

About Hunter

By FuMaku!

Revised: 2/4/10

Five years ago this month on February 20<sup>th</sup>, the world was deprived of the presence of the (now) late, great Hunter S. Thompson. Thompson died as he lived: on his own terms. To tell you about Thompson's life in this article would be impossible as there is not near enough time or space to do his story justice. Suffice it to say, I will tell you my impressions of the man and author who has had such a deep impact on my life. Do yourself a favor and take the time to investigate and, better yet, to read the work of one of the most innovative writers of the last 50 years.

My story of Thompson has a bizarre and, perhaps, paranormal beginning. In 1986 I was 17 years old and in that year I had a bizarre dream that made me sit up, waking abruptly. This dream would fascinate and haunt me for well over a decade. Actually, it still fascinates me for reasons that will become clear later.

In my dream I awoke alone in a large red Cadillac convertible (top down) that I was driving at breakneck speed along a long country road that was surrounded by a vast corn field. The corn stalks were so high that I couldn't see over them. I was terrified as countless large black bats were following and diving at me. As with most dreams, I'd been dropped right in the middle of the action and so didn't know the narrative my subconscious had conjured, of which I was now a part. But I did know one thing: The bats were out to get me. I had to get away, to seek shelter from this verminous infestation that chased me. As if in answer to a prayer, my need to find sanctuary bore fruit as I pulled up to a 'ranch' style house that was sitting in the corn field. Slamming hard on the breaks I brought this great beast of a car to a halt. I raced to the sliding glass doors, barely getting inside and slamming the door closed as the first of many large bats slammed into the glass that now separated us. Inside the house was dark and silent as I slowly backed away from the glass doors, the only sound being that of the repeated thumping of bats smacking into the doors. I started to look around the seemingly normal but unfamiliar house when... I woke up in a cold sweat breathing heavily. Just another particularly potent dream until...

Many years later, in the year the world was supposed to end but didn't, I saw a movie that amazed and shocked me. The year was 2000 and I chanced on the film, 'Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.' I was attracted to the film because it was directed by Terry Gilliam, formerly a Python, of whose work I am a fan. Beyond that I knew nothing about the movie. I was shocked as, in the beginning of the film, I was confronted by a scene that bore a great resemblance to the scene played out in my dream 14 years earlier. There was Raul Duke and Dr. Gonzo in a large red Cadillac convertible (top down) racing through the desert as Raul Duke complained of large bats attacking them and states, "This was bat country." This moment jolted me as I recalled the mysterious dream of so many years prior. But this jolt was surprisingly short lived as I was swept back into this quirky and funny movie that was based on a book by Hunter S. Thompson that was released in the early 70s. I say 'based on' but frankly this movie is almost exactly like the book, which I read sometime later and is, in my humble opinion, one of the most faithfully realized adaption of a book to film that I have ever seen. In any event, this was my first true entry into the strange and bizarre world of Hunter S. Thompson.

Ever since then I have endeavored to discover the man through his work. This wasn't as easy as it sounds as his books were surprisingly hard to find at the time. Now since his passing, via a gun into the next faze of existence, quite a bit of what Thompson wrote can be found. I did find a paperback of 'Hell's Angels' at a second-hand book store, though. This was the only book by Thompson the store had, I might add. The book was written in 1965 and is the book which brought Thompson out of relative obscurity and brought him acclaim and/or notoriety. It was a good place to start as this was Thompson to the core, but without the drugs and mania that was part and parcel of his later work. This book was written by Thompson the investigative reporter. Yet, that being said, Thompson had his own approach to investigative reporting and was more then just a passive observer as he befriended the Angel's, even though they knew he was gathering information to write a book about them.

This is one of the great qualities of Thompson's work: His ability to observe, become a part of and then, later, collate all his information into a worldview that is unique to Thompson and to state said information in a frank and blunt way. Thompson didn't see life through the rose colored glasses of the politically correct, but instead saw chicanery in most of what he documented, particularly politics. Thompson had the unfailing ability to call it like he saw it regardless of the consequences.