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The Non-fiction Novel

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The "Non-fiction" Novel

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I In Cold Blood

BY THE TIME Truman Capote's book, *In Cold Blood*, gets waxed into paperback and moving pictures ("the crime that shocked a million readers by the author of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*"), what remains of the integrity of the original work will probably be forgotten. Also forgotten may be Capote's notion that he had created something new in writing this book. *In Cold Blood* was not like a "documentary novel," or a "historical novel," Capote said. Least of all did it need a crime to make it work; its nature could only be described as a "non-fiction novel."

A "non-fiction novel" was a term the purists were not ready for, but rather than disturb the sleeping issue of the difference between literature and journalism which Hemingway had pretty well settled for this generation, Capote's claim was left as simple vanity. Surely this sort of thing had been done before even if, as most were ready to allow, seldom so well.

Still, if the book is good, one wants to know why, and Capote's term, ungainly as it is, serves to call attention to the high standards against which the book wants to be measured. "Non-fiction" implies a willingness to be held responsible for the data included as literally factual. The story actually happened. Newspapermen could "cover" it, and in the Clutter murder case newspapermen, of course, did.

Being covered though need not imply that the primary aim of the book is the same as journalism's aim. Ordinarily, journalism seeks to inform the reader about a particular event, or to "discuss" it. But the purpose of *In Cold Blood* is closer to that of the "novel," the chief aim of which is to "suggest" and "extend." The novel shares this chief aim with other art forms. What is therefore important in defining the novel, Capote would say, is not the imagined, or fictional, character of the material (compare the factual fidelity of many historical novels); but it is rather the suggesting and extending capacity all art forms share.

In a novel, the particular formal techniques employed will be those generally associated with fiction. Now, some of these techniques have long been used by journalists. At an elementary level the newspaper columnist may include the dialogue of a public figure for something more than the information it contains. The feature writer who writes about Kenendy's "vigah" or Johnson's "you-all" is reflecting an intention to characterize a public figure's personality. If he goes further and "imagines" satiric episodes (as Russell Baker and Art Hoppe do), he is "discussing" public issues entertainingly. But some of the better comic strips, such as *Pogo* and *L'il Abner*, do the same thing, and comic strips (maybe with the exception of *Peanuts*) are not "art."

In the somewhat longer forms, magazine writers have also used techniques of fiction: "scene" for its immediate evocative quality; dramatic development instead of rhetorical development; occasional distortion of chronology for emotive effect; even attempts at "depth" psychology. With certain techniques, it is not always easy to say whether they belong inherently to journalism or to fiction. The elaborate use of detail, for instance, has marked the development of at least one kind of novel, but when Defoe and others first used it, they were essentially copying the fact-oriented journalist or the popular autobiographer. Since then, "formal realism" has become so intimately associated with the business of fiction that a writer of a magazine article who uses it will probably write not with the blunter rhythms of a journalistic Defoe but with the more sophisticated overtones of subsequent fiction. But rarely—except in occasional pieces like E. B. White's "The Door"—is there a full formal control such as fiction has.

Full-length books of non-fiction have used these techniques and probably a few others. Any book which totally avoids them—unless it is the Warren Commission Report on the Kennedy assassination—will probably go unread, since the hunger for "objective truth" is hardly ever so great that the laboratory report is considered a proper model. The natural and social scientists learned from the novelist. Oscar Lewis's book, *The Children of Sanchez*, proceeds from a series of tape-recorded accounts of the experiences of a lower-class family in Mexico City as Lewis, a sociologist, recorded them. But Lewis edits out the conventional questions of the interviewer, and after his introduction does not interrupt the dramatic flow of each of his narrators. He imposes order on the accounts by omitting the "extraneous." Moreover, he juxtaposes the various narratives in such a way that one narrator can comment on events that another has just de-

scribed, thus increasing the ironic significance of the counterpoint. This device is completely familiar in American fiction, at least since Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury*.

