**New Journalism, New Ethics: The case of the Ibogaine Effect and the Writing of Hunter S. Thompson**

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**T**he sound of Hunter S. Thompson's name usually engenders a chain reaction of associations: strange behavior, drug use, guns, and many other eccentricities and idiosyncrasies of a prominent public figure and twentieth century counterculture leader. However, one must not forget that Thompson was, before all, a journalist. His work in the news business began in the late 1950s at various publications in California. Thompson's in-depth reporting on the Hell's Angels motorcycle gang for The Nation caught the eye of other journalists and publishers who sought to push the limits of traditional practices in the profession. Yet, the Hell's Angels story and the book Thompson subsequently published were still far from the type of writing he would adopt in his 1971 opus, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and later in *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. Of that earlier work, Douglas Brinkley, Thompson's biographer and editor said it "...is not Gonzo, it is not surreal, it is straight journalism but it's an authentic, full-blooded account of experience." Detractors, however, insisted that even reporters who had been following Muskie would have started crying.

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"BIG ED EXPOSED AS IOBAGAINE ADDICT"

Four candidates were leading the 1972 Democratic primary elections: Senator George McGovern (SD), Alabama Governor George Wallace, Senator Hubert Humphrey (MN) and Senator Edmund Muskie (ME). Thompson's biased coverage revealed that he had another explanation: He labeled Humphrey a "shallow, contemptible and hopelessly dishonest" candidate who had capitulated on some of his allegations. He defended himself by claiming that he "didn't say he was taking [Ibogaine]," he simply said that there was a rumor of a Brazilian doctor bringing Muskie Ibogaine packers. He then said "who would believe that?..." In another interview on a 1970s talk show Thompson openly declared that he "started the rumor in Milwaukee."
emotionally repressive style of middle-class worklife. In journalism that conflict over expressive and disreputable, in which lay, self-indulgent young reporters refused to accept their professional, institutional responsibilities. In 1973, Tom Wolfe wrote the seminal work *The New Journalism* that described both their coverage in the news of the events and in non-fiction literature. In this book, Wolfe argued that the introduction and indeed the already existing use of literary techniques in journalistic writing by the likes of Thompson, Norman Mailer, and Gay Talese were effective ways to capture the spirit of a new era of unprecedented social changes and cultural upheavals. Wolfe defined four key techniques that came apart by-scene construction of the events of the story, the recording and reporting of dialog, the use of a third-person point of view, and status details about the settings of events. The result was a blend of factual information with a subjective perception made explicitly transparent by the writer's admission and embrace of his/her limited scope on the events in which he or she participated and observed.

Fabrication is unethical by traditional journalistic standards, but is subjectivity unethical as well? Thompson's work has been praised by critics and no lawsuit was ever filed against him for the false allegations he made about Muskie or any other blend of factual information with a subjective perception made.