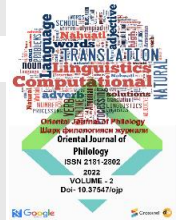




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TRANSFORMATION OF THE AUTHORIAL INSTANCE IN CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTARY-FICTION NARRATIVE

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ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: authorial instance, author-architect, compensatory authorship, documentary-fiction narrative, focalization, montage, testimony, memory.

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Abstract: This study presents a comparative analysis of the modes of authorial presence in T. Capote's novel, S. Alexievich's book of testimony, and M. Murodov's autobiographical novella. Documentary writing is approached not as the absence of authorial mediation, but as a specific mode of organizing factual material, the discourse of others, or autobiographical memory. The article proposes a model of the transformed authorial instance built around four parameters: the visibility of authorial discourse, the object of its organization, the dominant textual operation, and the associated ethical risk. The comparative analysis identifies three variants of a common architectonic structure: the author-reconstructor organizes the event, the author-editor assembles testimonial voices, and the author-mediator shapes fragments of memory. The concept of compensatory authorship is introduced to demonstrate that the reduction of direct authorial commentary does not eliminate the authorial instance; rather, it relocates its activity to the levels of selection, focalization, montage, and chronotopic organization. The analysis of textual microfragments demonstrates that the author's structural freedom becomes particularly evident precisely where the authorial voice is least explicit.

ZAMONAVIY HUJJATLI-BADIIY NARRATIVDA MUALLIFLIK INSTANSIYASINING TRANSFORMATSIYASI

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MAQOLA HAQIDA

Kalit so'zlar: mualliflik instansiyasi, muallif-arxitektor, kompensator mualliflik, hujjatli-badiiy narrativ, fokalizatsiya, montaj, guvohlik, xotira.

Annotatsiya: Mazkur tadqiqot T. Kapotening romani, S. Aleksiyeovichning guvohliklar kitobi va M. Murodovning avtobiografik qissasida muallifning matndagi mavjudlik shakllarining qiyosiy tahliliga bag'ishlangan. Hujjatli adabiyot mualliflik mediatsiyasining yo'qligi sifatida emas, balki faktik material, o'zga shaxslar diskursi yoki avtobiografik xotirani tashkil etishning o'ziga xos usuli sifatida talqin qilinadi. Maqolada to'rtta parametrga asoslangan transformatsiyalangan mualliflik instansiyasi modeli taklif etiladi: mualliflik diskursining ko'rinish darajasi, uni tashkil etish obyekti, ustuvor matniy operatsiya va u bilan bog'liq axloqiy xavf. Qiyosiy tahlil umumiy arxitektonik tuzilmaning uchta variantini aniqlaydi: muallif-rekonstruktor voqeani tashkil etadi, muallif-muharrir guvohlik beruvchi ovozlarni birlashtiradi, muallif-mediator esa xotira fragmentlarini shakllantiradi. Bevosita mualliflik izohlarining qisqarishi mualliflik instansiyasini yo'q qilmasligini, aksincha, uning faoliyatini tanlash, fokalizatsiya, montaj va xronotopik tashkil etish darajalariga ko'chirishini ko'rsatish maqsadida kompensator mualliflik tushunchasi kiritiladi. Matnning mikrofragmentlari tahlili muallifning strukturaviy erkinligi aynan mualliflik ovozi eng kam darajada ochiq ifodalangan o'rinlarda yaqqol namoyon bo'lishini ko'rsatadi.

ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ АВТОРСКОЙ ИНСТАНЦИИ В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ ДОКУМЕНТАЛЬНО-ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОЙ НАРРАТИВНОЙ ПРОЗЕ

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О СТАТЬЕ

Ключевые слова:	авторская инстанция, автор-архитектор, компенсаторное авторство, документально-художественный нарратив,	Аннотация:	В исследовании представлен сравнительный анализ форм авторского присутствия в романе Т. Капоте, книге свидетельств С. Алексиевич
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фокализация, монтаж, свидетельство, память.

