

---

## The Concept Politics and Law in Hunter S. Thompson's Gonzo Texts

Olga Robertovna Fayzullina<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kazan Federal University

A candidate of Philological sciences

An associate professor of

The Department of Foreign Languages

In the Sphere of International Relations

The Institute of International Relations

E-mail: OIRFajzullina@kpfu.ru

---

### Abstract

As social phenomena, law and politics are both dual manifestations of a single entity (perception of a single ontology) and their separate existence is only the result of a human dualism or a pluralistic conception of the world. In addition, the distinction between law and politics is unrealistic from a deeper ontological point of view. For this reason, in the field of political and legal theory and philosophy, conclusions have been drawn about the partial or complete overlap of law and politics, and even in some cases, the equivalence of the two, have created the issue of how these two attitudes should be defined. In this conflict, lawyers, as the main bearers of the law, have played a role and position in line with the owners of economic power. The important point of this stage was, first of all, the orderly and purposeful nature of rights (rule of law) dominated by the German approach, and secondly, the separation of rights from ideology. In fact, the classical legal thinking considered the balance between the public and private spheres in the market and the family. Following the universal legal system, international economic law centered on free trade and private international law was formed and money was depoliticized. In this article we establish the importance of Gonzo Journalism phenomenon as a cultural, historical, political, linguistic, literary and journalistic unique style of writing. The relevance of the topic is in the connection between Gonzo Journalism and the Post Truth Era we are living now. In this work we pay attention to the most significant concept in all of H. Thompson's (the founder of the style) media texts that is politics. Using biographical, historical literary, intentional stylistic, typological methods of analysis we come to the conclusion the notion of American Politics has influenced the Gonzo vision and helped form an extraordinary media language with its own rules and exceptions, rich and emotive vocabulary that can easily attract readers' attention, the subjective language that can be a strong political tool with a long-lasting effect. We can observe that gonzo text has a great multidisciplinary potential that must be fully explored.

**Key words:** Law, Politics, Lawyers, gonzo text, post truth, Gonzo Journalism.

### Introduction

In the post-truth era, media texts require careful analysis and verification. The line between "truth" and "fiction" has always been a subject of debate. Currently, in many areas of knowledge, especially in those related to media communication, the issue is quite acute. One of the most vivid examples of experiments in this sphere in the U.S. media is the works written by *Hunter Stockton Thompson* (1937-2005). He is an American gonzo journalist and publicist, better known as the author of the gonzo novel "*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas. A Wild Journey to the Heart of the American Dream*" (1971). H. Thompson is the founder of Gonzo journalism, the phenomenon which can be interpreted in different ways that's why its essence is quite controversial [1-3].

Politics is one of the crucial topics, playing a very significant role in almost all H. Thompson media texts. He tries to grasp the idea of this phenomenon in his books presenting his thoughts in his specific original gonzo vision. The play in objectivity, which the journalist should strive for, turns into a "double" game into reality, a "new" reality; even in the world of politics he created an absurd 'reality' which made the reader feel disillusioned. Using the technique of defeated expectancy, he showed that the objective journalist cannot give you full information about anything. The illusion that you can get relevant data right now relying on objective journalism is distorted. You must be subjective to understand the whole truth. On the one hand, it's an effective trick to remove the responsibility from the journalist (described in H. Thompson's media texts as "crazy, drunk idiot, stoned, distraught journalist striving for his own truth). On the other hand, such a journalist calls for critical thinking shifting the responsibility to the recipient.

It should also be like this, and certainly the position of literature in the science of law is not to encourage and encourage to continue the old style and to maintain adherence to old texts out of prejudice and prejudice, but rather to feel the cultural virtue and the strength of the legal foundation, because today there is no stronger test

