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THE PORTRAYAL OF VIOLENCE IN TRUMAN CAPOTE'S *IN COLD BLOOD*

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Vera Kaplická Yakimova, Ph.D.

Konzultantka: Mgr. Kateřina Kovářová

Autor práce: Leona Králová

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I confirm that this thesis is my own work written while solely using the sources and literature properly quoted and acknowledged as works cited.

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Leona Králová

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Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na reportážní román *Chladnokrevně* amerického autora Trumana Capoteho. Cílem práce je objasnění nejrůznějších forem motivu násilí, které autor v knize představuje. První část práce se zabývá porozuměním díla z hlediska pojetí fikce a reality, která knize předcházela. Zároveň se vyjadřuje k zapojení autora, které je důležité pro pochopení přístupu k násilným sklonům. Další část se zaměřuje na vyobrazení detailů jako hlavních prostředků k vyobrazení násilí, které je následně diskutováno v kontextu literárního motivu, který prochází celým dílem v mnoha odlišných formách a nahlíží na jeho zobrazení v celém díle. Tato část také zmiňuje následky plynoucí z vraždeného běsnění, které mají vliv nejen na vrahy samotné, ale i komunitu dané oblasti a v neposlední řadě i čtenáře a autora samotného. V poslední části jsou analyzováni vrazi rodiny Clutterů nejen jako samostatné jednotky, ale i v rámci svého vztahu pro vysvětlení jejich propojení, které mělo za příčinu následné události.

Klíčová slova: násilí, skutečný zločin, krutost, vražda, lidskost, fikce, realita, Truman Capote

Abstract

This bachelor thesis focuses on the non-fiction novel *In Cold Blood* by the American author Truman Capote. The goal of the analysis is to clarify the various forms of the violence as a motif that the author presents in the book. The first part of the thesis deals with the understanding of the work from the concept of fiction and reality, which was an inspiration for the book. Furthermore, it comments on the involvement of the author, which is important for understanding the approach to violent tendencies. The next section focuses on the depiction of details as the main carriers of depicting violence, which is then discussed in the context of a literary motif that runs throughout the work in many different forms. This section also mentions the consequences of the murderous rage, which affect not only the killers themselves, but also the community of the area and, last but not least, the reader and the author himself. In the last part, the murderers of the Clutter family are analysed not only as separate units but also within their relationship to explain their connection, which was the cause of the subsequent events.

Keywords: violence, true crime, cruelty, murder, humanity, fiction, reality, Truman Capote

Table of Contents

Introduction	7
1. Portrayal of a real-life violent event	10
2. Details evoking suspense	15
3. Violence as a literary motif.....	24
3.1. Origins.....	27
3.2. Consequences.....	30
4. Murderers as carriers of violence.....	36
4.1. Dick as an authoritative villain.....	39
4.2. Perry as a tragic hero	41
Conclusion.....	43
Works Cited.....	46

Introduction

The objective of this thesis is to explore the portrayal and role of violence in Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and Its Consequences*, one of the first novels labelled as non-fiction and published after its serialization in the *New Yorker* magazine in 1965. The novel follows a real-life story of the Clutter family, whose members, namely Herb and Bonnie Clutter and their two youngest children, Nancy and Kenyon, were murdered in cold blood by two ex-convicts, Perry Edward Smith and Richard "Dick" Eugene Hickock, on 15 November 1959.

Truman Capote describes a significant portion of the Clutter family's story by recounting details he uncovered during his own investigation. Yet the author does not only follow the journalistic approach of objective narration but also a subjective method that is typical for fictional literature. This connection between the reality of the actual events and imagination originating in Capote's additions is important for understanding how the story was shaped in terms of describing violence. The author presents not only the violent act itself, thus for instance the homicide, but everything potentially surrounding, preceding and following it. These include descriptions of the minor details that a usual observer would not notice and comment on, such as the atmosphere found in Holcomb. He also includes portions of the story narrated by the convicts, including their previous lives and the events of the infamous night.

To specify the terms of reality and imagination, the reality aspect is demonstrated by the narrative perspective of the murderers since their behaviour most directly indicates the nature of violence. In the context of this thesis, it is important to focus on the evolution behind the violent tendencies of both murderers, because physical harm in many shapes and forms follows them throughout their lives. The development of their tendencies starts with an experience, which firstly puts them into the role of witnesses and subsequently to the position of agents. Using this information, the story can point out the role of guilt and innocence as an

important part of violence and its impact. Naturally, both murderers are guilty of the crime they committed, but the possible innocence rises from Capote's way of sharing detailed specifics of Perry and Dick's upbringing and origin.

On the contrary, the imagination is represented by the author's point of view as his role was also an observer of the situation in Holcomb, which he uses to enrich the plot in terms of language and style, especially when describing the crime location. Capote is also the one who puts the story together and this enables him to put these details of violent behaviour into the context of its many forms. These different approaches to violence and its embodiment are discussed in the second chapter to emphasise the complexity behind a simple term that violence gives the impression of being.

The imaginative approach is also captured by Capote's reconstruction of the moments before the murders till the entrance of Smith and Hickock in the Clutter's house. Having no choice of verifying the information as the family cannot be questioned, the violence is never interpreted by someone, who would go through the terror, but only those who caused it or heard its description. Even though these moments before the main act of violent outburst do not seem important in terms of violence, the author builds the tension while using negligible details based on his assumptions and some general knowledge that he was provided. The thesis tries to discover how these small particularities operate in arousing and preparing the reader for the upcoming climax of the story, thus the murders of the family. This definite part also indicates how Capote digresses from a journalistic to a fictional approach of narrating the story and chooses a slow pace of portraying any direct violence. One can interpret these indirect, but supposedly violent-themed hints as a dramatic vanguard of the real brutality.

As an author who is also associated with the Southern Gothic, Truman Capote was intimately familiar with darker motives in his style of writing, for instance the previously mentioned brutality, but also fear, traumatic experience and variations of damaged human souls.

Some of his similarly dark-themed works include a short story *Miriam* (1944) or another non-fiction novel *Handcarved Coffins* (1980). Both of these literary works represent the evolution of his approach to violence, while *In Cold Blood* stands right in between with its detailed, but also stylistically poetic features.

As a last addition of violence found in the story, the two main creators of harm will be discussed separately in their own chapters, but also as a complex duo. Each of them is surrounded by different life circumstances, which differentiate them in terms of putting any of their violent thoughts into realization.

1. Portrayal of a real-life violent event

As the story is based on a real act of murder, portrays actual people and includes the direct presence of an actual journalist, it is crucial to mention the newly introduced method of writing found in *In Cold Blood*. Thomas Fahy mentions Capote's belief containing the invention of a new approach to writing a novel, precisely named by him "the nonfiction novel" (Fahy, *Understanding* 113). As Capote worked in the field of journalism, his comments on the new wave of mixing the factual and fictional genres seem as follows:

Journalism always moves along on a horizontal plane, telling a story, while fiction—good fiction—moves vertically, taking you deeper and deeper into character and events. By treating a real event with fictional techniques (something that cannot be done by a journalist until he learns to write good fiction), it's possible to make this kind of synthesis. (Fahy, *Understanding* 113)

While creating a base for the development of literature based on true crime events, Truman Capote also stood at the beginning of a literary wave called New Journalism, a revolution in the literary field that connected the term reportage with a fictional approach (Bloom 175). However, this type of fictitious reportage, which also applies to Capote's *In Cold Blood*, could have been created only with manners possessed by a skilful author of fictional stories in terms of fictionalising reality (Fahy, *Understanding* 113).