Scientists notwithstanding, as a general rule the newsworthy public event, like the inconspicuous private one, is nearly always altered and re-imagined when the suggesting and extending power of the novelist is sought for. Few writers with this object want to stick to *all* the facts. Thus, when Thornton Wilder writes about the collapse of that footbridge in South America, to treat it as he wants to treat it, he felt he had to fictionalize. When Stephen Crane writes of the sinking of the Cuban gunrunner, which he actually experienced as a correspondent, the most he can risk in his newspaper account to suggest the emotive effect of the disaster is a metaphor or two. It is only later when he distills the meaning of the experience and its impact in the short story, "The Open Boat," that the irresistible conventions of journalism can be unloaded for the sake of a rendering in which many of the facts are changed and the local metaphors effective in the newspaper account do not even appear.

With experienced novelists, cross-fertilization between fiction and journalism produces some paradoxes. When, for example, John Hersey chooses as subject for a novel the uprising of the Warsaw ghetto in World War II, he elects to invent "documentation" for the story by employing journals, notebooks, and other records from the inhabitants of the ghetto, as though to imply that the best insurance for the novelist is to convince the reader that it actually happened.

But when Hersey decides in writing about Hiroshima not to fictionalize it, he now chooses fictional techniques in order to maximize the emotive impact of the dropping of the bomb. He preserves the dramatic fluency of each subject's account of the experience. Further, he multiplies the force of it by making the reader undergo five times the violence of the event. The effect of the extended intensity of a single point of view is exploited in a way that was unknown before certain developments in the technique of the novel took place. But for all that, *Hiroshima* is not a novel, and Hersey would be the last to claim that it was.

It is only with Capote that the growing obliteration of the lines that demark journalism from fiction seems virtually complete. He wages total war with journalism and its conventions by his conscious intention to keep the instinct to inform and discuss subordinated to the novelistic objective throughout. With this perspective the new

form he seeks can evolve (and perhaps it is the way all forms evolve) because the intentions are no longer mixed.

Some of this can be seen by comparing Capote with the kind of writer who on the surface does the same sort of thing. Stanley Kauffman chooses John Bartlow Martin, a veteran true-crime man, whose work Kauffman finds sufficiently like Capote's to make him feel that *In Cold Blood* is no particular innovation. The apparent logic is that both Martin and Capote treat a criminal case at considerable length, with drama and with "depth" psychology, and both publish originally in installments in the most well-paying periodicals.

Beyond this, their assumptions are really quite different. Martin writes in the old *Police Gazette, American Weekly* tradition as it was sophisticated by the slick magazines in the Thirties and Forties. This sophistication was achieved chiefly by the infusion of sociological and psychiatric method into a narrative which still basically depended on the old Gothic evocation of the scene of the crime. Martin's one full-length, true-crime book, the story of an Ann Arbor, Michigan, murder committed by three teenagers, depends on these habits. Martin begins with the "shadow-lined" streets on which the crime occurs and proceeds from there through the newsman's catalogue of names and places to a series of interviews with people who knew the principals in the case. He emphasizes the class levels of the three defendants in these interviews. The attitude of the community toward the principals is also examined. At last, he answers his question, *Why Did They Kill?*, which serves as the title of the book, almost entirely by means of the psychiatrist's reports, here a labeling process which discerns after the fact that criminals had criminal tendencies. Martin's narrative specialty is the observation of incongruities, and again this reflects *Police Gazette* technique—"Revered Clergyman Slain," "Illiterate Pig Woman Key Witness," and so forth. For Martin, it is the guise of innocence, the handsome teenager, the shocked parent, which supplies the paradoxes that keep the reader interested.

In crime writing, the case history technique is naturally even more particularly emphasized by those who have their credentials along with their professional title. Frederic Wertham and Robert Lindner are two successful examples. Generally their approach relies on the convention of a scientific age that the best way crime can be treated is one which cools the phenomenon into a safely clinical aberration. The aberration is testified to by the medical authority who may accidentally deliver us a prurient glimpse into the haunted secrets of the

criminal, but who at the same time will relieve us of the burden of much real empathy for the culprit by casting that gulf between health and disease into the issue. As a convention, the sick-well dichotomy may not be much different from the old elect-damned dichotomy that was the basis of the pleasant stimulation of *American Weekly* true-crime.

