the era's zeitgeist. However, unlike some of his contemporaries, he also remembers to examine numerous flaws and fallacies existing within contemporary American society, the American Dream idea being the most striking one. Therefore, in order to explore the issue in its entirety, the paper also includes a comparison of Thompson's texts dealing with the counterculture with selected works of such contemporary authors who were not its direct participants but who are widely known to take a specific stand on the problem – among these are Thomas Pynchon, Tom Robbins, and Don DeLillo.

Mr. Starek has done an excellent job here of merging the *Lebenswelt* and personal experiences of one representative American writer with the broader events and cultural currents swirling around him in the complicated environment of the Counterculture(s) of the 1960s and early 1970s. His handling of both is rarely profound, but it is reliably comprehensive, highly plausible, and usefully heuristic throughout. This is a generally excellent and, particularly in the final chapter, ambitious piece of work, on which the author is to be congratulated.

Mr. Starek's literary analysis of the works he examines by Thompson and other significant American authors of the second half of the twentieth century (Pynchon, Robbins, and DeLillo, for example) are insightful and helpful, and the scholarship he deploys to assist himself and his readers in understanding the work and works of those writers is well-chosen and on point.

Both in his cultural analysis and in the personalities and works he has chosen to analyze, Mr. Starek does limit himself to a primarily male, white, middle-class *milieu* and point of view. It is true that Thompson was male, white, and middle-class, as are Pynchon, Robbins, and DeLillo; but some attention to the alternative constructions offered by other gender, race, and class observers of the phenomena on which Thompson focused, and of the ways in which he (and his male, white, middle-class literary brethren) constructed those phenomena, might have been instructive.

Overall, however, this is, in my view, a well-written and well-researched master's thesis. and I believe that it merits an evaluation of between “1, vyborne” and “1.5.”

Thesis evaluation: Between “1, vyborne” and “1.5”

Signed:

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If the reader has any questions or needs additional information, please contact me at [drobbins22@netzero.net](mailto:drobbins22@netzero.net).