и автобиографической повести М. Муродова. Документальная литература рассматривается не как отсутствие авторской медиации, а как особый способ организации фактического материала, дискурса других лиц или автобиографической памяти. В статье предлагается модель трансформированной авторской инстанции, основанная на четырех параметрах: степени видимости авторского дискурса, объекте его организации, доминирующей текстовой операции и связанном с ней этическом риске. Сравнительный анализ выявляет три варианта общей архитектурной структуры: автор-реконструктор организует событие, автор-редактор объединяет свидетельские голоса, а автор-медиатор формирует фрагменты памяти. Вводится понятие компенсаторного авторства, демонстрирующее, что сокращение прямого авторского комментария не устраняет авторскую инстанцию, а переносит ее деятельность на уровни отбора, фокализации, монтажа и хронологической организации. Анализ текстовых микрофрагментов показывает, что структурная свобода автора становится особенно очевидной именно там, где авторский голос выражен наименее явно.

Introduction. In documentary-fiction prose and in non-fiction literature more broadly, the authorial instance rarely coincides with an overtly evaluative narrator. The factual basis of the text and the demand for testimonial reliability push the author to curtail direct commentary, yet the text does not thereby become neutral: the selection of material, the distribution of points of view, the ordering of voices, the boundaries of retrospection, and the way episodes are closed all remain forms of authorial action. The question, then, is not only “who speaks?” but also “who turns factual material into a whole, and through which operations?” Narratology’s distinction among the biographical author, the narrator, and the abstract author keeps the person who wrote a work from being identified directly with the speaking subject. Wayne Booth’s concept of the implied author adds to this distinction the idea of the norms of the work, reconstructed by the reader. For documentary and documentary-fiction prose, however, another level matters more: the practice of selecting and transforming real material, which cannot be reduced to the narrator’s voice or to a general set of values [3].

This article aim is to trace how authorial functions are redistributed across three works that differ in genre and cultural context: T. Capote's nonfiction novel, S. Alexievich's polyphonic book of testimony, and M. Murodov's autobiographical novella. What unites the material is an orientation toward fact. What divides it is the source of that documentary status: an investigated event in Capote, a recorded voice in Alexievich, and personal memory in Murodov.

Materials and methods. The corpus consists of Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and Its Consequences*, first published as a book in 1966 after its 1965 serialization in *The New Yorker* [4]; Svetlana Alexievich's *Secondhand Time*, issued by the Vremya publishing house in 2013 [1]; and the novella by the Uzbek writer Mengliboy Murodov, *Mening bola qalbim* [My Childish Soul], whose text is available, among other places, in the Ziyouz digital library alongside R. Ashrapov's Russian translation, published as *Moia nedetskaia dusha* [My Childish Soul] in the journal *Zvezda Vostoka* [10, 11]. The Capote edition cited here is *In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and Its Consequences* [4]. The 2013 edition of *Secondhand Time* runs to roughly 500 pages and closes the cycle *Voices of Utopia*.

The principal method is comparative-narratological analysis: it examines the relationships among author, narrator, and character; types of focalization; temporal organization; compositional montage; and the means by which another person's words are rendered. Structural-compositional, comparative-typological, and hermeneutic methods are used as well.

"Authorial instance" is used here as a general term for the textually reconstructible organizing principle behind a work, one that does not coincide directly with the empirical person of the writer. This working definition unites together several related categories: Wayne Booth's "implied author" [3] and Wolf Schmid's "abstract author" [12], together with the broader idea of authorial position as a principle of a work's compositional and semantic organization.

The study's novelty rests on four related claims. First, the authorial instance is described through four parameters: discursive visibility, the object of organization, the dominant operation, and ethical risk. Second, the models of the "author-reconstructor," the "author-editor," and the "author-mediator of memory" are treated as variants of a single architectonic function rather than as separate genre features. Third, the article introduces the working concept of compensatory authorship: the weaker the author's direct discursive presence, the more control the author may exercise over composition and over the reader's access to fact. Fourth, ethical responsibility is built into the analysis of poetics: reconstruction, montage, and retrospective representation are treated as simultaneously aesthetic and ethical operations.