It is odd that Capote has been criticized for "cold-bloodedness" on the grounds that he is acting "scientific" without the proper diploma. The business of crime-reporting would appear to Kenneth Tynan and Dwight MacDonald and some others properly to belong to the pro. The police reporter and the psychiatrist can dispose of the matter with what are evidently the only answers it is decent for us to have.

Actually, Capote handles the clinical matters almost with diffidence. Although the psychiatrist's report is included in the data pertinent to the case file on Smith and Hickok, by the time the reader reaches this report in the book, the medical diagnosis does not seem to mean very much. Its conclusions are intelligible in terms of the evidence Capote had previously presented. But the conclusions as such seem no more than a professional label fixed on a pair of consciousnesses that have been rendered more justly and more emphatically in the material that has preceded. The subject Capote chose has already been realized, and such realization transcends the functionalism of a clinical analysis. For by this point he has also realized the Clutter family, the small-town life of western Kansas, and the spirit of a certain time and place. None of the victims are made to seem mere integers, created for the purpose of being acted upon. They hold their space in existence for the short hour of their time; and what they stood for, unsentimentally, endures side by side with what is represented by their aimless and pathetic antagonists. Nor are the impulses of the Smiths and the Hickoks vanquished by an execution, even though the period is placed with stubborn impassivity at the end of this particular case.

The real strength of the Capote book is achieved by the way he exploits a whole battery of novelistic techniques which enforce the structure and hence the meaning of the Clutter case. First, in the opening section he builds the emphatic involvement of the reader by the familiar technique of cross-cutting. Scenes taking place in the Clutter home are alternated with scenes between Smith and Hickok preparing for their trip and en route to their destination. At first the two stories are made to seem completely independent. They take

place hundreds of miles apart; the respective principals are strangers to the opposite party. In a machine age, antagonisms are impersonal; what you don't know is more likely to hurt you than what you do. The Clutters don't know, and neither do Smith and Hickok. They don't know the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow is nonexistent, but such uncertainty is of the order of things.

Within this section of the book, Capote also keys the identity of the two forces before they collide. Smith and Hickok are identified with the road and the automobile. They are introduced in a garage, subsequently they are seen in quick-stop cafes. The Clutters, on the other hand, are rigidly established on their homestead. Where they have settled seems not only the heart of their family, but the heart of the community. In the scenes recorded on the final day of their lives, friends visit them at their home, and even though the family is shown as tremendously interested and active in events occurring outside their home, the core of existence is first settled and stable before it can eddy outward to become productive. The home is sustenance and health; it is defined by apple pies and the Four-H Club. Remote places are "sickness;" the mother in the family was once in a Wichita sanitarium ill, but now she is returned and is well.

At the end of the first section of the book, with the last guest of the Clutters departing into the darkness of the night, the terrible collision between the two forces is about to take place. But Capote tells nothing about it here. On one hand, he is delaying the impact of it until later in the book where weight will be required and where its more immediate relevance to Smith and Hickok as independent psychologies can be apprehended. On the other hand, to dramatize it directly, as all the early sections of the book have been dramatized, will be too much for the reader. The crime needs the cushion of an interpolater; it needs to be recounted secondhand, as violence was on the Greek stage.

Also, more important to Capote at this early point is the shattering effect of the crime on the community. He takes up the story from its first felt moment within the house the following morning when the Clutters are discovered by friends who would pick them up on the way to church. The interdependence of the Clutters and the community has already been demonstrated in the first section. Now, as the news whirls into the larger vortex, Capote shows how self-doubt, and even doubt of the Clutters, produces a cacophony of discordant opinion. Various dialects and idioms are registered in separate inter-

views as the organism that is the town reacts to the cancer it thinks it detects within. Capote selects the postmistress, nominally the agent of interpersonal communication, as the chief and most articulate spokesman of the new feeling of subversion and isolation.

