

“Apocalypse and Hell”: Hunter S. Thompson’s American Dream

Nick Nuttall
University of Lincoln, U.K.

How the American Dream turned into Hunter S. Thompson’s “Apocalypse and Hell” is a story not only of America but also of Thompson’s personal quest for ultimate “safety”—a death that could be seen as a final heroic attempt to live the “dream.”

I began by positing the notion that fear was central to the projected persona of Hunter S. Thompson, whether in his writings or his life, or at least his life as hinted at in his few autobiographical musings. But my “take” on this “fear” was, I discovered, too simplistic. Thompson’s fear wasn’t so much narcissistic as communal. It was obvious that he feared for the United States, a fear embodied in what he termed the death of the American Dream. He said of his memoir *Kingdom of Fear*, “I especially like the title, which pretty well sums up the foul nature of life in the U.S.A. in these first few bloody years of the post-American century.”¹ But why should he “fear” on behalf of his fellow-countrymen when in life he displayed a certain disdain for them, often, it must be said, disguised as the exaggerated courtliness of the “Southern Gentleman”?

A SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN

This gentlemanly guise is, I believe, a necessary prerequisite for understanding Thompson the man and supports the generally accepted notion that childhood is the determining factor in our later lives. As suggested by Graham Greene, “Everything that can happen to a person, I think, is determined in the first sixteen years of his life.”² So what of Hunter S. Thompson’s first sixteen years?

Thompson was born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1937. His father, Jack, was an insurance agent who died suddenly in 1952, leaving the family broke. His mother Virginia raised Hunter and his brothers on her own. And it's safe to say that Thompson always considered himself a Southerner, a "Johnny Reb" at heart. Indeed, his collected early letters, *The Proud Highway* (1997), is subtitled "Saga of a Desperate Southern Gentleman," and Walter Kaegi, one of Thompson's childhood friends, recalled how "as children, [they] played with rocks, bullwhips and air rifles in the woods behind Kaegi's house, terrifying their mothers. They all had a particular fascination with the Civil War; their favorite game was 'North-South.' Thompson was general of the Virginia Second Cavalry and his base was Fort Lee." Aged only ten, Kaegi "hired Hunter to write about these mock battles in his neighborhood newsletter, the *Southern Star*. This obsession stayed with Thompson into adulthood" where he continued to wear a Confederate-style hat.³ According to Kaegi, "Hunter is very Kentucky. Kentucky is a very violent place."⁴

It is never entirely clear, however, if Thompson's distaste of democratic institutions themselves is part of his "Southern" sense of oppression about how they operate or a more personal aversion to those who operate them. Certainly his distaste of democracy harked back to a previous age and would have been understandable, for example, to many of the Founding Fathers. According to historian John Keane, Founding Father and second U.S. President John Adams "saw himself as keeping apart the conflicting ideals of republicanism and democracy." Indeed, for Adams, "Democracy invariably bred tyranny."⁵

BUMS, BEATS, AND BUREAUCRATS

And, as it turned out, so it did for Hunter. And here he joined illustrious company. Although artists and democratic society, by the twentieth century, managed pretty much to rub along together, this was not the case with those who either expressed extreme views or were prepared to extend the boundaries of "taste" beyond a kind of middle-class norm. William S. Burroughs, for example, according to biographer Ted Morgan, was "fed up with America, seeing government interference everywhere."⁶ Burroughs talked of "obscenity bureaucrats" and by 1949 he "decided to leave a country he had come to detest."⁷ After the 1960 Nixon-Kennedy debates, Thompson's one-time friend Allen Ginsberg wrote: "This country is evil . . . and I now spit on it and tell it to be nice or die, because that's what's coming. I HATE AMERICA!"⁸ In 1965, as if in confirmation, Ginsberg was strip-searched by U.S. Customs after a flight from London. "He was taken into a side room and

stripped down to his underwear. Agents examined the lint in his pockets with a magnifying glass but found only tobacco crumbs.”⁹

Similar tactics were used on Thompson in 1990 when he was charged with four drug felonies, possession of explosives, and three misdemeanors including sexual assault. As the magazine *High Times* chronicled, “Six investigators searched Thompson’s house for eleven hours for evidence of the alleged assault; they found LSD, four Valium pills and trace amounts of cocaine.”¹⁰ Eventually all charges against him were dropped. His valedictory, although delivered twelve years later, still shows his irritation at “my sleazy little morality tale about ninety-nine days of being in the grip of the provably corrupt American Law Enforcement system at its worst with provably evil intentions.”¹¹

