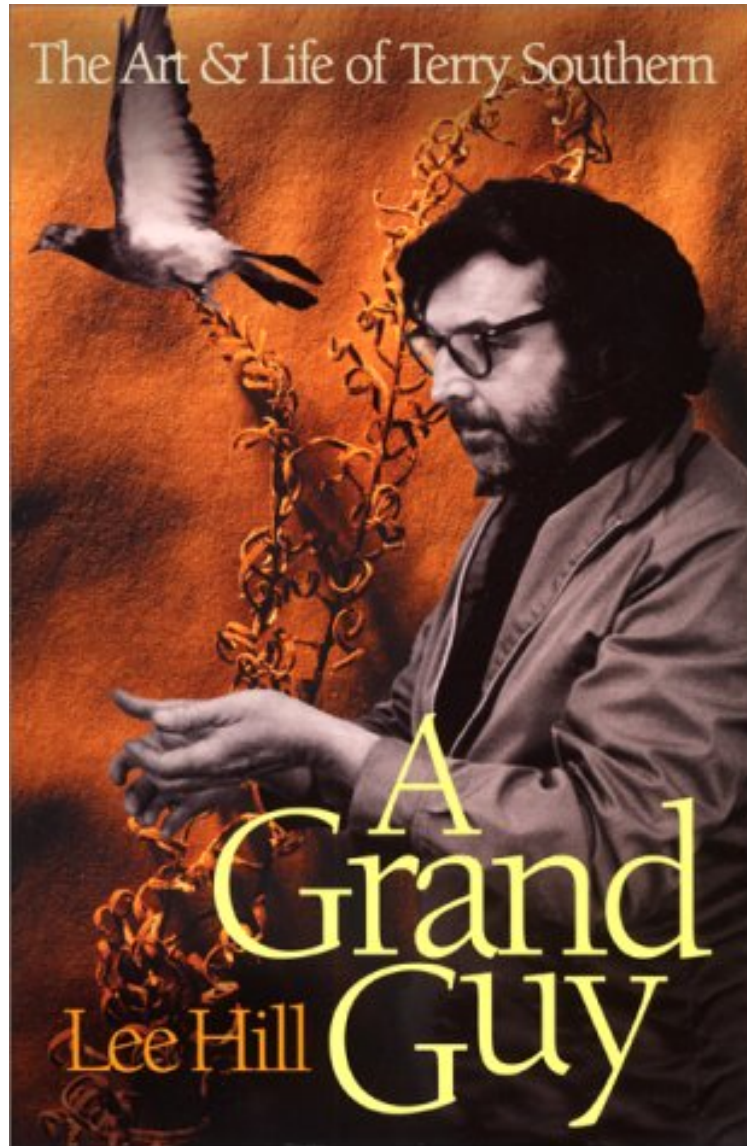


(Read ebook) A Grand Guy: The Art and Life of Terry Southern

## A Grand Guy: The Art and Life of Terry Southern

*Lee Hill*

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**Lee Hill : A Grand Guy: The Art and Life of Terry Southern** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Grand Guy: The Art and Life of Terry Southern:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Thorough and enlighteningBy orawThis is a good book to check into. I find Terry Southern to have been a very interesting character and a master of grotesque satire like nobody's business. A real renaissance man in that he had a beautiful ability to write across many different forms. He wrote great magazine articles, short stories, screenplays (in part) and books. This book is a little dispiriting on the level that it

