Athough any John Wayne bibliography will be a hefty one, the researcher cannot help thinking it is short of more serious biographies. There is a noticeable chasm between the like minded fans and hagiographers on one side and the iconoclasts on the other. And pointedly there are more books published on James Dean and Marilyn Monroe than John Wayne, and in the BFI National Library collection.

The infamous Playboy interview (May 1971), which led to alleged death threats, reminds the modern researcher of John Wayne's arch conservative views. Perhaps this is why Wayne has been such a polarizing figure. Interestingly, the interview also reveals how The Searchers (1956) has yet to transcend its genre and be recognized by Hollywood as a classic.

As is often the case with research useful sources are discovered in works on other people. John Ford and Howard Hawks have been the recipient of many more in-depth, well indexed and properly referenced studies, which not only offer fascinating insights into Wayne's relationships with these filmmakers but also into Wayne's underrated screen craft.

These alternative sources can often reveal a surprising side to the Duke offering entertaining glimpses at both ends of his life and career. Norma Barzman, in her memoirs, relates how some left-wing writers got their own back dreaming up more and more outrageous stunts for the Duke. In his autobiography, Don Siegel offers his droll observations of the tequila fuelled vicissitudes of working with an unwell Duke on The Shootist (1976).

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London: BFI Education, 1987. 91, 18p. illus. bibliog. filmog. index. + 43 slides. (Star Dossier two)
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