Other writers, notably Charles Bukowski, expressed similar sentiments to Thompson’s but without the same sense of political engagement. According to Bukowski’s biographer, Howard Sounes, a philosophy of “non-participation . . . runs through his work.”¹² Bukowski himself said: “My writing has no meaning. It has no moral aspect, it has no social aspect.”¹³ Distinctly different, the outstanding feature of most of Thompson’s output is that it *has* a “moral aspect,” and it shares this defining characteristic, I would argue, with what has become tagged the American Dream. For the “Dream” can only exist within a moral landscape and for Thompson it is this morality that has gone AWOL.

THE AMERICAN DREAM

But why is the American Dream so important? Apart from the fact that it’s a recurring motif in American life from the nineteenth century, Thompson alluded to it constantly in his own writings. True to Greene’s dictum, most of Thompson’s themes can be found in his early journalism. According to Travis Elborough in a 2005 postscript to *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail ’72*, as a “young aspiring novelist, the twentysomething Thompson would repeatedly type out pages from *The Great Gatsby* in the hope of absorbing the cadence of his hero’s style.”¹⁴ For Thompson the writings of F. Scott Fitzgerald were seminal. So it was perhaps inevitable that he would also ingest the way Fitzgerald embodied in his tissue and nervous system the fluid polarities of American experience: success and failure, illusion and disillusion, dream and nightmare. The main qualities of the American Dream presented in *The Great Gatsby* are perseverance and hope together with the idea of success against all odds. Through the eyes of the story’s narrator, Nick Carraway, we see how modern values have transformed such pure ideals into a scheme for materialistic power; how the world of high society lacks any sense of morals or

consequence. George Lorimer, Fitzgerald's publisher at the *Saturday Evening Post*, clearly understood this American Way of Life. Fitzgerald's biographer has Lorimer saying: "The American dream could not accommodate license or pessimism. Love that did not aspire to marriage, stories with unhappy endings had no place in the *Post*."¹⁵

Despite this, the theme of *The Great Gatsby* is inescapably the death of the American Dream. The story itself is of one man's dream of winning back a girl, Daisy, he had once loved. According to Fitzgerald, "the whole idea of *Gatsby* is the unfairness of a poor young man not being able to marry a girl with money."¹⁶ Inevitably, therefore, Jay Gatsby uses purely materialistic means to woo her once again—his Long Island home where he gives fabulous parties. He nonchalantly takes out a pile of his shirts, sent over from England, and begins "throwing them, one by one, before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel" in an attempt to dazzle.¹⁷ Gatsby's ultimate failure is the failure of the American Dream and the theme of Fitzgerald's novel became the theme of *all* of Thompson's writing.

After living variously in Puerto Rico, Brazil, and New York writing sports and travel features for *Time* magazine, the *National Observer*, and the New York *Herald Tribune*, Thompson settled in San Francisco. In characteristic style he resigned from the *National Observer* in 1964 when it refused to publish his favorable review of Tom Wolfe's *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*. So he was looking for work when in May 1965 Carey McWilliams, editor of the *Nation* magazine, signed him up. McWilliams saw his potential and gave him the idea of writing about the Hell's Angels. The piece created a buzz despite displaying little of the exuberant, indulgent, street-rap style of his later writing, and a number of publishers expressed interest in the story. Thompson signed a contract with Random House.

For a year he rode with the Angels, went home with the Angels, chronicled the sex lives of the Angels, identified with the Angels. The book he produced, *Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga*, was pretty much standard journalism. Apart from one important factor. Thompson became part of the action. There was no pretence here at traditional journalism's so-called objectivity. His fiercely subjective style reached parts of society no other journalist reached. This was the era of flower power and the Summer of Love. The establishment press had no clue how to report Black Panther rallies, Grateful Dead concerts, Beat writers' happenings, or Hell's Angels burn-ups.