Ann M. Algeo in her essay *Truman Capote's In Cold Blood* mentions Galloway's opinion on the unimportance of incorporating the work in a particular genre, which would potentially help with refocusing on the genuine impact the story should carry (99–101). Generally, Capote's *In Cold Blood* tries to point out how the aggressivity found in the fictional world of his book is based on the idea of actual violence increase originating from human society. Algeo discusses the real background of the case and summarises it as a type of damage that the society as a whole was dealing with during the 1960's (99). Capote does not comment

on this social problem directly, but he tries to emphasize the contrast between the bestial delinquents representing the lower class or even the poorest inhabitants of the United States and the family belonging to the middle class with no history of previous criminal tendencies. In general, this materialistic aspect can be a simplification of the reasoning behind the thought of hurting someone else. In case of *In Cold Blood*, Capote impartially suggests that the two murderers perceive violence as a form of defence mechanism and reasonable response to their dissatisfaction with their own lives.

This issue can be projected not only on Perry and Dick but also on the whole human society since the inability to cope with certain emotions is a psychological defect rising from early emotional development. However, this leads to the importance of Capote's backstory, which resembles the murderers' in many ways. Truman Capote experienced violence throughout his life in slightly different forms, but he was possibly affected by these traumas for life. Voss in *The Legacy of In Cold Blood* briefly describes Capote's complex relationship with his family members and the struggle he kept within himself (35). Therefore, as a proper member of human society too, he potentially had similar reasons for behaving violently in a similar way as Perry or Dick, but he did not. For that reason, one can question his portrayal of violence as it could have been affected by personal involvement.

Even though he continues with his partly distant and objective approach, his next detailed analyses do not fully support it for their intimate features. For example, Capote does not initially need to fully cover the psychiatric expert opinion of the murderers' complete mental state as the reader discovers their distinctive mental processes very much sooner. Thus, these elaborated passages almost partly operate as a form of defending their violent inclination to solve certain situations. To support the claim, there is a short extract from one of the psychiatric assessments:

Perry Smith shows definite signs of severe mental illness. His childhood, related to me and verified by portions of the prison records, was marked by brutality and lack of concern on the part of both parents. He seems to have grown up without direction, without love, and without ever having absorbed any fixed sense of moral values... (Capote 288–289)

The reader is already familiar with these circumstances and all the traumas of both murderers, there is simply no need to include whole speeches of experts of any kind. However, as the author feels a certain compassion for another human being somehow close to him, he uses these details as a form of humanizing and questioning the possible punishments. This contemplation covers the idea whether both of the murderers, especially Perry, should or should not have been hanged for their violent acts as there was a possibility to defend themselves based on mental illnesses. At the same time, it needs to be pointed out that only a few pages before the long paragraphs such as the last example set in this text, Perry confesses to the lack of feeling any regret and sympathizes only with himself (282), which does not play in the author's favour to make any effort in questioning the resolution of the death versus lifetime dilemma.

Following these thoughts dealing with right or wrong resolutions, Algeo includes in her work an opinion of Trilling, who summarises the difficulty of understanding the role of Capote in the real and fictional world of his book, where he fully possesses the ability to become whoever he wishes to represent and whichever side or neutrality he chooses to follow. The statement proceeds as this:

... some readers think Capote should have “thrown his weight to the Smith-Hickock side of the moral question”; others find Capote too sympathetic toward the murderers; some readers believe Capote's “unquestioning acceptance” of the townspeople and the authorities gives his implied assent to American society; others

feel that Capote was the one writing in cold blood, “exploiting tragedy for personal gain. (Algeo 101)

Even though the existence of seemingly understanding where Capote truly stands can be patterned on the facts about his life or previous opinions, no words seem to fully indicate his real standpoint about the two murderers. The author leaves that open to a diversity of interpretations, even though his standpoint proceeds to lose a sense of neutrality as his subjectivity arises from befriending Smith and Hickock. The intersection between a world created for the purpose of storytelling and reality was represented by a reminder of unfinished business for Capote, which potentially had an impact on his writing and standpoints in terms of jurisdiction (Voss 51). Thus despite some already mentioned signs suggesting a subjective engagement, one may never be entirely sure of his other opinions except the ones he displayed directly and finally how genuine was his real-life relationship with the murderers.

As the author begins to involve the murderers while simultaneously portraying the last day of the Clutter family, his characterization of Perry mainly describes his issues with the effort to be recognized as a masculine figure. Capote proceeds with the description of Perry in this section:

Sitting, he had seemed a more than normal-sized man, a powerful man, with shoulders, the arms, the thick, crouching torso of a weight-lifter. . . But some sections of him were not in proportion to others. His tiny feet, encased in short black boots with steel buckles, would have neatly fitted into a delicate lady’s dancing slippers; when he stood up, he was no taller than a twelve-year-old child, and suddenly looked, strutting on stunted legs that seemed grotesquely inadequate to the grown-up bulk they supported. . . (13)

Without any context, the impression that the paragraph gives would be a kind of mockery of Perry. On the contrary, Capote’s own bad experience with masculine image serves its purpose

to transform it into a vulnerable moment of compassion and the notion of his violent nature is concealed for a certain moment. Perry is simply made more human rather than being vilified. Alongside with that, the pessimism of unforeseen brutality and thoughtlessness as Fahy mentions highlights the intention of Capote to show how deeply buried anger could potentially act if it receives a chance to escape, leading to a loss of rationality and developing a predisposition to react violently (Fahy, *The Philosophy* 58). It is evident how the author portrays Perry's fight or flight response mechanism with the usage of preceding situations from his life before the murders, which makes Capote involved not only in the case of murder but in personal issues as well, making him an easy target of mistrust according to his potential partiality, which depends on the fact that the case finds its origin in reality.

In a short essay "In Cold Blood Reflection", Thomas Clarke summarizes the Capote's visible stance towards the murderers as Smith being less of an evil character as opposed to Hickock (191). This type of involvement implies that the author's objectivity possibly fails in terms of a strong emotional connection, which is his compassion felt mostly towards Smith and not extensively when it comes to Hickock. However, such a claim about the innocence of Smith or Hickock and even Capote's lack of detachment seems problematic. The portrayal of Perry involves a possible interrogation mark of whether he could evolve differently in distinct environments. His "intensity" as Capote mentions (268), works in his favour as showing openness through the usage of specific details and emotional vulnerability does not only affect Capote as a person or author, but the audience of readers as well.