than the experience of years. The sublime and efficient prose is the one that has remained stable and eternal for many years, and even today, the society's desire, which penetrates the minds and legal thoughts of individuals and experts, is the continuation of the same old method. Our legal literature is full of eternal works resulting from the combination of creativity and the mysterious embodiment of words, the analysis of which speaks of a beautiful content and firm principles, and the observance of brevity and avoidance of puns, and in the composition of opinions or the adoption of any type of judicial decision or bill. The defense and organization of documents in official document offices is trying to achieve goals that include the implementation of justice and its distribution and expansion in society, the strengthening of human rights, and the preservation of public interests and order in society. In addition to responding to material needs, the document includes spiritual needs as well. In a comprehensive definition of legal writings, it can be said that legal writings are actually a collection of legal and judicial measures and thoughts that the editor with his special talent and inspired by legal knowledge, experiences and savings to meet the need and exercise the right and formalize transactions and personal condition - which is the ultimate cause and reaching material and spiritual desires - is used; that this, itself, was the result of years of continuous suffering and effort and following the old rules; In other words, by looking at the texts of opinions, bills and regulatory documents, the opinions of the supervisory boards and the Supreme Registration Council, and the votes of the general procedure of the Supreme Court of the country, one can clearly see the profound influence of literature in the science of law, which is evident from the writings of high-ranking judges and lawyers and The directors of various registration departments and the respected heads of official document offices shine on the dark side of our history with beautiful words, and their original and literary characteristics are enough to cover a wide range of words and a special elegance of combining spirituality, legal culture and the ruling system.

Self-collected and the result of its successful effects with the powerful leaven of literature is the emergence of rich and proud texts that are considered as capitals of legal knowledge of this land. Here, we avoid judicial speeches that include the reading of the indictment by the prosecutor and the lawyer's defense in the presence of the court, which in turn are coherent oral content and full of legal literary skills and have a special mastery and background, and we only use the written role. We will pay it. It should be said that the drafting of the opinion and the organization of the documents are accompanied by many arguments; Legal concepts and documented reasons are directly involved in legal relations and actions related to it and are regulated by "express text". It is an official document of historical events that is written with a certain impartiality and makes the conscience of the society believe in the honesty and correctness of the opinion, and the conclusions in such works are so solid that even if there are objections, it is documented and undeniable, because the conformity The writings explain the standards that are meant by the legislator's opinion and are relevant to the actual requirements of the demand - including litigation and transactions and personal circumstances - this feature is by establishing order and general concepts and establishing the relationship between different topics and choosing the way of reasoning from the stage of perception and The association of meanings and the speed of the transfer originated and the process is an official document, a document that can be cited as valid without the need for confirmation in higher authorities and from the time of occurrence. And basically, the current method of organizing the documents is the result of the thoughts and experiences of the past and is based on the knowledge and analysis that was taken from the declaration of the will of the contracting parties and was written, and the most basic form of that is the expression of the conventional concepts of the subject in various forms and with the understanding of the meanings of the words. It is literary and since most of the documents are inferential in the eyes of notaries, the custom and habit of document writing prepares the form of the document. In organizing documents, in addition to observing all laws, regulations and directives, the notary uses his inferential powers, and inferential documents are documents that are supported by knowledge, experience, and continuity, and are scientifically and practically acceptable and prominent.

## **Materials and Methods**

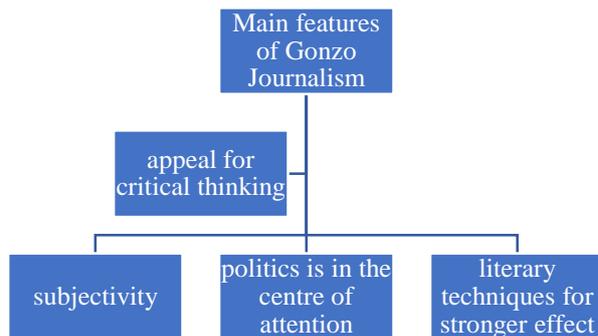
We have used several methods in order to convey the multidisciplinary nature of the phenomenon of Gonzo Journalism, and the position of the notion 'Politics' in it in particular. These methods are historical and literary, biographical, typological, intentional stylistic. Many media texts by H. Thompson are devoted to the theme 'Politics'. In this paper we concentrate our attention on two gonzo pieces "*Better than Sex*". They have bright examples that are interconnected. These books vividly illustrate the specific attitude to the idea of politics by the gonzo journalist.

## **Results and Discussion**

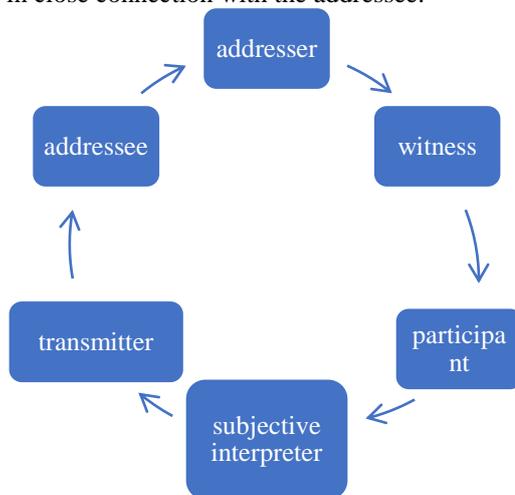
Gonzo Journalism is an individual author's style creating a media image of the founder.