The first printing of *Hell's Angels* sold out within days of publication, the book going on to make the bestseller list of 1967.¹⁸ In its final pages, Thompson elegizes the American Dream, the first time in his writings that he acknowledged both its power and its perils:

The outlaw stance is patently anti-social, although most Angels, as individuals, are naturally social creatures. The contradiction is deep-rooted and has parallels on every level of American society. Sociologists call it “alienation,” or “anomie.” It is a sense of being cut off, or left out of whatever society one was meant to be a part of.¹⁹

It should perhaps be made clear that, strictly speaking, Hell’s Angels are not alienated, for, as Thompson notes, most of them are “naturally social creatures” and possess a strong sense of fellowship. However, they do suffer from anomie—that is, they have no respect for the laws of a society and reject its given norms. In many respects he was paying homage to literary tradition and in particular to Fitzgerald, the writer he most lionized as “a spokesman for his generation.”²⁰ The aftermath of the First World War produced the jazz age and the loss of innocence recorded by Fitzgerald and for Thompson “America has been breeding mass anomie since the end of the Second World War.”²¹ Did he see himself as the chronicler of his age as Fitzgerald had been before him?

ON LIBERTY

To argue such a case is to suggest that the sheer enormity of Thompson’s pretensions has throughout his career enabled the enemy—towards the end of his life identified as “a fast-emerging new Oligarchy of pimps and preachers who see no need for Democracy or fairness”²²—to dismiss him because his very mode of expression has always carried within it the potential for his own destruction. On closer examination, however, Thompson’s free discussion of ideas is consonant with traditional views of liberty from John Stuart Mill onwards. According to Mill, “Strange it is, that men should admit the validity of the arguments for free discussion, but object to their being ‘pushed to an extreme’; not seeing that unless the reasons are good for an extreme case, they are not good for any case.”²³ No one can accuse Thompson of not pushing arguments “to an extreme.” But in doing so he offered his critics a double whammy for his “extremes” were apparent in both his content and his style.

Paul Perry, author of what he termed an unauthorized biography, relates a number of incidents where Thompson’s content and style caused editorial alarm. For example, in 1970, riding on the back of the success of *Hell’s Angels*, “*Playboy* assigned him a piece on Jean-Claude Killy, an Olympic skier turned Chevy Chase.”²⁴ *Playboy* rejected the article largely because of Thompson’s failure, as they saw it, to engage with the subject. “An editor fumed in a memo, ‘Thompson’s ugly, stupid arrogance is an insult to everything we stand for.’”²⁵ In 1980, a politically correct “editor at a magazine was upset about

some of Hunter's language and changed several of his expressions to ones she found more benign." She changed

"god-damn race" to "beastly race," and the exclamation "Jesus" to "geeze." "Shit," as in "kicking the shit" out of someone became "tar." "Bastard," as in "look at that bastard run," was now "guy." . . . At another point, she completely eliminated a sentence in which Hunter describes a black marathoner as "the fastest crazy nigger in the world."²⁶

According to this editor, the story was laced with racism but Thompson's reasons were in the best tradition of Mill. For Thompson was equally ill-disposed towards "any group or type or any identifiable race, creed, or color. They all deserve mockery and shame and humiliation."²⁷ He called himself a "multibigot." But it was the "unibigots" who were the racists. This is often a disingenuous argument, but there is little doubt that for Thompson it was the nub of the issue. To quote from the venerable John Stuart Mill again: "The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it."²⁸ Thompson's "expression of opinion" being, as already noted, as much a matter of style as of content, it was inevitable that such censorship would drive him "wild."²⁹ But by this time, however, his fame was such that the piece was published in its original form in *Running* magazine as "The Charge of the Weird Brigade," a gonzo-style account of a marathon run in Hawaii.

In re-visioning Thompson's journalism, however, it should be borne in mind that he was also a serious critic and analyst of the American literary tradition—a tradition he always yearned to become part of. In 1964 he wrote a piece for the *National Observer* entitled, "What Lured Hemingway to Ketchum?"³⁰ Elegiac rather than Gonzo in tone, it rehearses Hunter's "end of the American Dream" rhetoric as a tender reminiscence of another of his boyhood heroes:

[The] power of conviction is a hard thing for any writer to sustain, and especially so once he becomes conscious of it. Fitzgerald fell apart when the world no longer danced to his music. Faulkner's conviction faltered when he had to confront twentieth-century Negroes instead of the black symbols in his books . . . Today we have Mailer, Jones, and Styron, three potentially great writers bogged down in what seems to be a crisis of convictions brought on, like Hemingway's, by the mean nature of a world that will not stand still long enough for them to see it clear as a whole.³¹

This critique was posited three years before Thompson developed his first musings on the American Dream and twenty-six years before *Songs of the Doomed: More Notes on the Death of the American Dream* was published.