Results. Dorrit Cohn, distinguishing fictional from historical narrative, shows that access to a character's inner world carries a different epistemological status in fiction than in a factual text [5]. In documentary-fiction narrative this distinction becomes a source of tension: the text aspires

to psychological depth but cannot freely attribute thoughts and motives to a real person. Indirect means therefore matter more: material detail, shifts of focalization, symptoms encoded in speech, the juxtaposition of testimonies, and retrospective distance.

The concept of the author-architect used in this article does not name a new universal narrative instance but a functional level of analysis. Its diagnostic features are:

- (1) establishing the boundaries of the factual material;
- (2) distributing speaking positions;
- (3) managing temporal and spatial perspective;
- (4) assembling documents and testimonies through montage; and
- (5) turning an individual case into a historically significant statement.

Defined this way, the concept avoids treating the author as “absent” simply because direct commentary is missing from the text.

T. Capote removes the biographical author from the represented world and sustains an effect of impartial observation. The narrative runs in the third person but constantly shifts its distance: a panoramic view of Holcomb gives way in turn to the interior perspectives of the Clutter family, the killers, and the investigators. The authorial position surfaces not in explicit evaluation but in the control of what the reader is allowed to know and in the montage of parallel narrative lines. As a result, the murders become not just something reported but the center around which the book’s suspense is compositionally built. The first microfragment shows Perry waiting in a café. The sequence “Three aspirin, cold root beer, and a chain of Pall Mall cigarettes” brings medicine, a drink, and cigarettes together into an everyday still life [4, p. 21]. The detail never states outright that the character is anxious and unwell; it hands the reader observable signs from which to draw a psychological inference. Authorial authority operates here through the choice and sequence of objects.

In the second microfragment, Perry corrects Dick’s grammatical error with the terse reply “Those walls” [4, p. 28]. The correction takes up almost no space on the page, yet it disrupts the expected unity of the criminal pair: Perry’s linguistic pedantry and aesthetic sensitivity sit beside preparations for violence. Capote does not spell out the contradiction as a character trait; he creates it through the clash between a speech gesture and the situation.

The third microfragment occurs while the rope is being bought. Dick counts the future victims in a clipped formula: “There’s him. Her. The kid and the girl” [4, p. 41]. The syntactic fragmentation turns the family members into components of a technical task. The dry remark on the rope’s length that follows formally preserves neutrality but compositionally delivers a moral judgment. Authorial restraint is not the same as the absence of a position: the evaluation has simply moved from the lexical level to syntax and montage.

These episodes refine the model of the author-reconstructor. Its primary operation is not the mechanical restoration of chronology but the controlled distribution of signs from which the reader reconstructs the event's psychology and ethical meaning. Critical studies of the novel's legacy rightly connect its impact to the tension between its documentary claim and Capote's evident shaping of the material; in the model proposed here, that tension appears as a gap between the author's low discursive visibility and a tightly controlled composition [13].

In S. Alexievich's book, a single third-person narrator gives way to a multitude of testimonial monologues. The form can create an impression of direct access to another person's experience, but the published monologue has already been interviewed, recorded, trimmed, edited, and folded into a composition. The author is present as a listener before the text and as an editor within it. It shows most clearly in how voices are ordered and placed next to one another, so that agreement, dispute, or mutual refutation emerge without any separate explanatory comment.

The fourth microfragment sets the book's retrospective tone: "In the nineties... yes, we were happy..." [1, p. 9]. The ellipses break the smoothness of the written sentence and keep the trace of oral recollection. Among the many possible disruptions of speech, the ones preserved are precisely those that convey the gap between earlier hope and later knowledge. Authorial editing does not erase hesitation; it turns it into a form of historical reflection.