2. Details evoking suspense

The story as a whole presents the blending of reality with fiction while using the devices of written and verbal sources that Capote investigated himself, which required real sources, especially those who were involved in the story to a certain level, voluntarily or not. This structural layout based on this author's real-life investigation permits the involvement of minor characters not crucial for the shift of the main storyline, but mainly to arouse certain emotional impact and enhance the motif of violence by creating tension. One of these beneficial side characters represents Alvin Dewey, the agent leading the murder investigation. Brian Conniff in *Psychological Accidents* describes Dewey as a source of new revelations and disbelief about the aim of the murderers in the Clutter's home (79). Based on the intention to portray accurately how the investigation was conducted, the character of the main officer realizes the importance of coincidence at the same pace as Capote offers it to the reader, implying that the advantage of the novel hides behind its retrospective, but also chronological composition while describing specific facts in a lot of detail. That is supported by referring to the struggles of real crime investigation, such as the following flow of thoughts concerning the possible motive behind the murders:

Now, the big fact here, the thing to remember, is we're not dealing with one murder but four. And we don't know which of the four was the main target. The primary victim. It could have been Nancy or Kenyon, or either of the parents. Some people say, well, it must have been Mr Clutter. Because his throat was cut; he was the most abused. But that's theory, not fact. (Capote 76–77)

The usual disadvantage of a story based on real events does not cause a significant problem when it comes to the commonness of surprising moments found in the book. Even though the fate of the family is sealed since the beginning and the reader cannot expect the moment of pure astonishment, the appealing force hides in the backstage of the main crime scene. The violence

may not appear directly during the investigation but certainly acts as an omnipresent terror arising from the consequences of one night. While causing confusion among the police department during their attempt to catch the killer(s), another group of people involved in the case caught Capote's interest and these are represented by the inhabitants of Holcomb. Yet a problem arises along with the role of these side characters such as Mother Truitt or Mrs Clare, representing the reality of frequent rumours, speculation and misinformation surrounding a story behind the true crime case. Joy Wiltenburg addresses this gossip issue in *True Crime* with an explanation that excessive enthusiasm for new information and overstimulation with facts concerning the violent outburst or more of them, decreases the sense of preserving the absence of bias (1377). The lack of maintaining that quality tends to result mainly in prejudice or even ignorance towards facts. These particular members of the same community as the Clutters function on the same level as the description of the surroundings and their purpose does not involve any progress in the murder case. Through their appearances, these characters do not dynamically change their positions and they serve the role of a certain filling of places that Capote depicts from the start:

Down by the depot, the postmistress, a gaunt woman who wears a rawhide jacket and denims and cowboy boots presides over a falling-apart post office. (2)

The author certainly understands that it is important for the reader to learn in a certain way what were the subsequent reactions of these already-mentioned, but unimportant characters. In a limited manner, these real-life people portray the situation and atmosphere in town before and after the murders take place.

Along with those possible conversations which Capote presents to the reader to highlight the mood among the Holcomb residents, comes the wish to bring back the comfort of the past, which presents a certain "nostalgia" as Brian Conniff declares (80). Many of the minor characters tend to visualize the moments before the murders had taken place, but also the best

attributes of the Clutter family members, which automatically creates a sense of not fully justified prejudice against the unknown criminals. The author reacts to this by describing smaller details such as memories about the deceased family as an addition to the story and to shed more light on them, but without the attempt to praise or humiliate any side of the story.

Considering the impact of gossip and speculations, Capote's intention also seems to be covering an eye-opening experience to at least stop the degradation of Perry and Dick throughout the legal proceedings. However, he starts with this type of defence even sooner. Before the actual realisation of the murders, Capote expresses pity for Perry by showing his everyday physical pain and struggle (52), contributing to his own involvement not only as an author but also as a human being. Thus, the author finds his internal struggle with how to treat the murderers accurately and how to connect their lives rooted in reality with their transition of becoming the plot's characters. This indicates the beginning of the author's overlap in fiction and reality, which helps him create a dreadful atmosphere with the help of internal stories and trivialities to a certain extent, which defines the core of terror made especially for *In Cold Blood*. Finally, despite all of these violent or non-violent individuals, all have their roots in people that existed, making the story naturally more chilling and helping Capote to achieve this purpose even more.

As Fahy briefly summarises, most of the detailed passages in the literary work *In Cold Blood* represent “a meditation on the impact of violence on a small community, an investigation into the psychology of two killers, a portrait of contemporary law enforcement, an indictment of capital punishment, and an examination of the pervasive fears defining 1950s America” (Fahy, *Understanding* 113–114). The book indicates the former intention of Capote since the beginning of the first chapter, presenting the reader with detailed descriptions of the whole area and its inhabitants. As the author's first plan was to portray the surroundings and impact that the murders carried, he found a variety of fascinating aspects even though the area

of Kansas was not an area he was particularly familiar with before his first encounter. Simultaneously, he found the ability to capture the sense of terrifying horror, a typical agent occurring throughout his literary pieces, of a place not primarily open-minded to the trends of the modern world (Fahy, *Understanding* 112). Nevertheless, Capote starts rather slowly, only defining what can be clearly seen by any observer:

The land is flat, and the views are awesomely extensive; horses, herds of cattle, a white cluster of grain elevators rising as gracefully as Greek temples are visible long before a traveller reaches them. (1)

Naturally, a typical observer would not compare the surroundings of Holcomb using a comparison to “Greek temples”. This particular example visibly shows how the author objectively portrays a certain detail but does not neglect the essence of novelistic principles, thus it needs to differ in terms of capturing a plain reality. In this part found in the book, the detail keeps its objectivity, but Capote does not follow this rule on every occasion. Purposefully linking it with the isolating nature and effects of violence, his ability to capture a sense of detachment that surrounds Kansas by observing the town and natural sights also appears at the very end of the whole book before the fictional conversation between officer Dewey and Susan Kidwell takes place. Capote illustrates the landscape by the following description:

Seen today, it is a dark island lapped by the undulating surf of surrounding wheat fields – a good refuge from a hot day, for there are many cool paths unbrokenly shaded by trees planted generations ago. (334)

The scenery located in Garden City, a district in Kansas, accurately shows how Capote’s descriptions of natural surroundings portray the loneliness of a place, where the violent outburst took place and taking the reader back in time as well. Needless to say, the details serve the purpose of personifying a secluded place seemingly suitable for covering a hideous crime committed by two lonely individuals, separated in a similar way as the area itself.

In addition to that, Capote does not focus dominantly on aspects of surroundings, but he also takes advantage of his position as a journalist who gets access to look closely into the investigation, gaining trust to a certain degree. The story was essentially formed while using plenty of sources, in a simplified way divided into three randomly ordered categories: written, verbal and creative. Written ones capture mainly the police investigation of the family murders, verbal category portrays the communication with a diverse variety of people and creative sets the position of Capote as a collector of facts and creator of fiction. Fahy speaks about “the horrifying details of the murders...” (Fahy, *Understanding* 112), which interconnects all the previous categories, thus the facts from the crime investigation that are not freely accessible, excerpts from conversations he led and finally his writing methods including how he put the story and details together into context.

Capote’s portrayal of suspense while using the details of his observations stands on minor and easily overlooked trifles that rise from ordinary moments, but are found in a certain context with violence. One of the examples appears in the first chapter of Capote’s work, where Nancy makes a next-day plan of a regular Sunday church service with her family without the knowledge of future events and her “velveteen red dress” acquires the author’s comment that “it was the dress in which she was to be buried” (Capote 55). This detail of a seemingly innocent object carries the function of symbolizing the murders as the colour red generally portrays the bloodshed of the victims and the rage of a violent outburst linked to the murderers. The detailed passage also suggests a certain contrast of beauty and ugliness of the crime and tries to point out the extent of brutality as Nancy was still in her teenage years.

Another example also mentions Nancy with Capote’s observation of her writing style and its development throughout her maturing phase. “She had progressed in recent months, and it was in a handwriting of emerging maturity that she wrote” (55). Capote intends to highlight the sorrowful reality that the process of becoming an adult has ended and the violent

act of one night stopped a continuity of many years. Using a similar method, the childhood of Perry for instance indicates polar dissimilarities between the upbringing of the Clutter family and their murderers.