THE YEAR OF REVOLT

In any examination of Hunter S. Thompson and the American Dream, the year 1968 must be considered pivotal. Until then, mainstream politics had rarely motivated Hunter, but that year felt pretty threadbare for many on the political left. In April Martin Luther King was shot dead with one round from a .30.06 rifle at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis; in May “Bloody Monday” marked one of the most violent confrontations of the Parisian student revolt. More than 5,000 Sorbonne students marched through the Latin Quarter and rioted as police attacked with gas grenades; in June presidential candidate Robert Kennedy was shot dead at the Ambassador Hotel in San Francisco; on August 20, Alexander Dubcek’s attempt at “socialism with a human face” in Czechoslovakia, the “Prague Spring,” was swept away when 200,000 Warsaw Pact troops invaded the country.

In August 1968, Hunter went to Chicago for the Democratic Party convention. Random House gave him an advance of \$5,000 to go and write about “The Death of the American Dream.” As Hunter tells it, he had no real reason for going to Chicago apart from just wanting to be there and “get the feel of things.”³² Mayor Richard Daley opened the Democratic National Convention in Chicago on August 26. There were demonstrations all week by Abbie Hoffman’s Youth International Party (Yippies), a “movement” of committed activists and demonstrators. The Chicago police response was heavy-handed and disproportionate. Mayor Daley introduced an 11 p.m. curfew, and on Wednesday evening police baton-charged the crowd without provocation. The “Movement,” according to Hunter,

was essentially an expression of deep faith in the American Dream: that the people they were “fighting” were not the cruel and cynical beasts they seemed to be, and that in fact they were just a bunch of men like everybody’s crusty middle-class fathers who only needed to be shaken a bit, jolted out of their bad habits and away from their lazy, short-term, profit-oriented life stances . . . and that once they understand, they would surely do the right thing.³³

Hunter himself only just escaped to the sanctuary of his hotel and then, shell-shocked, watched himself fleeing in “stark terror” across Michigan Drive on the TV in his hotel room. “I went there as a journalist,” he recalled in *Kingdom of Fear*, “but I left Chicago in a state of hysterical angst, convinced by what I’d seen that we were all in very bad trouble.”³⁴ Years later he recalled: “I still have trouble when I think about Chicago. That week at the Convention changed everything I’d ever taken for granted about this country and my place in it.”³⁵

His dedication to the American Dream project now began to falter. In a letter to Jim Silberman, his editor at Random House (July 19, 1968), Hunter acknowledged, “The massive ‘American Dream’ filing system that I started building on my return from NY is a bummer. The brute weight of it all has paralyzed my head. . . . There is absolutely *no humor* in the Death of the American Dream.”³⁶ And for Hunter an essentially comic vision of the world was essential. As noted by Timothy Ferris in his foreword to *Kingdom of Fear*, “Hunter’s writing is, first of all, extremely funny.”³⁷ Finding the funny bone of America, however, was always problematic. The end of the sixties brought a flowering of dystopian art, most of which took itself very seriously. The 1969 movie *Easy Rider* had characters searching for the true meaning of America. The Lawyer George Hanson observed that Americans talk a lot about the value of freedom but are actually afraid of anyone who truly exhibits it. Simon and Garfunkel recorded their seminal track *America* a year earlier—“They’ve all gone to look for America” chimed its chorus. At a more rarefied level Aldous Huxley, author of *Brave New World*, had, a generation earlier, described the “United States as a somewhat benign plutocracy in which technological innovation and mass production techniques had made it possible for ‘capitalists who control it to impose whatever ideas and art-forms they please on the mass of humanity.”³⁸ Hunter railed against these “imposed” art forms as well as the way they manipulated the “mass of humanity.”