Judging by the definition of this concept, the purpose of such a gonzo message (reportage, essay, analytical article) is to show ideas in an extremely subjective way.

We would like to emphasize the main principles and features of Gonzo Journalism which are:



Analyzing the role of the author we can see that he is the center of the story, fixing real events, phenomena without further editing, provoking, manipulating and shocking the addressee. Gonzo reality is constructed in the process of subjective adaptation based on personal experience and experiments of the journalist. The addresser is always in close connection with the addressee.



Interpreting the author's gonzo texts, we can find a lot of examples demonstrating his open attitude to politics and his outrageous reaction against some political events [4]. Analyzing only these three sentences we can understand how emotionally attached his ideas are. If we talk about text visuality we can notice the usage of graphemic device – one of the most frequent approach which is applied by H. Thompson. We see two words at the beginning of the sentence written with capital letters to put logical emphasis on the utterance. The auxiliary verbs (is, are, do) are in italics to further underline his message. The author calls himself a political junkie and those who are involved in politics he calls addicts too. Another stylistic device which we can notice here is simile. He compares both politicians and journalists to addicts and junkies. Parallel constructions create the tension and the gradation emphasizes the emotional intensity. The repetition of the indefinite pronoun “they” generalizes the idea giving common features of all politicians. And in the case of the indefiniteness the writer takes less responsibility for his words [4]. Though comparing politicians to journalists that both are junkies, he opposes himself to them. Using the personal pronouns “they” and “I”, the possessive pronouns “their” and “mine” the author highlights the difference between them making it in a paradoxical way.

This complex comparison creates emotionally vivid image that leaves a very long-lasting impression on readers. We can find the features of naturalism in this description. Ernest Hemingway had a great influence on Hunter Thompson. The journalist followed his example because E. Hemingway often exploited the principles of naturalism in his great works. Hunter Thompson didn't even try to avoid any unpleasant details in his text, on the contrary, he highlighted that it's not just exaggeration but a real disease:

Metaphorically the concept of politics is established in a shocking and negative way. The conclusion the author comes to is even more unpleasant and it becomes quite unexpected [4]. The worm represents the concept of politics. The parallel H. Thompson creates is quite similar and accurate to the real disease that it really seems to be true as described. This metaphor is getting so real and so terrifyingly impressive, and the reader starts believing that it's a dangerous thing to be involved in politics and the consequences tend to be unpredictable in a bad way [5]. M. Bakhtin classified it as grotesque realism. “We have enough trouble in Washington without the goddamn Guinea Worm – although many presidents have suffered from worse things, but these were always kept secret from the public” [14]. Mocking at reality ironically reflecting it in an exaggerative way. The antithesis that proves the unpredictability and controversial nature of the phenomenon of politics. Positive and

negative aspects of one concept blending together confuse the reader but this paradox captures their attention and makes us think about the essence of politics. The antonyms “lose-win” are basic verbs when there is a presidential campaign, and he continued in the narrative further supporting the idea of the opposition of losers and winners by giving the quotation by Richard Nixon, the 37<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America.

Hunter Thompson gives a lot of quotations in his book *‘Better than Sex’* connected with politics as well: “In politics there is no honour” Benjamin Disraeli [4]. These words are said by a well-known respected politician, a British statesman, Prime-Minister of the United Kingdom, Conservative representative Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881). “Mencken understood that politics – as used in journalism-was the art of controlling his environment, and he made no apologies for it. In my case, using what politely might be called “advocacy journalism”, I’ve used reporting as a weapon to affect political situations that bear down on *my* environment” [4]. He shared his experience in a subjective way though saying the words that people must pay attention to. We can see many invectives and affectives that help create emotionally strong picture and deliver his clear and direct message.

In Table 1 you can see the changes in interpretation of politics created by Hunter Thompson to make this concept more personal socially valuable idea that is crucial in understanding the role of every citizen in the political processes in the country.

