

## The Elements Of Documentary Narrative In In Cold Blood By Truman Capote

**Khidirova Mukhlisa Alisher Qizi**

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Year Student Of Master's Department,  
Uzbekistan State World Languages University,  
Tashkent, Uzbekistan**



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**Abstract:** The article deals with the elements of narrative, namely appliance documentary narratives and their significance in the novels.

**Keywords:** real, novel, Capote, narrative.

### Introduction

To begin with, the book In Cold Blood, Truman Capote claimed to have invented a new form, the "nonfiction novel." His development of this form, which he described as combining the "horizontal" linearity of journalism with the "verticality" of fiction, "taking you deeper and deeper into characters and events," led him to give his narrative a filmic structure in a different sphere. Using a strategy analogous to cinematic intercutting, the book links different viewpoints the killers' misadventures to the activities of the Clutters and the police. In removing deep himself from the narrative and giving the impression of maintaining a neutral and detached point of view, Capote claims to appropriate the ability of cinema to view its

characters and their world from the outside and naturally, with photographic objectivity. Realism on the page and realism on the screen are considered as meaningful different things, and it is fascinating to see these differences play out in the adaptation of *In Cold Blood*. In the famous book, Alvin Dewey, one of the detectives in charge of the Clutter case, remarks, "I've come to feel I know Herb and the family better than they ever knew themselves." Though Capote's hyperrealist technique tries to obtain the reader the same feeling, his accumulation of the minor details of the characters' lives does not produce quite the sense of recognition we obtain from Brooks's film. In the book, having connections the effect of cutting back and forth between the killers and the Clutters is to make us see the two as inhabiting entirely separate universes. In the film, on the other hand, though the extremes of these lives are not entirely continuous, we feel that the characters all belong to the same world. Though sometimes labored, Brooks's cross-cutting strategy pays off when he cuts from the killers driving across the railroad tracks to Nancy Clutter in her room preparing for bed, and we hear what we know to be the same train passing in both shots remarkably. The formal contiguity of editing has suddenly become physical inevitability.

### **The Main Findings And Results**

In Truman Capote's true and real-life crime novel "In Cold Blood", it contains the gruesome murders of the members of the clutter family, a much loved family among society that were huge members of their tight knit community in Holcomb, Kansas. The book begins from the family's perspective and gives readers very insightful view to the lives they lived. It showed that people really desired and respected the Holcombs, and how, as the book describes, it was a community where no one locked their doors during the days even nights.

Capote is able to give his readers, a remarkable insight to the impact a loss of a human life or lives really does to other peoples. Readers are given very specific details and how the Clutter family impacted Holcomb and how important and loved they were by everyone in the town and in just one night, those people who were so loved, were taken away by

murders.

Before the night of the actual murder, readers are introduced to the killers, Perry and Dick. Their pasts are unknown in the begging but what the author gives is that they are going to get a huge score, with obtaining no idea what the real score is. Dick does stress frequently one thing to Perry throughout the way, "No witnesses." It's a very ominous foreshadowing for what's to come later. The Clutters are found dead in the morning by the Nancy's two friends, and the police appear. Readers are shown in gruesome that each family member has been bound and blasted with a shotgun in the head almost point blank, all with the exception of Herb, who not only has been shot, but has his throat slit in a dreadful way. Capote knew in deep recognitions that before he could finish his book, the ending — the executions of the two convicted murderers — had to happen. In 1965, when the killers were hanged, the real conflict he felt "tore him apart," Mr. Clarke said in an email.

Undeniably, Capote's aptitude to give real-life accounts the feel and weight of a fiction piece have flourished the genre. Even, nowadays, a half-century after the first ever nonfiction novel, journalists, directors, writers, the people of arts, generally, all of them, understand and utilize ideas, themes, and techniques made popular by Truman Capote in our everyday media and literature.

A Times reporter also mentioned about the accuracy of the writer and wrote:

"To record real life, (Capote) trained himself for two years in remembering conversations without taking notes. Friends would read to him, and he would try to transcribe what he had heard, eventually reaching the point where he was 92 percent accurate."

It is omniscient that, *In Cold Blood* is a vivid example of documentary novel genre. As mentioned by Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, a writer and researcher to describe an emerging documentary novel's characteristics, in *The Mythopoetic reality* (1976), he interestingly claims that the only limitations that are imposed on the nonfiction novelist are that of the medium, the book he considers the documentary novel as inclusive and non-selective, for the novelist does not select elements of his experience in order to project a total

perspective on life. [Mas'ud Zavarzadeh. *The Mythopoetic Reality: The Postwar American Nonfiction novel*, 1976, 89]

Furthermore, according to the ideas of Flis, some of the most typical features that can serve as proof of inter-relativity or overlapping between documentary narratives and metafictional texts can be of intertextuality, plurality of truths, self-reflexiveness of the narrative, the use of parody and irony, reliance on a proto-text, deliberate anachronisms and the tendency towards the evaluation of the past events.

Considerably, the proto-text can either be a historical character or a story to a national literary or cultural principle in *The Armies of the Night* by Norman Mailer which was written in 1968, he describes the march of intellectuals on the Pentagon to the protest the war in Vietnam, which the author claims as "an obscene war, the worst war the nation had ever been in", as well as Truman Capote, in his novel *In Cold Blood* inclines as his proto-text the murder of the Clutter family more precisely.

It should be noticed that, in his public viewpoint and in his writing style Mailer was one of the initial writers of the description of a documentary novel.