The author acquaints his readers with lengthy passages addressing past events nearly obsessively detailed. This type of strong interest is discussed by Voss, mentioning Capote's rather strange enthusiasm oriented on the case as a whole, particularly Perry after the arrest (51). To create a sense of understanding a certain character or an entire group of characters, Capote uses comparison by pointing out similar details about an individual, mainly their mental and physical development starting during the stage of childhood till the day of the murderers. To put that into context, the narrative follows the history of the Clutter family early from their settling in the U.S., even though very briefly as it focuses primarily on the last two generations (Capote 4). This historical background also involves the murderers later in the plot, but their evolution covers their first-hand confessions, deepest thoughts and recollections of important life events that possibly shaped their personalities, future decision-making and mental processes (Capote 265–271). As opposed to the family, one cannot be sure of the truthfulness behind the statements of either Dick or Perry.

Nonetheless, not every detail contemplating violence is secretly hidden or needs to be looked for with difficulty. In *The Philosophy of Horror*, Fahy presents the simplicity in which the story does not particularly need any type of decoding when it comes to the relationship between the killers and the police. According to his questions concerning the reasons why Capote's book raises fear without the moment of surprise, he says:

Before reading the first page, we know the outcome. Even if we haven't heard of the Clutter family, the description on the back of the book tells us that there is no mystery here. . . . We know the Clutters will die and that the killers will be caught and executed. (58)

The understanding is not hidden by the author in the plot as Capote's first intention was "to write about the impact of these horrific killings on the town" (Fahy, *Understanding* 112). The moment of surprise does not happen and Capote simply needs to rely on the suspense that he proceeds to create. Details and thoughts connected with the violence hold the main power and have an impact on causing terror. To clarify the term of thoughts, some of these detailed passages work as products of ordinary observation, but they contain an invisible bond to possible interpretation or reflection of the reader's own experience while reading it.

As the two separate groups of characters, in a simplified way categorised as victims and criminals start to appear in the story, the plotline evolves with the usage of reconstructed scenes based on certain memories and collected narratives. The bridging between the Clutter family and Perry with Dick gathers its momentum with the description of a similar sound or situation. In the first chapter of *In Cold Blood*, these scenes occur frequently as they are fixated on simple detail that emerges in both settings. For example, one of them compare Mr Clutter and Perry based on their morning habits (12). Another example incorporates the sound effect, where the sequence of Dick giving a honk seemingly blends into a conversation between the Clutter children, where one is presented with Kenyon shouting at Nancy (15). Both of these acts contain a form of alertness and simultaneously carry a function of another shift in the plot, suspecting a certain moment of imminent violence or sudden action.

This also shows how Capote does not exclusively follow a path of the literary sphere and chooses to involve his fondness of cinematography (Hickman 468) by using sound in the transition between scenes that he is logically not able to transfer onto the reader in literal sense. The article "Animals in Exile" by George Creeger supports the statement by describing it as "a strong sense of motion but also to confirm the intimacy of the relationship between the criminal and the community" (97). This aspect also serves a purpose of distinction between characters

as to emphasize the existence of two main sides of that story, one interpreted as seemingly good and the other one as bad.

The sound effect presented by the blending of shouting and honking is not merely the only method used by Capote to change into different settings. While the sound symbolises the resemblance between noises and gradation moving towards the climax of the day, the author also applies sameness in terms of emotions experienced by certain characters. One of them is repeatedly represented by a child from the Clutter family, precisely Nancy, and the other by Dick, standing as the more dominant and conspicuous type of character compared to the quiet nature of Perry. The feeling of contentment on both sides stands for the creation of a bond between the murderers and the Clutter children (22). Capote's intention to connect these two groups even before their first encounter with each other establishes an impression of easiness, a distance from the whole violent thoughts starting to escalate as Dick vocally produces them through conversation with Perry covering the homicidal plan (20).

All of these detail-oriented sections fulfil an attempt to outline how the reader may understand the novel, even though some of the main characters do not entirely develop as their presence is certainly limited by the realness of the true event behind the narrative. Wolfe explains this issue with doubts about Capote's genuine presence "inside the minds of the characters" (116). The fundamental understanding of the novel is dependent on the comprehensive description of the surroundings, customs of the murders' area and thought processes that are a product of the author's ability to assemble information for the purpose of forming a non-fiction narrative. Capote develops the characters to initially seem genuine, even though the sense of fabricated situations refers to a certain vigilance when it comes to his sources and the writer's imagination.

The nature of a fiction-oriented writer emerges especially at the end of the novel during the encounter between officer Dewey and Nancy's friend Susan Kidwell (335–336),

which should end the story positively with the idea of moving on. Nevertheless, the effects on the writer himself as Voss also indicates (54) could have created a function of that scene as nothing but a necessary made-up conclusion and last piece of entertainment. Somehow it also works as a last farewell with the family as their murderers were discussed extensively in previous chapters, which additionally magnifies the suffering linked to violence and its impact found in the narrative.

3. Violence as a literary motif

American literature covers the topic of violence in a diverse spectrum of representations, related to the actual world or fictional universe. *In Cold Blood* presents to the reader the harshness of the actual one but with a twist of the author's intention to attract a great audience. The psychological aspect of violence is simplified in *Justifying Violence* by Bernard Gert as an inversion of not ending a life, not hurting or even damaging the physical or emotional health of any person (Gert 616). Violence creates the aspect of fear, an emotional fright following a brutal act or even preceding it. In *The Philosophy of Horror*, Fahy describes the importance of details that contribute to the exaggeration of brutality and wickedness (58). All these branches rising from the sense of violence meet at the point of unpredictable human nature, which in the case of Capote's non-fiction novel intervenes in the literary world and also real life. The possibility of putting all violent actions found in the book into practice can be seen as a potential danger, which unites the reader with the Holcomb community and the fear for the people's own lives (Fahy, *The Philosophy* 58–59).

Capote's general inclination towards American gothic (Perry Jr. 43), thus darker motifs in general, attracted his curiosity to further explore one of these typical darker segments in *In Cold Blood*, which is in this case the topic of violence. Capote was certainly already familiar with the procedure of depicting violence and darker themes in literature, but his approach had to be modified to a certain extent with *In Cold Blood*. Specifically, it demanded him to adapt to a reportage style and use an objective approach that would not be a mere description of the sequence of events, thus supporting what is already known by emphasizing the emotional side with the usage of postponing certain scenes or inserting them in between.

The question that arises from the portrayal of violent acts, which Fahy mentions as well, is the definition of the range in which cold-blooded thoughts are transformed into implementation. The burst of brutality detonates in the Clutter's house but originates in Dick

and Perry's separate lives and involves mainly throughout their union phase till the family murders. Capote points out this fusion of two different violent temperaments with the explanation of their origin and representation of life events. The usual negative view of violence changes into compassion towards the criminals and gradually makes it more difficult for the reader to accept the ending with the execution of them both.

This indecisive tendency of Capote's standpoint when it comes to the murderers is easily transferred onto the reader, thus the social circles aware of the case or the topic of criminal (in)justice and violent behaviour. David Brion Davis in *Violence in American Literature* supports this noticeable controversy by the main components attracting the literary society of readers and critics. According to his opinion, these components are "suspense, surprise, and startling contrast" (28). Capote's story, even though should be lacking the features of suspense and surprise because of the story's real base, works as an unpredictable journey of unfortunate accidents and life events. The suspense was not complicated for the author to create as he simply followed the reality, which even kept him in suspense, but also raring for the capture of the murderers and then the final closure of the case. On the other hand, surprise mainly depends on the author's skill in writing fiction. The reason for that statement is linked to the poetical form of description and storytelling found throughout the book (Linnemann 515). For demonstrative purposes, there is one example fitting accurately this purposely entertaining form of novelistic style to introduce the first signs of suspense:

But then, in the earliest hours of that morning in November, a Sunday morning, certain foreign sounds impinged on the normal nightly Holcomb noises – on the keening hysteria of coyotes, the dry scrape of scuttling tumbleweed, the racing, receding wail of locomotive whistles. (3)

Capote could have used the specific details that he was given by the murderers and their storytelling. Only as an author of fiction does he possess the ability to focus on the surroundings

of the Clutter's house, also being in no rush as opposed to Perry and Dick during the robbery. This paragraph represents the gradual evolution of violence throughout the book, starting at a slow pace to first engage the readers and force them to imagine the scenery and possibilities. Capote certainly builds on these aspects as the storytelling involving the night of the murders relies only on the confession of Dick and the frankness of Perry to share his viewpoint.

