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TRUMAN CAPOTE'S REPRESENTATION OF ADOLESCENCE

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ABSTRACT

Truman Capote embodies the writer of a new generation as far as American Literature is concerned. His was an insecure childhood and a series of uprooting. His childhood was rather very much disturbed by the fact that his parents were divorced. His constant series of disappointments as a child made him write and think about his painful lists. His treatment of adolescence was probably made out of his own life. His novels are considered as a reflection of human lives in modern times and its repercussions in the minds of adolescents. His writings are concerned with sexuality and home erotic. A critical assessment of capote's novels will bring to light his meticulous genius and literary glamour.

Key Words: American Literature, Adolescence.

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Capote's novels and stories are written not out of any formal knowledge of the psychology of the irrational but directly out of the irrational itself. They evoke with a shocking directness of the terrors of childhood and the vivid force and grip of dreams. His fictions are generally about lonely, loveless people – they seem too alone because they are loveless. His characters encounter strange, often offensive creatures with whom they are trapped and whom they cannot and usually do not wish to escape. Capote's writings are set in a world of dreams from the real into the surreal, from the natural into the supernatural. They are stories whose central concern is with the theme of the alter ego. His writings are stories about people who inhabiting a world of love, live peacefully with their selves, and are even capable of transforming those around them. His characters dream. According to capote a man who does not dream is like a man who does not sweat, he stores up a lot of poison. The dreams of his characters are gentle, even happy, with none of the violent turbulence and alarming exposures of the night mere stories.

"It is the gothic form," Fiedler observes, "that has been most fruitful in the hands of our best writers: the gothic symbolically understood, its machinery and décor translated into metaphors for a terror psychological, social, and metaphysical". (28)

Capote has an uncanny gift of observation and he is famous for writing, reportage. It is his experience and discipline as a writer of fiction that makes Truman Capote the superb reporter that he is. His depiction of childhood and adolescence is a class by itself.

In his first novel *Other Voice, Other Rooms* Capote depicts the characters in such a way that almost everyone and everything in the book are nothing but the people of actual life. The illusion of identity and individuality in a society is a question asked by every adolescent in post-war America. The characters like Joel Knox and Randolph are the main epitomes of the novel. It is a remarkable achievement of Capote to depict the maze and it makes the reading a poetic experience. The novel was universally acclaimed as a novel with an amazing intensity and a real voltage despite awkwardness in depicting adolescence. Viewed as liberation, the story is marked by ambivalence. Its explicit meaning is that Joel has broken out of his childhood prison and has achieved maturity but the way in which he does it and the symbolic pattern surrounding the action, suggests a narcissistic confinement. This contradiction is presumably intended to function as a vital paradox but one feels uneasily that Joel and Capote's have not made quite as clean a break with childhood as they think, though they are moving in the direct direction. Capote's description centres on Joel Knox. His initiation leads him through many mysteries to find his own identify like father, seducer and mirror image which end in a hallucination of self- knowledge, a vision of love, loneliness and mutability.

The Grass Harp, another novel of Capote, deals with the end of boyhood innocence. It is a first person narration and recalls a past episode and a heroine who had a special meaning for the hero Collin Fenwick. The novel depicts the story of all the people buried on a hill of all the people who ever lived. It also describes the alienation and separation of the people from the rest of the world. It is the backbone of the story's plot. The Grass Harp contains Capote's fullest expression of antagonism between his chosen dreamers and the rest of the society. The Capote's characters do not fit in the world and they do not seem to want to. They are innocent pilgrims wandering in search of some better places. Society for its part considers them 'crazy' and tries to put them into its prison and its starchy strait – jackets. But as Miss Bobbitt divined beneath its hostility lies envy. On the present occasion the representative of society stand below Miss Bottit and her crew like dogs gathered around a tree of trapped bosoms.

Capote moves into still another mood and possibly the one that suits him best in the novel *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Holly Golightly is self sufficient, uncommitted to everything but her own need for freedom world is a wild thing. The novel describes about submerged world of childhood to the real world of people and events. Holly Golightly has not let the psychiatrist treat her dreams. She belongs to a later generation of Capote heroines who have learned to preserve their integrity by safeguarding their uniqueness. Society helplessly admires her and considers her praising at the same time. She explained that she did not want to be a movie star because it requires the sacrifice of one's ego and she wants still to be herself. Her life of travelling is really a search for a home, a place where she and things belong together. Holly's ideal love is simply not a sexual one, nor is it likely to be satisfied by any real human being she will meet. The ideal relationship she aspires to is appointment by the narrator's own relationship with her: tender but distant, and consisting largely of admiration for her brilliance and strength. That Holly makes honesty to self, her guiding principle is not surprising when we remember that on the deepest level she is Capote's narrator's alter ego, representing for him – as Miss Bobbit did for Billy Bob-the strange, unconventional side of himself.

We learn that her idea of love is a non-sexual focusing of aesthetically oriented feeling. Honesty is an importance to her as it came to be for Joel Knox. All her life she has known deprivation and death and fought a desperate battle against fear. It is finally the awareness of death that keeps her from feeling at home anywhere and impels her on a constant search for something better. Holly's values are those of the Capote-narrator: she is a part of himself set free like a broken – stringed kite to wander towards/an ambiguous land of dreams of death.

The mood of the story in *Children on their Birthdays* is a balance between sun and darkness buoyant summer rain and sleepless scuttling. It is gothic in the sense that Lolita is gothic; both have the delicate balance of nostalgia and terror, accuracy and imagination. What Lolita in the *Children On Their Birthdays* shares is a moving affectionate comedy that is also brutal and shattery, a brilliant use of black humour that allows us to delight in that which should spin us into despair. Thus Capote places the wall that is art between man and the horror of life in adolescence.