FREAK POWER CANDIDATE

Hunter’s immediate response was to engage in political action of his own. Returning home to Woody Creek, he built up a head of steam and ran for Sheriff of Pitkin County on what he dubbed the Freak Power ticket. He seemed deadly serious in his political ambitions, toying briefly with the idea of running for Congress. He said that Aspen was ready for

a whole new style of local government—the kind of government Thomas Jefferson had in mind when he used the word ‘democracy’. We have not done too well with that concept—not in Aspen or anywhere else—and the proof of our failure is the wreckage of Jefferson’s dream that haunts us on every side, from coast to coast, on the TV news and a thousand daily newspapers. We have blown it.³⁹

But the satirical mood was seldom far below the surface—his manifesto pledges included changing the name “Aspen” by public referendum to “Fat City,” decriminalizing the possession and sale of drugs, and ripping up the city streets and replacing them with bike paths and footpaths.⁴⁰ Even more bizarre than his political platform was that he lost by fewer than 400 votes.

More significantly, perhaps, Thompson produced what became the defining book of his oeuvre, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. It is subtitled “A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream,” but this sub was probably more to keep his publishers quiet than a true reflection of the book’s ultimate rationale. Random House had been pursuing Thompson for some time for his “American Dream” book, and, as already noted, he had pretty much given up on it. *Fear and Loathing* started life as an exposé for *Rolling Stone* magazine of the killing in Los Angeles of a Mexican television journalist. One of Thompson’s sources was Oscar Zeta Acosta, a prominent Mexican-American activist and lawyer described throughout the book as “my attorney.” They decided to head for Las Vegas so they could talk more freely and used Thompson’s assignment to report the Mint 400 motorcycle race as cover. There are references to the American Dream throughout the book, but it is difficult to ascribe much potency to them apart from their ability to assuage an editor who had given Thompson \$300 up front in cash for the trip.⁴¹

In 1972 Thompson returned to the world of politics and covered the Nixon–McGovern presidential campaign for *Rolling Stone*. The articles were collected in his most significant political opus, *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*. He had assessed Nixon as early as 1968 for *Pageant* magazine: “Nixon’s mind is programmed, from long experience, to cope with difficult situations. The fact that he often distorts the question—and then either answers it dishonestly or uses it to change the subject—is usually lost in the rhetoric.”⁴² Apart from the fact that this observation seems as apposite of modern politics as when he wrote it, he was among the first to understand in any sustained way that the exposure of “shrewd technique” required a closeness to the politician rather than the political process, a need to see him or her working, rather than a mere perusal of manifestos or a rifle through press releases.

Thompson dogged Nixon’s footsteps from the 1972 presidential campaign, through Watergate, to his death in 1994. He dedicated *The Great Shark Hunt* “To Richard Milhous Nixon, who never let me down,” and wrote a coruscating coda for *Rolling Stone* when Nixon died. “Read it and weep,” he commanded, “for we have lost our Satan. Richard Nixon has gone home to hell.”⁴³ Arguably Nixon implanted in Thompson the cynicism with which he approached most political figures from then on (apart from Bill Clinton who he initially disliked until the Gennifer Flowers “affair”). He sent a “Bill Clinton Fights Back” poster to the Clinton headquarters and noted that “the Clinton camp took my advice and denied everything. Which worked nicely. The net result of the Gennifer Flowers flap was a nine-point gain for Clinton in the New Hampshire popularity polls. The pro-adultery vote had spoken.”⁴⁴

OUTLAW MAN

This sardonic tone, a vital ingredient from which much of his humor sprang, is evident even in his earliest writings such as the high school essays he wrote for the Athenaeum Literary Association yearbook, the *Spectator*. “Let us visualize the secure man,” the eighteen-year-old Thompson wrote in his essay “Security”:

He has pushed ambition and initiative aside and settled down, so to speak, in a boring, but safe and comfortable rut for the rest of his life . . . he is accepted as a respectable, but average and prosaic man. But is he a man? Has he any self-respect or pride in himself?⁴⁵

This “desperate southern gentleman” was haunted by the fear of being “average” and “prosaic.” And here arguably is the central dichotomy of Thompson’s own life. Pride and self-respect do not sit comfortably with “security.” “Average” and “prosaic” have become synonymous with the American Dream as it slowly turns into nightmare. Were the drugs, liquor, guns, and outrageous behavior the weapons he enlisted in the fight against these harbingers of failure? With mock pretension he noted: “Every culture needs an Outlaw god of some kind, and maybe this time around I’m *it*.” And Thompson in life as in his writing capitalized Outlaw and lower-cased god.

