

Capote (B. Miller, USA-Canada, 2005)

By Elisabetta Marchiori

On 14 December 1959, in Kansas, a brutal murder was committed: a family was killed in a robbery that incredibly enough, degenerated into a blood bath. A “multiple murder”, no different from many others, made little news. The New York Times only wrote a brief article, which Truman Capote, an eccentric and already famous writer, as well as a protagonist of international “jet-set” did not miss.

Capote arrived in the small town in Kansas with the intent of writing an article on the murder repercussions. Seven years later he published *In Cold Blood*, a non-fiction novel that launched a new literary genre and is regarded as his masterpiece, yet also as the beginning of his painful decline. The killers, Perry Smith and Dick Hickock, were arrested and sentenced to death. Fascinated by the possibility of penetrating the meanders of their mind, Capote established a complex and ambivalent bond with the two, especially with Perry with whom he shared similar traumatic childhood experiences that include being abandoned and neglected. From this close bond his old and unresolved issues became ghosts that haunted him.

Bennet Miller’s film début covers this story; it is flanked by Dan Futterman’s screenplay and stars Philip Seymour (Oscar winner for best male actor).

The film is extremely dense yet essential; fast paced though not superficial; with a masterful use of images to evoke the different problems related to aggressiveness that induce the viewer to (re)read Capote’s novel and biography (by G. Clarke, from which the story is adapted) under the following perspectives:

- Capote’s self-aggressiveness, masked as a “search for truth”, a challenge towards himself and American society, slowly but surely draws him to his own self-destruction;
- the fierce aggressiveness applied by the two murderers in the killing appeared in very few but powerful scenes;
- lastly, the “social” aggressiveness applied in the death sentence which can become an extreme legalized vengeance.

This biopic in weaving open stories, leaves room for thought and the need to better understand the apparently senseless drive that compels such a brutal act as “in cold blood”. Whereas, television and certain types of films present murders in such a way as to block any authentic possibility of thought (as in the familiar Italian case of Novi Ligure and Cogne).

“I didn’t have anything against them, and they never did anything wrong to me - the way other people have all my life. Maybe they’re just the ones who have to pay for it”

(Perry Smith)