Thus, it is not shock as much as it is a more dangerous force—disunity—which must be coped with in Holcomb and Garden City. At this point, Capote introduces his folk hero, Police Captain Dewey, who must restore the town to health. A thoroughly inconspicuous and unprepossessing man, Dewey must be carefully and subtly developed. He must be given space in the book where he is by himself, occupied not so much in thought as in solemn meditation. Accordingly, there are paragraphs in which Dewey contemplates nothing, except perhaps the land. For there is nothing to contemplate. The clue-hunting methods which might succeed in a rational universe are almost useless here. Dewey goes through the motions, but Capote never tempts us to feel that the little grey cells, as the detective story would have it, offer very much hope. Dewey is cast as the conscience of the community, a moral force. Untroubled by the winds of mistrust, he does what decency can do. If he is to catch the biggest fish that anybody in port ever saw, he will have to be lucky but he is not too proud to keep trying for that luck.

In the meantime, the antagonists, Hickok and Smith, are shown like hurled pebbles still skipping across the water after their refracting impact on that half-yielding, half-impenetrable surface. Their flight is not presented as panicky. Instead, it is more like the dissipation of momentum. They are "on the road," reflexively, as they have always been. They experience neither hope nor fear. Their stops whether long or short afford encounters with other transients, and it is only their fantasies perhaps that give them any appearance of having a will, a plan.

In this part of the book Capote distinguishes Smith from Hickok. While earlier the spectacle of their combined force has received the emphasis, now the components of their individual mediocrities are separated out. Smith and Hickok derive from different native heritages. Hickok belongs to an exhausted bourgeois line of clock-watchers; his father is dying, his mother whines and clings, and refuses to believe. Smith, on the other hand, comes from an older frontier tradition, of medicine shows and Indian rodeo riders, of prospectors and extravagant aspiration. In a way, both of them are distorted shadows of their forbears, both of them are reflected as if

in funhouse mirrors. But it is important to understand, or to try to understand, that an incompetent father or a clumsy mother is only part of the story, that that father had a father too. If it is fair to say that Hickok wanted too little in life and Smith wanted too much, it is worth knowing what contributed to the different aspirations.

Distinguishing them as Capote does during this section prepares the reader for an acceptance of the dramatic climax of the book, the account of the murders by Smith after the arrest. In order that the morbid and sensational aspects of the account may be softened, the question of "who?" has been allowed to become more central than "how?". The gory details of the crime, while they are not denied, are thus sublimated in the rather more pertinent psychological, and social, question as to which of these two forces—that represented by Smith or that represented by Hickok—is the more violent, the more ruthless, the more unstable. Wanting to know who pulled the trigger each of the four times may be beneath the law's notice (Smith and Hickok were both guilty "ten times over"); but Capote creates the curiosity in the reader. It is of more than passing interest to know who presses the button—the glib, initiating Hickok or the Christ-painting, guilt-ridden Smith. Capote says that, four times over, it is Smith.

The last quarter of the book, a longer proportion than most writers would allot to this part of the case, shows Smith and Hickok in the community of the condemned, ironically the only community in which they have existed with such lingering permanence. Capote takes the trouble of describing the personalities and the crimes of some of the other inhabitants of death row in order to give definition to the community in which they spend their final years. The temper of this place gets contrasted, in alternate sections, with the temper of Garden City, which is seen in the last part of the book both during the murder trial and in the appeal. While Garden City, that solid reality earlier in the book, drifts off in the mists of the ephemeral words of some undistinguished attorneys, the drier reality of the prison and the inevitable execution scene replaces it. Capote includes the "last words": Hickok, like Willy Loman appreciating the good turnout at a funeral, and Smith, not unlike Raskolnikov, "apologizing."

There is a brief coda, a cemetery scene between Dewey and one of Nancy Clutter's girl friends. The scene restores consideration of the Clutters to the proper importance for the reader. Further, it turns again to the landscape, the concealing earth, and to Dewey, the hero of the narrative, who endures, untriumphant, with decency and luck.

II Green Hills of Africa

IN THE RECENT biography by A. E. Hotchner, Hemingway is quoted on what "the artist must do." "On canvas or on the printed page," Hemingway is supposed to have said to Hotchner, "he must capture the thing so truly that the magnification will endure. That is the difference between journalism and literature. There is very little literature. Much less than we think."