Table 1

Concept	Traditional (dictionary) interpretation	Gonzo (nontraditional) interpretation
Politics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the exercises engaged with getting and involving power in open life, and having the option to impact choices that influence a nation or a general public [1].</li> <li>2. the workmanship or study of government; the craftsmanship or science worried about directing or impacting legislative strategy; the craftsmanship or science worried about winning and holding command over an administration [7].</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Politics is not better than sex but it causes addiction especially when you win [4].</li> <li>2. The art of controlling your environment [6].</li> </ol>

## Summary

We want to draw attention to W. Stephenson’s words connected with specifics of the Gonzo language. We are dealing with what W. Stephenson calls ‘semi-autobiographical Gonzo discourse’ [5]. The specific synthesis and mixture of techniques are necessary elements of Gonzo texts: “...his writing develops like a game that goes beyond its own rules and transgresses its own limits. Even as it expounds or advertises its protagonist, who is often named Hunter Thompson, it refuses to limit itself to autobiography, journalism or fiction, and never draws clear lines between experience, reportage and fantasy” [5]. In his book *‘Gonzo Republic. Hunter S. Thompson’s America’* W. Stephenson makes very deep thorough conclusions that must be taken into account: “Gonzo journalism depends not on self-absorption but on perception that is often all too painful. It is a form of active resistance to literary, journalistic and social convention; by abandoning nominally “objective” reporting, Thompson turned away from the “truth” determined by metropolitan editors and their establishment paymasters, and lit out for his own frontier. ...Gonzo requires not randomness, but spontaneity based on a thorough knowledge of craft, convention and tradition, even if the end result is to overturn the acceptable” [5]. His motivation of the study where the border between the truth and the lie is, this eternal endless hopeless search for objectivity in subjectivity inevitably brought him to protest against reality. “Thompson was at odds with the American political system, which concentrated power in the hands of an influential few, meaning the leaders of each main party and their financial backers. Despite his support for George McGovern, Jimmy Carter and other Democrats, Thompson knew that the two-party system was a vehicle for controlling the environments of others, and shaping them as subjects according to its own needs rather than anything as quaint as the Founding Fathers’ goals of the freedom or self-realization of the individual” [5]. The drive to preserve fundamental rights and

freedoms, true values of the American society eventually transformed a self-made man into a Gonzo persona, a media image, a caricature reflecting the real state of affairs in the country.

At the center of the media texts of the journalist-publicist is the figure of the author himself, he positions his creative intention with the help of very well-known stylistic techniques, resorting to paradox, playing with the addressee. He creates a special communicative environment based on contradictions, emotional outbursts, ironic and sarcastic statements. Communication between the addresser and the addressee is constantly maintained due to original appeals to the reader.

N.I. Klushina, studying the peculiarities of the language of politics in mass media, distinguishes the proper political text and the ideological text, which is characterized by a personal mode. "An ideological text is a text on political topics, created by a journalist who has his own understanding of the political situation, the author's position, his own style, finally. From this point of view, the ideological text is always subjective. The imperativeness, declarativity, emphasized formality of political discourse is neutralized by the media discourse through the author's irony, interpretation or commenting on a political event" [8]. Gonzo text in this respect acts as an "ideological text", possessing such typical characteristics as extreme subjectivity, emotionality, humor, exaggeration, used in the author's assessment of the described situations.

H. Thompson often uses as L.V. Minaeva calls them 'invectives' (contemptuous and sarcastic words aimed at ridicule and humiliation) and 'affectives' (emotionally evaluative words) in his ideological texts [9].

The author is not afraid to be subjective, plays with the reader as an "outlaw journalist" For H. Thompson, the comic is a language roleplay that he has following his own rules.

The author's intention is a core point in the analysis of media texts and a very important key component in media stylistics and media linguistics in general. Particularly, we may use the intentional stylistic method.

In our research, we rely on the definition proposed by the Russian professor N. I. Klushina: "Intention is a cognitive-communicative phenomenon that includes the author's awareness / scanning of the external world and the communicative tendency (intention) to convey this scanning (interpretation) to the Other (The Other can be and the subject of intention itself, acting in the autocommunication)" [8].

Even as a sports editor, covering sports news, H. Thompson was able to draw sarcastic and memorable parallels associated with political events and figures. To express his opinion, H. Thompson had to create his own unique space, this turned out to be possible only on the scale of gonzo text.