shows that he spent a lot of time wrestling and running from his demons but it is an accurate portrayal of the man. A delight of a book, well researched, well written and entertaining. You could not ask for more. One only hopes that in due time Terry Southern will be fully recognized for the great talent that he was and his brilliant contributions to writing. 2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The Definitive Biography of Terry Southern By Diego Banducci Unfortunately, it is not terribly well written. What Lee Hill apparently did was compose a laundry list of everything that Terry Southern ever wrote, sort it chronologically, and then string it together with whatever biographical material was available. What is missing is any kind of objective analysis, fawning praise taking its place. Terry was a good guy, but that doesn't mean he was a great writer. As Hill points out, it is difficult to assess Southern as a writer because so many of his collaborators claim credit for much of what he did (e.g., Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda on "Easy Rider"). Thus, his reputation has to rise or fall based upon a few major works -- "Flash and Filigree," "Candy" (coauthored with Mason Hoffenberg, a junky), "The Magic Christian," "Red Dirt Marijuana," and the screenplay for "Dr. Strangelove" (for which Stanley Kubrick also claimed credit). Lee Hill concludes that "The Magic Christian" is the best of these. I generally agree, although there is a story in "Red Dirt Marijuana," titled "Razor Fight," that is on a par with anything Hemingway wrote. Terry's son, Nile, has published a collection of his shorter works, "Now Dig This: The unspeakable writings of Terry Southern" that provides additional indications of greatness and is well worth purchasing. 11 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Good spadework in a first-ever bio By margot Lee Hill was disserved by his editors, who permitted him to compile a 'Terry Southern and his times' tome that is chock-a-block with cliches and party lists, and lacking in critical focus of the man. It tries to be both cultural history and biography, and fails on both counts. However, this is the first and badly needed biography of a man who brought fame and fortune to dozens of other people, and Hill deserves to be commended for his years of spade-work. Hill has no feel for American culture. He is apparently a Canadian who spent some time in London and is primarily a film historian. His sense of cultural history in a broader scale is ludicrously third-hand, delivered in broad generalities on the order of, "America was in the grip of repressive McCarthyism in the early fifties," or "Many well-meaning people were concerned about the plight of the negro." Paradoxically, Hill titles his book 'A Grand Guy,' although his lack of feel for modern American cultural history makes it impossible for him to tell us where Terry Southern's 'Grand Guy' persona came from. The 'Grand Guy' act, a compound of heartiness, mock-haughty superciliousness, and college-humor hyperbole, was a standard persona for those of Southern's generation. Many of Southern's contemporaries (from Gore Vidal to Bill Buckley and even Norman Mailer) played the same notes on their fiddles. This act was a continuation of the tongue-in-cheek snootiness you find in the early years of the Luce publications (where Time letter writers would be accorded a put-down caption on the order of, "Let Subscriber Brailsford Mend His Ways!") as well as The New Yorker (think of Peter Arno's captions or E.B. White's snotty captions for squibs pulled from local newspapers). This was the accepted "hip" idiom for the 20th Century Quality-Lit man, and it reached its full effulgence in the Esquire of the 1960s, when an unrelenting, over-the-top mockery of sacred cows became the mark of sophistication. Southern's tragedy, perhaps, is that he got stuck in what was essentially a passing style of ephemeral journalism, and he was unable to grow beyond it, and he had no friends to encourage him to grow beyond it. Thus, by the early 70s, his output was reduced to self-parodying letters to his friend and imitator at the National Lampoon, Michael O'Donoghue.

"When they're no longer surprised or astonished or engaged by what you say, the ball game is over. If they find it repulsive, or outlandish, or disgusting, that's all right, or if they love it, that's all right, but if they just shrug it off, it's time to retire." -- Terry Southern A Grand Guy He was the hipster's hipster, the perfect icon of cool. A small-town Texan who disdained his "good ol' boy" roots, he bopped with the Beats, hobnobbed with Sartre and Camus, and called William Faulkner friend. He was considered one of the most creative and original players in the Paris Review Quality Lit Game, yet his greatest literary success was a semi pornographic pulp novel. For decades, the crowd he ran with was composed of the most famous creative artists of the day. He wrote Dr. Strangelove with Stanley Kubrick, Easy Rider with Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper, and worked on Saturday Night Live with a younger, louder breed of sacred cow torpedoers. He's a face in the crowd on the cover of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (the guy in the sunglasses). Wherever the cultural action was, he was there, the life of every party -- Paris in the '50s, London in the swinging '60s, Greenwich Village, and Big Bad Hollywood. Brilliant, dynamic, irrepressible, he enjoyed remarkable success and then squandered it with almost superhuman excess. There was, and ever will be, only one Terry Southern. In a biography as vibrant and colorful as the life it celebrates, Lee Hill masterfully explores the high and low times of the unique, incomparable Terry Southern, one of the most genuine talents of this or any other age. Illuminating, exhilarating, and sobering, it is an intimate portrait of an unequalled satirist and satyr who whose appetite for life was enormous -- and whose aim was sure and true as he took shots at consumerism, America's repressive political culture, upper-class amorality, and middle-class banality. But more than simply the story of one man, here is a wide-screen, Technicolor view of a century in the throes of profound cultural change -- from the first chilly blasts of the Cold War and McCarthyism to the Vietnam era and the Reagan years; from Miles and Kerouac to the Beatles, the Stones, and beyond. And always at the center of the whirlwind was Terry Southern -- outrageous, unpredictable,