It is not an unexpected observation from Hemingway, for in many ways he is the symbol of the "difference" between journalism and literature. As much as any other cause, it was Hemingway's great seriousness about the art of letters that within his lifetime reduced the glamor and the stature of the ace reporter and the foreign correspondent, and in its place substituted the prestige of the "author." The reduction of the newspaperman's image was perhaps most gleefully announced by Hemingway's own managing editor, Harry Hindmarsh, whose exploitation of Hemingway in the latter's final months as a newsman in Toronto helped decide Hemingway to abandon the business in disgust. Hindmarsh is supposed to have said that at last the age of the prima donna had come to an end. All great correspondents had become replaceable cogs in the machine. By the end of World War II, the age of the great newspaper had ended too. Without the creative independence that the individual paper once had, the genuinely creative writer had abandoned the profession.

It was perhaps natural for Hemingway to make much of the difference between the permanence of literature and the amnesia of journalism, where you had to "forget everything you knew yesterday." He did not at the same time, however, make any invidious distinction between fiction and non-fiction. He knew that the basis of his own power, whatever he wrote, lay in "the fact"; and also knew, quite consciously, that "the way it was" served as the cornerstone for the hard, new structure of literature he wanted to make. The beginning of his literary career came in the vignettes he wrote for *In Our Time*, which are purified fragments of journalism, literally "magnification," as he calls it, or to use another frequently applied term, "objective correlative," the discovered essence of experience which communicates the emotion that ought to be communicated by that experience.

But the vignettes of *In Our Time* are very brief, and if they succeeded in a measure as both "journalism" and "literature," they did not provide Hemingway with any larger guidance when he came to

attempt book-length non-fiction. While he could obviously see the connection between the vignettes and his short stories, he had no apparently coherent idea of the nature of the problem that might obtain in a long work like *Green Hills of Africa*.

Consider his Foreword to *Green Hills*:

> Unlike many novels, none of the characters or incidents in this book is imaginary. Any one not finding sufficient love interest is at liberty, while reading it, to insert whatever love interest he or she may have at the time. The writer has attempted to write an absolutely true book to see whether the shape of a country and the pattern of a month's action can, if truly presented, compete with a work of the imagination.

If the statement is not utterly frivolous—and Hemingway was far from a whimsical man—it appears, first of all, that Hemingway supposes that the introduction of that which is "imaginary" is weakening to a serious work of literature, that it is better to write that which is "absolutely true." The belief will not surprise since it is consistent with most of Hemingway's other statements about writing, and is the basis of the Hemingway esthetic. But at the same time Hemingway hints at an assumption that what is fundamental in the long work of literature is "love interest." He makes the comment half facetiously, no doubt, in order to guide us to what he thinks is the real *sine qua non* of a work such as his, namely, a "shape" or a "pattern," considerations which are more important than "love interest."

All this is well, and we accordingly may assume that in writing *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* he was as much aware of the need for a shape, or a pattern, as he was of the need for a love interest. What happens, however, in *Green Hills of Africa*, as one reads beyond the Foreword, is that for Hemingway the superimposition of a "shape" or a "pattern"—an essentially modifying act—comes into conflict with the aim of writing that which is "absolutely true." The book has a defective shape and ultimately seems not very true at all.

Structurally, the difficulties are self-evident. The "country" in which the action takes place seems to have little "shape" as such, for it is fully vulnerable to the depredations of the hunting party. It offers up its wealth and its bearers to the service of the safari, and there is only fitful rapport between the protagonist and the land, nothing like the mutuality one feels in "Big Two Hearted River" or *The Sun Also Rises*. Moreover, the "pattern" of the month's action is fuzzily presented. The urgency of the hunt is forced at times, forgotten at others.

In the early, best-known portions of the book, there are many oracular pronouncements on the literary situation, most of which might easily have been lifted out of context without harm to their general drift; or if, alternatively, they were deleted from the book, it would be without injury to the remainder of the text. All this is well known: the absence of any felt connection between the structure of the book and its intention.