## Conclusions

The influence of American politics on Hunter Stockton Thompson's works is very strong and vivid. Many researchers confirm it. Witnessing crucial moments in the history of the U.S. politics made him create extraordinary original pieces of gonzo writing establishing common political events in an unexpected way. Politics is a focal point in almost all gonzo texts. Though in the results we distinguish the most common features and principles of Gonzo Journalism. There are some perspectives for further study of the phenomenon comparing it to the relevant situation since we are living in the era of post truth.

Thematically, the author always demonstrates his independence, focusing on the acute political events of the country and drawing analogies with the general set idea. The subjective manner of presenting the material, adherence to the national traditions of the American counterculture are integral elements of H. Thompson's creative position.

We believe that when analyzing such media texts, the researcher should always pay close attention to the author's intention. The primary task for H. Thompson is to present his interpretation of what is happening in an extremely original stylistic manner, not considering it critically important to follow the established canons.

The question of truth and fiction remains more relevant than ever in the dominant era of post-truth. Communication in the socio-political and media spheres can be interpreted from different positions and perceived in completely different ways.

We conclude that Gonzo Journalism is not only about one subjective opinion of an outrageous journalist who cared only about his media image of a celebrity, who provoked audience by his epatage. Actually, the journalist is not in the centre of his story, his written message is. His gonzo language constructs the reality that influences readers and helps realize his subjective journalistic intentions.

The results of our work show that the study of gonzo text requires an interdisciplinary approach. We come to the conclusion that any documentary material can be presented in an extremely subjective manner, and a specific interpretation does not prevent it from being perceived as a fact of history. The techniques used by the journalist give special meaning to the text-document, supplementing it with new meanings. Presenting the essence and prerequisites for the emergence of such a concept as "post-truth" in the analysis of a media stylistic text, it is important to take into account the specificity that a gonzo text possesses.

## Acknowledgements

This paper has been supported by the Kazan Federal University Strategic Academic Leadership Program.

## Bibliography

- [1] Oxford Advanced American Dictionary online URL:  
[https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american\\_english/gonzo-journalism?q=gonzo](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/gonzo-journalism?q=gonzo)
- [2] Fayzullina O.R. GONZO JOURNALISM: FICTIONAL ELEMENTS IN H. THOMPSON'S NONFICTION // *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*. - 2016. Volume 20, Special Issue. - P. 274-277 EID: 2-s2.0-85041791118
- [3] McKeen, W. *Outlaw journalist: The life and times of Hunter S. Thompson* / W. McKeen. – N. Y.: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008. – 428 p. ISBN-10: 0393061922 ISBN-13: 978-0393061925
- [4] Thompson, H. S. *Better than sex: Confessions of a political junkie* / H. S. Thompson. – London: Picador, 2010. – 248 p. ISBN 978-0-330-51075-2
- [5] Stephenson W. *Gonzo Republic. Hunter S. Thompson's America*: Bloomsbury, 2012  
[https://www.google.ru/books/edition/Gonzo\\_Republic/gq8sIuBixZcC?hl=en&gbpv=1&kptab=morebyauthor](https://www.google.ru/books/edition/Gonzo_Republic/gq8sIuBixZcC?hl=en&gbpv=1&kptab=morebyauthor)
- [6] Thompson, H. S. *Hey Rube. Blood Sport, the Bush Doctrine and the Downward Spiral of Dumbness. Modern History from the ESPN.com Sports Desk* / H. S. Thompson. – NY: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks., 2005. – 246 p. ISBN-10: 0684873206 ISBN-13: 978-0684873206
- [7] Merriam -Webster Dictionary online URL: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gonzo#h1>
- [8] Klushina N.I. *Media Stylistics: Monograph* M.:Flinta, 2018. – 184 p. ISBN 978-5-9765-3899-3
- [9] Minaeva L.V. *Speech in the World of Politics: Monograph*, M.: Aspect Press, 2019. – 224 p. ISBN 978-5-7567-0998-8
- [10] Peter Richardson *Between Journalism and Fiction: Hunter S. Thompson and the birth of Gonzo: Boom* (2016) 6 (4): 52–61. <https://doi.org/10.1525/boom.2016.6.4.52>
- [11] Thompson, Hunter S. *Proud Highway: Saga of a Desperate Southern Gentleman, 1955-1967*. Vol. 1. Ballantine Books, 2012. ISBN 9780307826626