Even though the book covers the intention to hurt the Clutters for the most part, the main intention of Perry Smith and Dick Hickock originated from the desire to get a significant amount of money. The whole act of robbery points out the importance of stealing material and non-material objects, which can be accomplished by using violence as a driving force. As Perry describes to officer Dewey after the police unit finally captured them, Dick assured him beforehand of a sum of ten thousand dollars to be found in the Clutter family house (226). While undermining Perry and Dick's relationship stability (238), a blissful ignorance of the facts about the safe's existence ended with dissatisfaction involving the ridiculously small sum of money that was stolen (239). This financial gain represents the material object already mentioned. For the non-material objects, these would be epitomized by the lives of the murdered family members. All four people were robbed in terms of their money, belongings and lastly their lives. They were harmed in terms of physical and emotional aspects, but initially, they were not caused any significant harm by losing material objects such as money or belongings. These materialistic possessions only matter to the murderers, which leads to the absurdity of the whole robbery attempt.

Both Justman and Wöll mention throughout their works the sense of this pointlessness and the lack of motive when it comes to the violent outburst, which carries a truthful base, but also focuses mainly on the fact that neither Perry nor Dick knew their victims before the violent night. Justman states it as "the dazzling paradox of malignity with no apparent motive" (178) and Wöll as "apparently senseless murder of a married couple and their two

teenage children” (50). The motive of both Dick and Perry was money-driven, but individually speaking, only Dick was the one that was constantly mentioning the killing of any witnesses, thus intending to have a violent motive from the start. Perry mentions his hesitation of actually ending any lives, which evolves in the contrast of morality found in both of their personalities, but also ways of expression that are also their natural attributes. Hickock and his charisma affect most of the people he encounters. Based on this feature he possesses, his accomplice generates a certain attraction to him as well (227). On the other hand, Smith is portrayed as a creative mind who establishes an identity sympathetic enough to feel pity for him, contributing to the sensational factor of his persona (Wiltburg 1382). Considering all these matters, both of the murderers work well as characters because of their charming characteristics that complement each other. Their likeability rises from their imperfections and negative features, while they represent how the portrayal of violence in literature can become diverse.

3.1. Origins

Firstly, Capote does not directly mention the origins behind any form of violence found in his work. One can presume and interpret it by his or her own means, but according to some detailed passages, the first origin of why someone is inclined towards a harmful force can be traced to childhood. In *Understanding*, Fahy points out the term troublemaking as the early stage of possibly developing a positive relationship with violence (120). Capote in his storytelling takes this troublemaking naturally to the extreme, but as he depicts the life narratives of Dick and Perry, the origin seems to resemble a characteristic of a young troublemaker. Perry comments on his upbringing by stating:

In Frisco I was continuously in trouble. I had started to run around with a gang, all of which were older than myself. My mother was always drunk, never in a fit condition to properly provide and care for us. I run as free & wild as a coyote. There

was no rule or discipline, or anyone to show me right from wrong. I came & went as I pleased ... (Capote 266–267)

In this passage, Perry describes his previous life before the murders of the Clutter family. A short paragraph such as this one contains the most important aspects for a general outline of delinquency. He stereotypically joined a troubled group and became a ruthless and reckless adolescent without authority whatsoever. On the other hand, the story of Dick differs in some key points such as the opposite experience with parental authority, but also having a childhood that was not initially troubled or unhappy (Capote 269). However, he confesses to a stimulus that he finds within himself, causing him to like stealing and having paedophilic tendencies. The comparison of their different troubled nature refers to the fact of how origin can differ, but simultaneously have a similar pattern for future purposes.

Dick and Perry stand as the polar opposite of the Clutter family as their purpose should be representing the wickedness of society, but they are not the only side that finds pleasure in causing harm to a living being. The Clutter family also possess a certain type of natural inclination towards violence that may act as a cultural manner or simply inborn human behaviour. Capote uses this type of information to objectively capture the variation of similar qualities of the family and their murderers.

In the section concluding the characterization of Kenyon, the youngest victim of the murderers, Capote mentions his good shooting skills and involvement in the profitable sale of hunted rabbits (Capote 37). Kenyon's normal adolescent behaviour shows more signs of innocent childish behaviour as oppose to the atypical tendency of Dick as an adult who acts brutally without a reasonable motive. While the young boy's actions come from the environment he was raised in, the murderer acts violently merely to hurt a living being and the action itself is found enjoyable, not the circumstances leading to the moment of killing as Kenyon enjoys the atmosphere of hunting and the company of his closest friend (Capote 37).

The origins of violence come from a great number of social spheres as the previous one originated in habits, both in Kenyon and Dick's case, only differently approached. Nevertheless, Capote presents these primal traces of what possibly influences the violent tendencies way before the hunting moment and refers to them continually throughout the storyline. He starts referring to some of these early in his work and it needs to be noted that these origins are the first roots of causing further violent behaviour and also worsened manners of a person in general.

Another origin for acting violently can be found in the very first chapter, where Capote focuses on the stance towards drinking alcohol. As the author states, "Holcomb, like all the rest of Kansas, is 'dry' (2). This fact displays how the inhabitants of the town usually do not spend and waste their time, simultaneously representing the stereotypical vision of being an American citizen (Wöll 61). Both Dick and Perry show a tendency to have a positive view on alcohol, not profoundly thinking about their habit of occasionally drinking. The theme of alcohol abuse especially dominates the past of Perry with his mother becoming an alcoholic. While preparing for the robbery and trespassing at the Clutter's house, there seems to be a hint of using an alcoholic beverage as a form of easing up and gaining the courage to move forward in the violent action. After a provoking moment of trying to hype up each other, the scene in the book follows as this: "There was some liquor in the car. We each had a drink..." (228). Although the author does not specifically comment on the issue of alcohol usage and its effects, the moment of sudden discouragement transforms in a minute into a stimulus for subsequent aggression. Finally, later in the book, there is other evidence that Dick consumed alcoholic beverages to cope with the emotions he tries to suppress the whole time (271).

The issue of aggressivity is also connected with the lack of security, thus a problem with finances leaning towards the unfulfillment of dreams and plans. Once more, Capote insinuates the issue through his detailed analysis of Holcomb's background. He mentions the

stability of the farmers' financial situation (2), then also the state of affairs particularly of the Clutter family. In case of Dick, money as a source of stability symbolizes envy while craving the stability of money income to fulfil his youthful desires, but Perry does not share the major interest of that rather materialistic approach that is typical for his accomplice. His dream on the other was filled with possibilities, treasure-hunting and dreamy adventures (15). While uncovering this rawness of the killers and their deepest thoughts, Capote achieves a humane approach, a style on the edge of fiction and reportage (Skålevåg 248). Finally, the other origin of violence is to be found in the core of the murderers and their traumas later discussed in detailed passages dedicated to Perry and Dick individually and collectively.