Perhaps the absence of "absolute truth," in Hemingway's terms, is even more disturbing. The characterization of Mrs. Hemingway is one example. On one hand, she is said to be very involved, very interested in the hunt. On the other, she is depicted with a kind of brittle and lolling indifference, at most patient and polite toward her husband's childish lust to have the kudu with the longest horns. She is anything but a coherent representation.

That Hemingway senses this may be suggested by his two very effective later portrayals of a wife-on-safari. In "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," the woman Margot cares so much whether her husband is "brave" or not against the lion that she commits murder to indicate her interest. In "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," the wife is sadly, yet honestly, not interested in the safari, but the terror of her lack of interest is partly alleviated for the hero by an understanding of the wasted pasts of both principals and by the mystique of the lonely transfiguration at the end.

Hemingway's success in these stories depends in great measure on his understanding of the techniques which must apply to make the stories have their impact. Here, the techniques are extremely traditional. Both of them depend, literally, on the life-and-death situation which intensifies the importance of the struggle. In "The Short Happy Life" a conventional love triangle is offered and must be resolved. In "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," an even more elementary dramatic question is asked: will help arrive in time? Of course, neither story is settled in the simplistic terms their plots imply, and obviously neither of them accepts the easy beliefs of hack fiction that life is good, wealth is good, marriage is good. Nevertheless, their traditional qualities are apparent, and they demonstrate that even many years after Hemingway had developed his purer and more personal form for the short story, a form which was already admired and widely imitated by the time of the African stories, he still found a use for fictional techniques with which he was not primarily identified and against which his best work directly rebelled.

What went wrong in *Green Hills of Africa*, it would seem, is that traditional techniques of a parallel sort were simply not available for long "non-fiction." Since novels were something that had "love interest," the only model that was available was that of journalism. For Hemingway the method of "long" journalism was a group of articles to make up a series. In the newspaper back home, whether he was the war correspondent or the travel reporter, he wrote in installments. A given installment would seldom run as much as 5000 words, and even when there was a definite continuity between succeeding installments, the important thing was the organization of the individual episode and not of the series as a whole. As a result, "tableau" was the source of impact and also provided its meaning; implication that depended on a perception of remoter connections in the longer narrative line became secondary. *Green Hills of Africa* similarly grew episodically and in terms of the tableau; it was unable to find, except in very uncertain ways, the shape of the country or even the shape of the hunt. Hemingway fell back on the submerged "I" of journalism when either a more or less egocentric selection of detail would probably have helped the book.

Most of the excrescences of the book are a result of irrelevant habits of journalism. The anecdotes in it inevitably lead the reader astray. They have the feel of newspaper humor: the easy laugh at the expense of a clumsy native or the anger of a Mr. Dithers sputtering at somebody's frustrating eccentricity. Mrs. Hemingway wins the designation P. O. M., for "Poor Old Mamma," an epithet which reminds one of Earl Wilson's habit of calling his wife "the B. W." when he mentions her in his gossip column.

Some people in the cast, such as the Austrian in the early chapters, are overemphasized, perhaps out of belief that they are "most unforgettable characters." Others, such as the rival hunter Karl, are only half-developed or not developed at all, perhaps again because of the journalist's habit of limning a character quickly and picturesquely, rather than extensively and with growing depth, as the novelist must do.

Finally, the substantive conversations in the book are both pointless, and in process are handled rather like newspaper interviews. Evidently Hemingway felt that some notice had to be taken of the fact that the narrator was an author, and as such, had opinions and areas of information that had nothing to do with the hunt. In *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*, relatively intelligent protagonists

are allowed to remain silent on subjects alien to the narrative, but in *Green Hills* Hemingway finds it interesting to have himself interviewed on the literary situation, and while his statements in a different context might have been of some value, here they seem pretentious and postured. Since there is little discussion at all in the book on the purpose of the hunt, it is dangerously easy to infer that Hemingway is offering his credentials as Ubermensch in an effort to justify the morality of the hunt. If the literary talk were handled less like one of his own interviews with Mussolini or with Lloyd George, the conclusion would be less tempting. But this is the way it occurs to him to do it. A more spontaneous opportunity to talk literary talk—when the narrator and P. O. M. are actually reading books—he passes up by furnishing typically simple-hearted responses in their dialogue: "That was a damn good story," etcetera. The strategy implies that literary talk is strictly for public consumption, and that grunts are preferable among friends.