charming, erudite, and eternally cool; a brazen innovator and unappreciated genius; and most of all, A Grand Guy.

From Publishers Weekly In 1964, Southern was on the crest of celebrity. Not only had his underground 1959 novel, *Candy* (published by Olympia Press in Paris), been launched in the U.S., landing high on the bestseller list, but his screenplay for Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* was critically and commercially celebrated as a comic masterpiece. Today, *Candy* is a cult book and *Dr. Strangelove* is a classic. This well-researched and thoughtful biography is the first full life of the writer, whose novels never achieved the fame of his screenplays. Born in 1924 to an impoverished professional family in Texas, Southern left college and joined the army in 1943; later, on the G.I. bill, he studied in Paris, where he became a minor, if central, player in the literary expatriate scene there. Back in the U.S. in 1953, Southern moved to Greenwich Village and "embraced the emerging idea of Hip." Hanging out with artists like Robert Frank and Larry Rivers, he began shaping his public persona and a writing career that embodied that concept. His novels *Flash and Filigree* (1958) and *The Magic Christian* (1959) earned him a small, faithful literary following. But after 1964, Southern's career stalled. Despite work on high-profile film projects like *Easy Rider* and *Casino Royale*, Southern's essentialist hipster sensibility did not readily translate to screen or novel. Hill's unpacking of Southern's complicated history should please those who remember his work fondly, but the level of detail will probably keep other readers away. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Southern's heyday was in the 1960s, when his screenplays for the films *Dr. Strangelove*, *Barbarella*, and *Easy Rider* were the height of cool. Born in Texas in 1924, Southern had a common rural childhood. After a stint in the army, he studied at Northwestern and then the Sorbonne. He explored the drugs, cheap cafes, music, and eroticism of Paris, where *Candy* was published in 1958 and quickly became a cult hit. Though initially banned in the United States, copies trickled in, and it was finally published here in 1964. It is his screenwriting credits in the 1960s that launched him into the pantheon of celebrity and found him hobnobbing with the Beatles and Stanley Kubrick. But, though his satirical edge influenced such programs as *Saturday Night Live* and *The Larry Sanders Show*, Southern's star waned. This biography falls curiously flat, given that its subject wrote some of the zaniest, most influential avant-garde pieces of his day. Journalist Hill, who interviewed Southern, offers no real analysis of how this seemingly ordinary Texan became the epitome of 1960s cool. For larger public and academic libraries. Rosellen Brewer, Monterey Cty. Free Libs., Salinas, CA Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. "A well-deserved tribute to a cultural lion whose notoriety threatens to overshadow his body of work." -- *Texas Monthly* "As bizarre and entertaining as you'd expect." -- *Esquire* "Crackles and burns on the page." -- *Vanity Fair* "Many people in Hollywood may already have forgotten [Southern. A GRAND GUY] should help redress that injustice." -- *Variety* "Shows how, by the sheer force of his subversive writing, Southern became, however unwittingly, part of our collective story." -- *Brill's Content* "Succeeds in recreating a reckless era and shows Southern as one of its merry players." -- *Kirkus* "[A] well-researched and thoughtful biography...should please those who remember [Southern's] work fondly." -- *Publishers Weekly*