3.2 Consequences

Since the beginning of Capote's story, the reader's awareness of the first consequence does not raise a question of uncertainty. The violent night ends with murders, the first irreversible result of a violent outburst. Death as one of its consequences does not meet only the family, but also their murderers at last. Interestingly enough, both implementations of killings are a method of murder and a decision to end someone else's life.

With a realization of this disturbing fact, the theme of murder suddenly becomes rather neutral. Its concept is further discussed by Shani D'Cruze et al. in the work *Murder*, particularly in the chapter focusing on the social perception of murder, where the ending of someone else's life refers to the evil characteristics and intentions of the killers. If we are not certain about the good and bad sides of human nature, the potential to hurt other human beings hides inside every person and the human race is then dependent on fortuity (25–26).

Even though the story of the murderers also contains their brighter moments, the wickedness of the details gives the impression of emotional distance and a sense of sickening evilness. While Perry describes the slitting of Mr Clutter's throat, he also does not forget to comment on his good nature (237). The statement points out the problem of the duality of

violent action but a non-violent idea that seems to originate from an unspoilt part of Perry's personality. The emotional consequence of disgust evolves because of being sidelined by well-intentioned comments such as the one focusing on the characterization of Mr Clutter. At the same time, the literal quotation of the comment on Mr Clutter as being "a very nice gentleman" (237) proves the difficulty of approaching a character that realizes the origin of good, but also acts immensely bad.

It should not be forgotten that the act of murder stands as a form of coping mechanism and device of revenge, possibly to moderate the ugliness of the past. The atrocity of what remained in the house of the family was found the next day by Nancy Ewalt and Susan Kidwell, the two friends of Nancy Clutter (58). As the girls encountered the post-murder scene, another consequence of the violent outburst was created – the impact on mental health and clarity. Whereas the direct encounter with a violent outcome seems harsher for the mentality of a person, nevertheless two adolescent girls, the basic information spread throughout the town of Holcomb, causing another important consequence. The fear of repetition in the community and the already mentioned rumours connected with questions such as who is going to be a possible next victim underlines the wider impact on the whole community and the people closest to the family.

Right after the encounter of these two young women at the scene of the murders, the reader is presented with another emphasis on the residue of violence. Even though the reader is not yet informed of how the family was murdered and what happened since the murderers entered the house till the minute they left, the author presents the consequences immediately through simple scenes that portray a rather logical part as they could have been realized by the common sense of most likely any reader. After the unspecified act of murder comes consequently the discovery of bodies and an attempt to understand the violence behind the death of the family that seems incomprehensible since no character involved in this sequence accepts

it as something that can happen to anyone at any time. As this shock suddenly strikes the community, the citizens of Holcomb do not hesitate to demonstrate their respect for the deceased family. Capote continues with his original plan of showing the consequences of the murders on the whole community while also referring to the terror that was brought into their lives. The second chapter of *In Cold Blood* starts with the highlight of unity that encircles the citizens of the area, showing their reliance on good manners, while they attempt to put in order the family's former home. Capote presents the scene with an emotional aftermath as follows:

They went first to the furnace-room in the basement, where the pyjama-clad Mr Clutter had been found sprawled atop the cardboard mattress box. Finishing there, they moved on to the playroom in which Kenyon had been shot to death. The couch, a relic that Kenyon had rescued and mended and that Nancy had slip-covered and piled with mottoed pillows, was a blood-splashed ruin; like the mattress box, it would have to be burned. Gradually, as the cleaning party progressed from the basement to the second-floor bedrooms where Nancy and her mother had been murdered in their beds, they acquired additional fuel for the impending fire – blood-soiled bedclothes, mattresses, a bedside rug, a Teddy-bear doll. (74)

This passage accurately detects the impact that the night carried for the Clutter family. The reader is never presented with their point of view as the logic of the matter does not allow it, simultaneously pointing out the definiteness of their deaths. Once again, the author chooses the path of a detailed description, where the fact that two of the victims were still in the age of growing up visibly stands out with the mention of the playroom and Nancy's childhood toy. Another important symbol that the cleaning scene brings out is portrayed by the emphasis on the blood, which the murderers do not seem to mention in their testimonies, despite the fact of being a piece of important evidence all across the murder scenes and eventually helping the police department fill in the blank spaces of the case as the footprints served as a form of

evidence too (Nuttall 178). Blood as a liquid does not carry brutality in its essence, but in terms of connection with any harm, the meaning quickly changes. Without any direct description of the action, any traces of blood and its red colouration create a powerful image and message of a tragic event filled with aggressive behaviour.

The violent act performed on the Clutter family inevitably shifts the plot towards the investigation part, but the incident itself does not convey the expected importance. Initially, the consequences of the violent rage are presented through the perspective of Perry, giving him the role of an important source of information. His detailed storytelling of what happened every moment in the Clutter's house discusses the murders very briefly as they are overshadowed by the murderers and their relationship issues. According to the book, the first signs of violence with consequences start with the act of cutting the throat of Mr Clutter (237), but the pure disgust that the violence brings evolves mainly by commenting on the sound of Mr Clutter's pre-death agony, quoting the character of Perry: "Like somebody drowning. Screaming under water" (238). After one of the killers finally shot the head of the family, other family members' lives were ended as well, mercifully only with the use of the gun. Although the entire narrative of the events that happened during the night is quite lengthy, these most violent moments occupy only a few lines of the entire book, leaving it questionable whether the unravelling of the murders that were committed is even important for the plot whatsoever.

The description of Mr Clutter's death is directly pointed out by the act of cutting, but the indirect terror comes with Perry's comment and comparison to drowning while these two events would not have much in common in reality. These exaggerated moments represent Capote's strategy of emphasizing cruelty and lack of emotional approachability of the murderers, but also their damaged idea of mercy, which is portrayed by murdering Bonnie, Kenyon and Nancy after the initial violent impulse was triggered by killing Herb. On the other hand, the act of mercy stands in opposition to justice as one is mainly driven by the instability

of emotions and the other by the directness of logical sense. The function of justice is to be a needful device for maintaining order, but mercy opens up the questioning of rightfulness and whether a person should have a right to judge someone or decide about someone else's life. Nevertheless, Capote fulfils both notions of mercy and justice at the same time by explaining what led Dick and Perry to kill and why their punishment must be inevitable regardless of their reasoning.

In case of Dick and Perry, the act of punishment is performed by hanging, thus a death penalty for both of them. This form of punishment as a logical consequence resulting from committing violence should serve the role of putting justice into practice. Now according to the storyline, the deadline for justice is constantly being extended. This fact based on real events potentially makes space for reflecting on death as a form of outcome and if it is seriously needed, which indirectly refers to all deaths in the story. This dilemma branches to the basic human morality, which acts as a doubtful side and sees the legal act of killing as a useless revenge.

Justice as a needful wish and device for maintaining order should be served equally and somehow it partly does at the end of the storyline. However, the bittersweet realization that both victims and the killers are eventually all dead and killed by a human being does not add up to the simplification of complexity that occurs since the moment of the homicidal night till the death penalty of Hickock and Smith. To explain it more thoroughly, the sections of the plot found in between those two main events, bring up more justification than justice alone. An attempt of Capote to truly capture every detail of both sides establishes a tragedy within a tragedy. While the reader is familiar with the sequence of events of the November night at Clutter's (229–239), right after that comes the description of Dick and Perry's life before the incident (265–271).

