



Capote's In Cold Blood - How meaning is carried through the presentation of small details and the structure of the text.

Stella-Maria Stejskal

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Essay from the year 2007 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: gut, University of Bern, 2 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Truman Capote is regarded as one of the founding figures in the 1960s movement loosely referred to as "New Journalism" or "Literary Journalism". These terms are mainly ascribed to texts that present a mixture of both journalism and fiction. According to Mark Kramer

Literary journalism helps to sort out the new complexity. I'll even claim that there is something intrinsically political – and strongly democratic – about literary journalism, something pluralistic, pro individual and anti-elite.

Kramer further nominates eight breakable rules for the Literary Journalist, with one of them being that "literary journalists develop meaning by building upon readers' sequential reactions". This is exactly what Capote does in his text. In In Cold Blood he – as Kramer has put it - "develops meaning by building upon (his) readers' sequential reactions". In the following I will have a closer look at how he does this, how he structures the text in general, and how he enters meaning to the text and its characters through this structuring.

The text is written in eighty-five short report-like chapters and placed within the context of four large sections, each of them similar in length, entitled "The Last to See Them Alive", "Persons Unknown", "Answers," and "The Corner". The titles are straightforward enough, presenting the kind of language known from newspaper reportage. These four sections are of interest, insofar as they underscore Capote's journalistic approach. Even though the writer is aware of all the details, facts are withheld so as to create the impression of a developing case. Gradually, light is shed on the specifics of the crime in very much the same manner a reporter or police investigator would discover them. So far, the text can be said to be a story, developing along the pattern "first ... then ... next ... finally." Yet it is the smaller sections that reveal more about the text than what is purely factual and that give the book its depth. . Although the technique continues in each of the sections, examination of the first major section is sufficient to illustrate this In addition to the four main parts of the text, there are, as mentioned above, eighty-five smaller sections that are also of equal length.

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