

A lurid falsification



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the 1950's and 1960's, the concept of the nuclear family was a personification of the American dream, the illusion of the perfect life, the perfect wife and the perfect children, all living in a model community. With four staccato shotgun blasts, Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* all but irreversibly cracks that quintessential familial mold, sending it on a journey of misguidance, sympathy and greed that Dick and Perry were responsible for. For many, however, their thoughts of the "perfect score" and the subsequent manhunt and trial were adulterated with the grimy hands of the author's puppeteering and personal bias. Every action in the story was manipulated for his true endgame, to create a tantalizing atmosphere out of a macabre act. For all of its realistic re-creation of dialogue and alternation of arcs to slowly interweave the two plots together, Capote falters in ultimately creating the book's fictionalized true-to-life atmosphere, the consequence of his failure to separate the intimate aspects of his writing from the set facts of the events that have transpired.

The "nonfiction novel" that Capote introduces to the literary canon successfully creates a layered plot that effectively evokes both conflicted feelings for the antagonists as well as creates a realistic atmosphere that mirrors the actual events of the murder while subtly adding enough elements to include a fictional aspect to it. The book itself is split into 5 different sections, each one another part of the two divergent story threads that contribute to the mythos of the story through the following of both Dick and Perry and law enforcement back in Garden City, developing two distinct layers to what will eventually become a single plot line. As a result, Capote is able to treat each plotline as its own self-contained, multi-faceted entity

before they merge and by keeping them separate, fleshes out the development of each character, combining real-life and made-up elements effortlessly to truly portray the person that he desires them to be, not who they were. To many impressed, including the New York Times, “[Capote] demonstrated that reality, if heard out patiently, could orchestrate its own full range” (Knickerbocker 4). This “full range” is exemplified in the conflicting emotions that Dick and Perry bring to mind, sometimes compassion, sometimes anger, all feelings that twist the book’s perception of them and offer different perspectives for how they might be interpreted long after their executions. In doing so, Capote stresses that while his characters are partially his own creation, they are still essentially a product of their own, set actions in reality.

Unfortunately, Capote’s often-manufactured dialogue, designed to hasten the pace of the story, ultimately hurts it by becoming a difficult aspect of it to overcome in relevance to the book’s descriptive diction and the absurdity of the author’s supposed memorization of every word. As a “343-page true-crime chronicle,” (Kauffmann 1) Capote pushed for the story to be as realistic as possible, a decision that was as misguided as poorly executed. Because the story is consistently rooted in the interactions between its characters, dialogue is used heavily to fill in the necessary plot gaps that the author’s descriptions could not fill themselves. Although Capote wanted it to add a degree of authenticity to the novel, each character’s words does little more than break up the quick style of his writing when every stoic sentence is accompanied by lines of hurried speaking. The book’s struggle to balance its use of dialogue with use of complex plot elements is exemplified in

dialogue-heavy passages such as Perry's resigned confession on the way back from Las Vegas, which is so drawn-out that Capote draws doubt about the truthfulness behind it rather than the sympathy he intends to. Indirectly responding to the NYT, a different perspective was found as a result of this conflict of motives, that " Capote demonstrates...that he is the most outrageously overrated stylist of our time" (Kauffmann 7); that, in itself, is a definite point that the book's over-emphasis on dialogue cannot deny, as it further convolutes Capote's writing and damages his sense of ethos.

Likewise, for the first half of the book, Capote alternates haphazardly between the arcs of Garden City and Dick and Perry's escapade, a spontaneous style of writing that contributes more to the compromising of the story's timeline than its proceedings. Capote lacks a set organizational structure to find plot points where it is appropriate to switch between arcs; along with the added " illumination... [of] vastly oversupplied facts," (Kauffmann 8) the story never has a clear path to reaching its climax, where the threads of law enforcement and the murders intertwine in Sin City, a point in the book that should be an explosive payoff, the sum of all the built-up tension and mystery in the land of greed and malice. Instead, it comes off as more liberating than gratifying, as if the plot itself is being released from Capote's manipulation and generously veers into more realistic, true-to-life territory. By switching back and forth constantly between different stories, Capote intended to draw out the process of capturing Dick and Perry as much as possible, showing the intricate workings and careful actions of bold characters such as Alvin A. Dewey. The author never successfully achieves this desire because his syntax is continuously bogged down with " Reddiwip

[style] writing, goo that gushes out under...compressed air and that...looks like the real thing,” (Kauffman 7) a caustic point that is in conjunction with the struggle for him to omit the “ fluff and filler” from his writing. In republished notes about the book, Capote hypocritically wrote down that “ There is a flaw in...your strength and unless you learn to control it the flaw will prove stronger and defeat you” (Wiener 7). As much as he was praising himself and his work, there was an underlying hint of irony, subtly highlighting his general failure to follow the ideology that he himself preached.

Capote’s new literary form of a “ nonfiction novel,” to somehow interweave a fictional re-telling of a story with the actual events as how they happened, struggles to achieve its full potential because it cannot escape the difficulty of at re-creating authentic dialogue while incorporating fictional elements as well his misguided shifting between the two divergent story arcs that make up the main plot. As didactic as he was about his philosophy of learning flaws and correcting them before they became too overwhelming, Capote evidently suffered from the same mistakes that he earnestly tried to correct in his writing and his philosophy; the pressure of creating an entirely new genre showed in the cracks of the story. He then became his own hamartia and unconsciously became like the character of Perry Smith in his own book, a person stuck in his own daydreams and misconceptions about reality, a person who was not and could not be cognizant of the actual world that was around him, a person who refused to change and believed he was the epitome of everything that was right in the world. In a sense, with the two

worlds that he was tied to, he did not have the courage or capability of merging them together.