To briefly summarize the topic of consequences, they fundamentally involve all characters that have anything to do with someone knowing the family, the murders, the citizens or the police investigators. In other words, the first killing of that night opens up a whole other level of narrative and spreads across the United States similarly as a disease with its final destination at Truman Capote himself, eventually creating the subject matter of the book as a consequence of the two young men's vengeance for suffering through a lifetime. Simultaneously, it cannot be omitted that the sentence of death, a way of ending Perry and Dick's life according to law, portrays a certain reshaping of a murder, only being interpreted as a rightful decision.

4. Murderers as carriers of violence

The complexity of Dick and Perry's relationship presents their (dis)harmony in terms of being criminal accomplices, but also friends with unusual attitude towards one another. The conversations between the two of them gives a hint on their different intellectual levels followed up by passive-aggressivity, but also a sense of admiration of the other one. In "Self-Knowledge Failures and First-Person Authority," Mark McCullagh describes Perry's struggle with his desire to outsmart others, but the lack of fully developed knowledge does not allow him to be taken seriously, especially by Dick (376). According to his manner of speech towards Smith, Hickock seems to be slightly annoyed by the presence of his friend's oddness. For instance, Perry enjoys his own reflection in a mirror while practising his different facial expressions (14). On the other hand, Dick felt a certain insecurity, mostly after the accident which caused a deformation of his face (29). The strange rarity of their relationship points out some traces of tenderness that both express diversely. Perry is inclined towards verbal compliments and secretly keeps unspoken comments about his friend, which Capote does not hesitate to express in his work. For instance, one of these compliments gives an opinion on his nice physical features (29). Dick with his more masculine and practical-oriented behaviour calls his friend by nicknames certainly more suitable for a feminine character, hinting at Smith's inclination towards the artistic field with more of an emotional orientation.

Together with their interesting approach towards each other enter the controversial thought discussing the truthful bond they created till their deaths. Mentioning their final moments, there is a certain strangeness in how Perry handled the betrayal of Dick after he revealed that Perry was the cold-blooded murderer of the Clutter family (Capote 222). In the last chapter, Capote describes how Perry "misses Dick" (251), even though he gradually realized that Dick was as much of a scared young man as he was. Their fellowship was filled with toxic fondness and hateful moments, but their connection stayed the same for particular

reasons. As Perry indicates, the common fear of loneliness and possible abandonment kept them together on their journey (251), despite the fact their arguments started to reappear quite frequently. It also indicates a resembling situation of the previously mentioned impression of certain coincidence. To explain the claim more thoroughly, it has been claimed that the murders lacked an elaborate motive, meaning the victims could have been different people than the Clutters. In the same sense, the composition of their murderers could have been changed as well. The bond between Hickock and Smith, although strong indeed, was random in its core. The options of possible outcomes if Perry would not agree to even come are almost endless. Perry was chosen by Dick for being useful and suitable. Naturally, their bond over similar emotion of hidden mental damages leaning towards outbursts of anger created a certain comfort in the other person.

The feeling of certain openness without judgment can be found in their relationship, but they do not lack awareness of each other's defects either. Perry's narrative of the murderous night includes a scene, in which Dick intends to rape Nancy Clutter. He comments on this Dick's feature with words showing disgust and contempt. Hickock's strong sexual drive and dominant temperament, even when it does not involve paedophile tendencies, contradicts the rather passively submissive perspective of Smith. The author of *Truman Capote and The Legacy of In Cold Blood* comments on this topic in very much the same manner as he expresses his idea hereby: "...it's the way he [Capote] presents Dick's thoughts about Perry that support a reading of Dick as a seducer of Perry..." (Voss 130). Unsurprisingly, the reader can register how Dick takes advantage of his accomplice for his opposite characteristics.

The trace of seduction or certain attraction is also applied in the language they use and expressions. Hickock tends to call Smith by the word honey on many occasions. This type of repeatedly used pet name for Perry can be understood mainly as a form of mockery or as an actual act of expressing attraction. During the conflict in Clutter's house concerning Perry's

attempt to prevent Dick from raping Nancy, Dick himself ends the argument with “OK, honey. If that’s the way you feel” (236). As unusual as it seems, Capote works with that word not only in terms of these two characters but also puts it into perspective of other characters as well, mainly those family related. Officer Dewey’s wife uses the same expression for her husband (156), Mr Clutter uses it to praise his daughter for her acting performance (5) and the wife of the teacher Hendricks calls her husband the same as well (59). In those mentioned cases, the affection is certainly reasonable and highlights the familiarity between two people loving each other. Furthermore, Perry never expresses any objections towards the pet name and treats it as an accustomed nickname. Considering the possibility of a mockery mentioned earlier in the paragraph, it starts to fade away quite rapidly as this part of the conversation takes place according to Capote’s depiction:

“...You never wished me a Merry Christmas.”

“Merry Christmas, honey. And a Happy New Year.” (192)

Without any context, it would not give the impression of a conversation between two men, especially in the 1960’s period with the taboo portrayal of homosexuality (Voss 135). This small dialogue between Perry and Dick hints at their relationship reminding more of partnership or platonic love. The attachment between them shows the importance of their differences that complement each other, which in this case is portrayed by Perry’s submissive feminine attitude and Dick’s dominant masculine tendencies shown exactly through the word he uses to call his friend. To some extent, these scenes show humanity and carry a function of balancing out the brutality, and the dark side found in both of them.

In addition to the arrangement of power between the murderers, Capote never admitted their relationship as being more than a friendship (Voss 122). Their sexual preferences do not carry great importance for this topic, but their stances on sexual activity discussed later individually, refer to the specific bond over traumatic experiences and similar deficiency of social perceptions, transforming into a predisposition towards harming others. Dick loudly

speaks about hurting others on many occasions (20), but contrary to him stands Perry's unconcern type of approach, seemingly believing his accomplice very extensively (227). These tendencies indicate how their relationship started with a sort of unhealthy dependence, which forced them to continue on their journey to escape still with each other's company. Voss later refers to the fact that the fulfilment of their relationship was the night of the murders (131), confirming the idea of their habitual reliance, finally creating a perfect duo due to their mutual undying bond that remains in good and bad times, even though Dick eventually betrayed Perry in an attempt to save himself.

4.1. Dick as an authoritative villain

The character of Richard Eugene Hickock is portrayed by the author in a less detailed manner as his nature seems to possess features of unattainability, both mental and physical. Firstly, this sense of toughness and repulsiveness that comes from his character finds its connection with the strange appearance caused by the car accident. This type of deformation of physical appearance indicates his hidden features of wickedness (Fahy, *The Philosophy* 61). Capote underlines Dick's appearance by comparing him to a serpent, suggesting his deceitful nature (29).

While this being only a part of his persona, he also gives the impression of "an American-style good kid with an outgrown crew cut, sane enough but not too bright" (Capote 29–30). This phenomenon represents the contradictory attributes found in Dick from the very first moment he enters the scene. His villainous tendencies are not very visible despite his disfigured appearance, and he is aware of the ability to appear as a charming man, which can play to his advantage. His inclination towards illegal activities also involves check fraud, but this behaviour only indicates his ruthless nature and does not necessarily make him a significant villain, even though it does not add any good to his character whatsoever as his reasoning stands on impulsivity and bad manners compared to his companion's well-behaved approach. His evil

side becomes evident through his hatred of human society, which he blames for his unsuccessful life. This also connects with his narcissistic nature of feeling superior to others, based on the comment from Capote's book of seeing himself as even more intelligent than other people (210).