The novel is less subjective than Capote's adolescent novel *Other Voices, Other Rooms*. Common to the adolescent novels *Lolita* is an unwillingness to grow up, a wish to stop time. The story has a definite period of one year but the sense of being tapped by a small turn suggests timelessness.

Cold Blood, a non-fiction novel is Capote's master piece. It bears the clear mark of his childhood. He converges both fiction and fact in times of outrage with the insane surrealism of daily life. Based upon accounts of Grisly Kansa murders of a wealthy farmer and his entire family the book ends by raising vast questions about American Society, the anger and deprivation of men and working of justice. Capote draws nets of animal imagery around his characters by using years of research and endless interviews. He deals in detail with the traumatic adolescent period in the lives of Dick and Perry, the perpetrators of the gruesome murders.

From this novel one can understand Capote's experience and discipline as a writer of fiction. And what a superb reporter he is in *Cold Blood* is ever accepted as a new form of novel and it is because the material itself seems to come straight out of the world of contemporary fiction. Capote dramatizes the confrontation between ordinary people and extreme experience. The victims are a god – fearing family which epitomizes the best in the conventional ideals of middle class, middle Western America; the criminals representing all that is brilliantly, poisonously sick in contemporary culture come as black angelic avengers to violate insularity of this comfortably old fashioned world. Capote manages to liberate his images from the events which created them and in those moments in *Cold Blood* seem literally too good to be true. His depiction of adolescence in his fiction is a sterling example of Capote's talent.

A Christmas Memory is Truman Capote's nonfiction short story. It is a frank memoir which, while generally accepted as one of his finest and most charming short stories, has become his own avowed favorites among his shorter works because it is "true".

The story is his idealized recollection of his relationship with the elderly cousin with whom he spent much of his childhood. As it has a unique importance among his works, it embodies the archetype of an emotional pattern which underlies all his later fiction and even exerts a subtle influence on *In Cold Blood*.

The novel is differentiated by its predecessors by its internal cohesion, its emphasis on tightly orchestrated plot and action, its realistic portrayal of characters and its situations, and its eschewing of overtly allegorical elements. Characters in the novel are more than archetypes, they are invested with a sense of interior consciousness, a psychological depth missing from the figures that populated earlier prose works. It is less fantastic than romance, relying more heavily on mimesis, i.e. the attempt to accurately "mirror" the real or quotidian world in a fictional setting. (Keep)

A sexual admiration of a child like dreamer – heroine is the usual attitude of the Capote narrator. The pastiness of the experience is also essential; Capote's is a fiction of nostalgia. *A Christmas Memory* is one of his best and most satisfying works because it places the feelings he can dramatize most powerfully in the setting which is best suited to characters.

His earlier stories are written in what is called gothic tradition and the stories are set in a world where we continually move without transition or warning from the actual into the dream, from the real into the surreal, from the natural into the supernatural. These stories evoke with the shocking directness the terrors of childhood and adolescence, and the vivid force and grip of dreams. In one of his earliest stories *A Tree of Night*, Kay, a pleasant girl on her way back to college from a funeral is forced by two grotesques with whom she is trapped on a train into a recognition of her own unconscious life and made at last submit to it.

The Headless Hawk is probably the story that most completely epitomizes the nightmare mood. It is a story on the discarded surrealistic imagery of the dream state and it explicitly announces the alter ego theme where Vincent, the hero, finds his other self. This is nothing but the malevolent side of the adolescents and their outward embodiments of inner decay. His stories depict the hopeless plight from identity and the final recognition of it in the darkest from identity and the final recognition of it in the darkest depths of the self. In another story *Master Misery* where Syllabi, an adolescent, robbed of her dreams is robbed finally of her very self and there was nothing left to steal.

Among the Paths to Eden published at about the time Capote began his Kansas research for *In Cold Blood*, shows signs of the new strength and freedom he feels he derived from his work on the nonfiction novel. One of his principal aims in that project was to enlarge the range of characters could portray sympathetically. The story is told in the third person in a playful comic tone that places the author at a slight, good natured distance from the hero, Mr. Ivory Bell who in turn views his brief acquaintance, Miss. Mary O' Meaghan, in the same way.

House of Flowers is the most exotic of all Capote's stories told in a whimsical, playful tone that seems to place is even further from his personal world of experience and imagination than *A Diamond Guitar*". It was, in fact, based on stories he heard, as Capote himself has explained Though remote from his other work in many ways, it is still about a girl who is a pioneer and a dreamer.

In finding her dreams come true, Otilie moves into a world of romance in which nothing, not even death, need be taken seriously. The story of Otilie has a fundamental unseriousness which Capote, has fortunately, seldom put into his fiction, and, where it deviated from romantic cliché. The story has something rather chilling about it. Though old Bonaparte somewhat resembles the archetypal bogeys of the dark fiction. The atmosphere of the story does not sustain that kind of reading, and Otilie's murderous innocence seems on extreme case of the chill exclusiveness that tends to mar Capote's dreamers.

Capote's sympathy for adolescent life quickens the work with life of its own. A fierce controversy greeted the work, centered on two issues: the authenticity of the nonfiction from as a medium of narrative, and the authenticity of the author in his relation to the two killers awaiting execution on death row. Capote's endurance and wit make him survive all the controversies around him. He has an image of the aesthetic, the terrorist, the humorist, the jet- setter, and the social critic.

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