The apparent datum is that contemporary documentary novels simulate reality, they often develop it to a certain literary degree. Many writers, whose works can be considered as documentary novels are aware of the fact and some of them openly claim it (for example, John Berendt, Norman Mailer) that their narratives can never give a fully accurate development of events, since, as soon as they are narrated, facts appear to have interrelated reflection of the author's interpretation of the reality or history.

Regarding to the fact that, the documentary novel, as defined abovementioned definitions, is not a minor subgenre that can be readily relegated to the special margins of novelistic production at any selected period.

Undeniably, the documentary work is very much a twentieth-century phenomenon and perhaps, for this reason it has received very little critical attention by literary critics, and simultaneously by readers. One recent study which examines the documentary form has been made by William Scott, who deals specifically with the United States in the 1930's. According to Scott, documentary is 'the presentation of actual fact in a way that makes it credible and vivid to people at the time. In the period of Great Depression America was

involved both in the themes (the worker, the peasantry, the land) and in the artistic and reportorial techniques by apparent examples from Russia and Germany.

As Truman Capote, usually tried to put forward the events which he was really witnessed himself; with personages, he gives the reader a detailed account of the main characters' childhood, his writing style was the vital step towards the documentary genre. Documentary, as a part of literary genre, from the academic point of views, its main aim is to illustrate the American life in more widely approaches, also to centralize global daily issues, which overwhelm other rituals of life.

Admittedly, a documentary novel is not superior to other modes of fictional discourse in its capacity of assertion, since all fictions assert their propositional content with equal force and sincerity; it should be believed that it does raise the problem of reference for explicit consideration. In order to investigate the truth-telling claims of a documentary novel, it is important to illuminate the assertive capacities of fiction and non-fiction in general.

Taking above into consideration, the factual and fictive discourses take more insurmountable connection in searching for a documentary novel's accomplished elements through the reality. Hence, factual and fictive discourses are not unchangeable truth essences, but, meanwhile are historically different types of writing, signaled by, besides, incorporated with the help of alteration of literary conventions and generated by the changeable structures of historically specific bounds of production and intercourse. M. M. Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher, literary critic and scholar who worked on literary theory, as well as the philosophy of language, has remarked in his views that, the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, between literature and non-literature and so forth are not laid up in heaven. Every specific situation is historical and the growth of literature is not merely development and change within the fixed boundaries of any definitions, the boundaries themselves are constantly changing. [Bakhtin M.M. The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays.,1981]

The common argument that fictional and non-fictional discourse cannot be subjectively distinguished simply rests on one of three following counterpart notions. The initial notion, which can be named the "spectrum" argument, centers on the claim, that

the considerable qualities of factuality and fictionality originate in separate facets of literary work, rather than in any informative paradigm and the task of criticism is to evaluate the literary impact of these upon the certain work's rhetorical effect. Therefore, Paul Hernadi, a Research Professor in the English Department of the University of California, acknowledges a "microstructural theory of poetic discourse" which holds that any provided literary work is mentioned as the possession of connected aspects of varying discourses and should be assigned not as a text consolidated by a single non-exclusive frame but as a unity of heterogeneous elements influencing the richness of literary discourse in general. Thus Hernadi manipulates, the investigation of "generic conventions as reflections of historically conditioned preferences of writers and readers." On the contrary, he advocates "the finest generic classifications of our time make us look beyond their immediate concerns and focus on the order of literature, not on the borders between the literary genres." [Paul Hernadi. What is literature? 1978, 80-86]

Obviously, the reader of a documentary work may expect less in the way of a gripping story than the reader of other types of fiction, for the interplay of personages, the build-up tensions, the resolution of conflicts, and other features which traditionally are connected with the fictional narrative, and secondary importance to the writer of the documentary fiction or non-fiction, who is more concerned with the documentary aspect of the work. In documentary novels, the harshness of reality is illustrated with the main essentialities, which readers imagine the reality without any exaggerations.

It is omniscient that some scholarly apparatus to bear on several well-known works of non-fiction that it would be characterized as "documentary novels". Significantly, Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night* and *The Executioner's Song*, John Berendt's *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, are pioneering novels of documentary genre in the Modern American Literature

More specifically, the documentary narratives, as they are in the form of the literary journalism or documentary (or non-fiction) novels, that these studies examine are no exception. As inclined, both terms a non-fiction novel and a documentary novel are appropriate to describe works that are read like novels but are based on facts documented by the author. Both literary terms denote a novel version of nonfictional events in the

different periods. Usually, documentary works widely fall in two categories: documentary novels can either be seen and interpreted as samples of historical and biographic metafiction, with modernistic and also post-modernistic bases, or as the documentary novels with an associated traditional, realistic base. The second type seems to prevail the previous one.

The documentary novel that commonly entered the American literary scene in an updated version during the 1960s was accompanied by the emergence of the journalistic – literary (essentially American) phenomenon of New Journalism.

Capote informed Plimpton: "I'm still very much haunted by the whole thing. I have finished the book, but in a sense I haven't finished it."

In July 1978 Capote was interviewed on Stanley Siegel's live television talk show (shown at 4:36 below). Siegel, who passed away several years ago, asked the obviously inebriated Capote what would occur to him if he did not give up alcohol and drugs.

"The obvious answer is that eventually I'll kill myself," he replied.

## Conclusion

In a nutshell, as Truman Capote, usually tried to put forward the events which he was really witnessed himself; with personages, he gives the reader a detailed account of the main characters' childhood, his writing style was the vital step towards the documentary genre. Therefore, his characters depict the reality and reliable facts.

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