Given his inclination towards bad qualities, the most hideous aspect of his character is the perversive lust to have sexual intercourse with young girls still in their childhood age or teenage years. He even reveals his primary intention to rape Nancy Clutter, which possibly proved to be stronger than the desire to rob the family in the first place (Capote 270). Interestingly enough, this uncontrollable manner also leads to better knowledge of his authoritativeness. This category of victims is the easiest to approach and essentially manipulate. The power and control he seeks in his life as he simultaneously acts on impulse without considering the consequences (Fahy, *The Philosophy* 64), is fulfilled by the ability to control visibly powerless and submissive individuals, making him a villain without much effort done by Capote himself. As he confesses to his perverted thoughts, he starts with the sentence "I know it is wrong" (Capote 270). Later at the court, the opinion of the psychiatrist also says that Dick possesses the ability to distinguish good from bad (285).

Capote initially covers every detail in its neutral sense, meaning he does not exclude Hickock as well. The humane side of his character is rooted in what he calls "sickness" (270), continuing with the description of the affliction that affects him:

...caused from the car wreck I had. Spells of passing out, and sometimes I would haemorrhage at the nose and left ear. ... Not long ago I had a piece of glass work out of my head. It came out the corner of my eye. My dad helped me to get it out... (270)

Dick essentially acts as a character not to be trusted with his intentions, but also with his words. He essentially feels bad for his perversion, confessing a certain guilt for these desires. On the

contrary, it does not seem like a genuine confession, considering how he ends the flow of thoughts with him understanding the need of trying to not seem guilty in court. Also, he most definitely wants to avoid the punishment to some extent at least. The author portrays Dick mainly through the eyes of Perry, which gives him a certain subjectivity as well, making him easier to dislike for his random violent outbursts towards people, but also animals as he finds entertainment in running them over while driving a vehicle.

4.2. Perry as a tragic hero

Perry Edward Smith as the more expressive criminal between the two when it came to description of events and his past, suffers from a certain monstrosity based on his appearance too. Naturally of smaller stature, but with a muscular upper part of the body, he did not necessarily seem dangerous or wickedly as Dick, but mostly ridiculous (Fahy, *The Philosophy* 61). His motorcycle accident caused him to be in permanent pain and disabling him from walking as he normally would. All these facts about his life carry a similarity with Dick, thus they both should not be judged as peculiar according to their looks or disabilities.

What creates a first difference is the upbringing of Perry and his first encounter with violence. He remembers how his father used to beat his mother as she cheated on him (Capote 265). Being a child, Perry reasonably does not seem to prove his understanding of the whole situation, leaving him confused and afraid in the first place. This claim is described by Perry according to Capote as follows:

I was scared because I thought my father was going to hurt me, also because he was beating my mother. I really didn't understand why he was beating her but I felt she must have done something dreadfully wrong... (265– 266)

This early state of confusion stemming from childhood caused him to be unable to deal with his own feelings, leading him to either become emotionally overwhelmed or apathetic. First one of these consequences led him to either crying or violent outbursts (266), both extreme

responses in its core. This childhood trauma that he was unable to prevent or change shows his helplessness, creating a base for an easier understanding of his situation and behaviour, thus the violent tendencies. Capote depicts with this description the raw form of humanity in Perry's personality. Another example of his humane side is his interest in creating a comfortable environment for the family during the robbery, which portrays the first unusual aspect of the case (234). His attempt of trying to ease the loathsome moment for the family also represents his coping mechanism with the trauma he has been through while trying to not make anyone feel as bad as he felt during his childhood.

In the light of that, Perry should not be praised only for surviving a trauma, even though the memories he presents create sympathy towards him, possibly on a larger scale than in case of Dick. His apathetic approach as the other extreme when it comes to his emotional response shows his much darker side of personality, leaving the reader confused as in the example of Dick. Perry describes his inability to feel any emotion about the event of the Clutter family murderers (282), proceeding to mention he feels sorry for himself. His tendency to go back and forth, from one extreme to the other, leaves him just as misunderstood as Dick because his nature is neither purely good nor essentially bad.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to explore different facets of violence in Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* and how it needs to be approached in terms of non-fiction type of literature that is based on a true crime story. The ability to understand how the author proceeded through the actual events differs in terms of the book's composition as the perspectives switch for accurate capturing of the plot's tension, which is also underlined by the structure of chronological order that the author tries to follow and disrupt at the same time. For that purpose, the direct involvement of Capote essentially carries an important function in the detailed analysis of violence seen through the different perspectives.

The first chapter intended to briefly introduce the term non-fictional novel and how Capote approached it in terms of objectivity and subjectivity. One does not have any other choice but to recognize that his subjectivity originates from his artistic role of an author. Even though there could be some doubts about his full objectivity in terms of describing Perry's violent intentions, these are mostly based on speculations as the details concerning how the thought processes are believably constructed. Capote mastered the artistic approach of the fictional side, which will possibly always raise some questions if the portrayed violence corresponds with any type of real-life story.

The second chapter focuses on the importance of details that represent the essential core of accessing the motif of violence as the author shows how physical harm does not stand strictly on the main plotline or the climax of the story. However, he distinguishes different intentions that form the initial idea of hurting someone else. Overall, *In Cold Blood* gives many possible interpretations of its detailed passages but does not conclude that someone is exclusively evil for violent behaviour. From a realistic point of view, Capote directs the reader towards the attempt to understand how collective violence is seen in a different light as opposed to the one performed individually.

Another topic is the contrast between murderers, mostly intended to operate as a comparison of differences and similarities in their life stories, behaviours and approaches to their violent predispositions. The theme of subtext hidden behind the friendship between Hickock and Smith does not look for a solution but rather contributes to their humane side of longing for acceptance and companionship. Moreover, their fondness for each other is not always constant as it functions more as an answered prayer and not as a persistent longing to voluntarily be with the other person. Both of them show the example of remains that simply united as they saw no better option available. In light of that, this shows the portrayal of coincidence found in the story, which lightens the heavier atmosphere created by their actions.

The violent tendencies of Perry and Dick are not merely based on their trauma from the past and damaged mental health, but on ordinary humanness that shows the imperfections of society as a whole. Both Hickock and Smith dream of a better life for themselves but choose to apply incorrect ways to do so. Capote generally tries not to judge his characters as he realizes the bigger picture and the importance of connection between past and present.

The last two subchapters dedicated specifically to each of the criminals show the final puzzling out of their behaviour and thoughts occurring in their minds. Their past experiences play a significant role in the narrative and Capote appropriately gives them a lot of space to show their importance. Equally, it represents his desire to cover every detail of the story and objectivity to maintain his unbiased position. Whether the author intended it or not, he managed to show the human side of Perry and lead the reader towards the direction of feeling at least some sympathy and mercy, eventually answering some questions arising from the tendency to choose violence over other approaches. In case of Dick, the result does not seem that simple as the topic of child abuse is socially perceived very negatively, even when the other crime is murder. It is also impossible to miss the fact that Perry has done intentionally better-viewed deeds than Dick, which still confirms his portrayal as a rather negative character. Both

of the murderers probably suffered from mental illness, possibly making them more responsive to moments that mentally healthy individuals would consider slightly stressful. However, the truth still stays the same and that is the original plan to leave no witnesses, thus acting in cold blood on purpose and not based on a coincidence.

By carrying the burden of describing violence in detail, its message is to have an impact on the reader, in better case on the whole society to help with the development towards more pleasant events. Capote does not intend to shock or surprise the reader but to slowly build up tension and evoke terror through the ambiguous fusion of fiction and reality while emphasizing the ordinariness of violence in the human world. At first, violence serves the role of an exclamation mark and gradually transforms into a question mark, serving its purpose as a warning to the next generations of readers, but most importantly being crucial as an example of how to poetically engage in a dark motive such as violence.

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