Many other examples of the habits of journalism arise in *Green Hills*. They do not completely destroy the short-term power and precision of certain sections of the narrative, but they disunite and weaken the coherence of the story and seriously damage its total effect. They seem to indicate that a sacrifice of the conventions of fiction (which involves much more than whether or not there is a love story) do not guarantee finally any great appearance of "absolute truth"; any more than the habitual employment of the conventions of journalism arrive at that truth. One is impelled to feel that the fuller and purer meaning of not only Hemingway's African experience but of the analogous experiences of any man is better served in the two African short stories than in *Green Hills of Africa*.

Perhaps much of this is familiar: that the rendering of truth is no better served by the precepts of the journalist, or by the precepts of the specialist than it is served by the precepts of the artist. The fact-monger can be the greatest charlatan, and innocent formlessness can have, or seem to have, the loudest meanings. But questions like "what is truth?" are fortunately beside the point here. What a comparison between *In Cold Blood* and *Green Hills of Africa* may illuminate is that techniques and strategies associated with fiction can have more value in evolving the meaning and felt significance of events which have "actually happened" than will techniques associated with journalism. The important quality of literature is the capacity to universalize the implication of an isolated real happening, and while remaining

loyal to "facts," yet to put these facts in some distinctly larger context by the way the various elements are deployed rather than by discursive examination of the elements.

The journalist may find this difficult for a number of reasons, some of which I have examined, but chiefly because he is so conditioned to the primacy of the facts that he seldom has the space or the natural gift to create the larger context. The "specialist" who writes non-fiction has essentially the same problem. By habit he grinds exceedingly small; he is trained to examine things discursively, from one particular angle, and although he may know some of the basic tricks of the novelist's art, his can often be the "little learning" that is the dangerous thing.

What the Capote success seems to indicate is that it does not even matter so much if the conscientious "non-fiction novelist" makes a mistake in fact here and there (as has been alleged with *In Cold Blood*) or that someone else has a different interpretation than his. What seems to matter more is that he has sacrificed some of the novelist's hard-won privilege to disaffiliate (which may be sending the novelist the way of the poet), and that he has written a book which shows there can still be a connection between the artist, practicing his art to the full, and the random event which verifiably happened and has this implication, this texture, this raw core.

Some of the things that have been learned about the mass audience make the need for this kind of writing plain. There is, for instance, a story that when the Gemini 8 space flight was floundering somewhere in the beyond, causing the television networks to cancel their regularly scheduled programs in order to wait out the return of the nation's heroes, many television watchers actually called the station to object because a weekly series called "Lost in Space" had been taken off the tubes for the evening.

No cause for amazement; glutted as they are, people continue to hunger for the fare of the fictionalist, some even at the trough of a child's fantasy called "Lost in Space." They are not attracted by the professional catering of even a Brinkley and Huntley when they suspect they are simply going to be told over and over—for who knows how long?—that the intrepid astronauts, whose script is also familiar, are lost, and that they are still lost, and that they have not yet been found. There is no grandeur in that.

Who can blame them for being bored? If it is the hack magic of "Lost in Space" on one hand, or the melancholy design, for better or worse, of Huntley and Brinkley, or for that matter of the President

in press conference, then it may be Hobson's choice. But if instead the unsubsidized inclination of a good writer, whose habits are not the journalist's or the specialist's, guides him toward a job such as Capote undertook, then the lines start to etch away. There will still be "fiction novels" around, some even on the burning issues of the day. But for uncertain reasons, their blaze is low; the form seems to have lost beyond recall the combustible power of, say, an *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, let alone a *Red and the Black*. If this is the case, the non-fiction novelist might just as well lift up the glass and try with some new refractions for the "magnification that will endure."

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