Interviewed by George Plimpton for the *Paris Review* in 2000, Thompson said: “An outlaw can be defined as somebody who lives outside the law, beyond the law, not necessarily against it.”⁴⁶ This may be a fine distinction—in sociological terms the difference between alienation and anomie—but for Thompson it embodied the very essence of his survival instinct. He bought Owl Farm in Woody Creek, Colorado, a 100-acre “home-base fortress” where he lived “outside the law,” protecting his privacy with electric fencing and an arsenal of guns and other offensive weaponry. In his recent biography of Thompson, William McKeen noted how “life in Woody Creek had Hunter sounding like a satisfied man.” But McKeen then asked the question: “Had he bought into it, the 2.5-kid Rotarian American Dream?” Thompson’s own response seemed to suggest that he might have: “When I made that hairpin turn up the hill onto Woody Creek Road, I knew I was safe.”⁴⁷ This was about as close as Thompson ever came to the life of “Security” alluded to in his youthful *Spectator* essay.

So, in spite of all his bravado, Thompson seemed to harbor a real trepidation of the outside world—its institutions, its rules and regulations, its people. His journalism and letters are sprinkled with the bad karma of people and place: “Nicole was not optimistic about loading up the Cadillac and driving 1,200 miles through hostile territory, just to get to Little Rock.”⁴⁸ And

the paranoia really took hold during his bid for sheriff: “The word had come that afternoon from the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, and the word was extremely grim. Tonight . . . Mr Thompson, the Freak Power candidate for sheriff, was going to be killed.”⁴⁹

Without question, however, he surely stands alone as the manufacturer of the apocryphal moment, in life as in his writings. Whilst Thompson anecdotes abound, they are often useful when trying to get the measure of his lived personality as distinct from his literary persona. Who else would go to a birthday party, for example, even if it was Jack Nicholson’s, loaded up with a bleeding elk heart from his freezer, an outdoor amplifier, a tape recording of a pig being eaten alive by bears, a 1,000,000-watt spotlight, a 9mm Smith & Wesson semi-automatic pistol, and a 40 million-candlepower parachute flare that would light up the valley for forty miles and forty minutes?⁵⁰

Yet ultimately it is not as a man of the counter culture that Thompson must be judged. And here it’s reasonable to ask: on what exactly does his reputation rest? Is it deserved? What does it mean to the wider community—especially the parasitic, internecine worlds of journalism and politics? As early as 1963 with the death of Kennedy, Thompson believed that the commentator/novelist who traditionally covered politics had nothing to say. “Fuck that crowd,”⁵¹ was his strident lament. He decided there would have to be somebody to carry the flag. And that somebody, almost by default, turned out to be him.

Although almost as much has been written about him as by him, no writer can remain alive solely through his biographers. There must be something in the work, the oeuvre, which demands posterity’s attention. In Thompson’s case it is the way he transformed not only political writing, allowing the private to invade the public, but also the very way we think about a journalist’s role as producer of the first draft of history. By his own lights he was “the most accurate journalist you’ll ever read.”⁵² For the real drug that fuelled him was a desire to tell the truth as he saw it—“a demented kind of honesty.”⁵³

To conclude, I want to return to that Hemingway piece of May 1964 for the *National Observer*. It was certainly prescient. Written forty-one years before Thompson’s own suicide, it could almost be his epitaph, too. The last paragraph reads:

Like many another writer, Hemingway did his best work when he felt he was standing on something solid—like an Idaho mountainside, or a sense of conviction.

Perhaps he found what he came here for, but the odds are huge that he didn’t. He was an old, sick, and very troubled man, and the illusion of peace

and contentment was not enough for him—not even when his friends came up from Cuba and played bullfight with him in the Tram [a local Ketchum bar]. So, finally, and for what he must have thought the best of reasons, he ended it with a shotgun.⁵⁴

The American Dream is dead, long live the American Dream.

Nick Nuttall is the author (with Jane Chapman) of Journalism Today: A Themed History (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), which places current debates in journalism in a historical context. He has contributed a chapter on Truman Capote to The Journalistic Imagination, published by Routledge in 2007, and his article on Hunter S. Thompson will be published later this year in a follow-up volume titled Global Literary Journalism. He has contributed to The Newspapers Handbook (Routledge) and delivered a number of papers on literary journalism. His articles appear in such journals as Ethical Space, Jhistory and Media Education Journal.



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