The fifth microfragment builds a sequence of visual frames and closes on the sentence: "That was the first time I saw someone who had been killed" [1, p. 18]. The short sentences reproduce a child's encounter with death without translating it into an adult explanation. Yet the episode's real weight comes from the choice to place this sentence last. The witness delivers the lived experience; the author-editor sets the boundaries within which private memory reads as a symptom of the era.

The sixth microfragment marks the move from the private to the collective: "I want to understand what we lived through. Not only my own life, but ours..." [1, p. 25]. The shift in pronoun from "I" to "ours" becomes the book's organizing axis: readers encounter not a collection of biographies but the passage of individual experience into collective memory.

The model of the author-editor thus holds together two opposing tasks: preserving an individual intonation and folding it into a supra-individual structure. What matters scientifically is not the bare fact that interviews are edited, but how authorial responsibility gets distributed. The less the author speaks in her own name, the more she decides about a monologue's length, its beginning and end, its placement next to other testimonies, and the recurrence of motifs. The principle of compensatory authorship is at its clearest here.

In M. Murodov's novella *Mening bola qalbim* [My Childish Soul], documentary status rests neither on an investigation nor on a set of interviews but on autobiographical recollection. It was published in R. Ashrapov's Russian translation as *Moia nedetskaia dusha* [My Childish Soul]. The

narrating “I” splits between a child who does not yet grasp the historical meaning of events and an adult who knows the consequences of the war, the father’s death, and early orphanhood. This structure cannot be reduced to an identity among author, narrator, and protagonist: temporal distance turns lived experience into an object of selection and composition. The seventh microfragment turns on the protagonist’s first encounter with the word “theft”: “It was the first time in my life that I had heard the word ‘theft.’ I did not understand what it meant” [11, p. 21]. The retrospective narrator knows the episode’s moral meaning but keeps the limits of the child’s perception intact: the child wanted to warm his sick mother and sisters and could not understand why taking a log without permission counted as stealing. The documentary quality of the memory lies in preserving this early incomprehension, which the adult perspective then organizes into a scene of moral maturation.

The eighth microfragment turns on the word “orphan”: “What did you say? You called me an orphan?! Who is an orphan?!” [11, p. 27]. The repetition adds no new fact; it registers the child’s resistance to a loss that has already happened. For an adult listener, “orphan” is a social label; for the protagonist, it violently destroys the hope that his father will come back.

Double focalization holds onto the immediacy of the child’s reaction while also showing its historical weight. R. Ashrapov’s Russian translation of the work appeared in the journal *Zvezda Vostoka*; recourse to the Uzbek original remains necessary here, because the precise organization of speech is itself part of what is being analyzed.

The author-mediator of memory does more than testify to his own past. He distributes roles between the “I then” and the “I now,” selects scenes of moral maturation, and turns family memory into public historical testimony. The ethical risk of this model is retrospective correction: adult knowledge can make the child’s voice too coherent. M. Murodov limits this risk through questions, repetitions, everyday detail, and the protagonist’s meaningful misunderstandings.

Discussion. The comparison shows that authorial visibility and the strength of authorial organization do not track each other in any simple way. In Capote, the author rarely comments yet controls access to the event and to the characters’ consciousness. In Alexievich, witnesses hold the main discursive space, but montage decides the order of voices. In Murodov, the personal “I” is explicit, yet within it the experiencing child and the remembering adult stay distinct.

Table 1. Comparison of authorial models across the three works, by object of organization, dominant operation, and primary ethical risk

Work	Model	Object of organization	Dominant operation	Primary ethical risk
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T. Capote	Author-reconstructor	Event	Focalization and montage of facts	Speculative psychologizing of real persons
S. Alexievich	Author-editor	Voice	Selection, editing, and juxtaposition of testimonies	Appropriation or subordination of another person's words
M. Murodov	Author-mediator of memory	Recollection	Retrospection and double focalization	Replacement of childhood experience by adult knowledge

The table brings out both an invariant and several variables. The invariant is the author's organization of the movement from fact to meaning. The variables, such as an event, a voice, or a recollection, depend on what the author receives as source material and these sources carry different dominant operations and different limits of what is permissible. This model is sharper than a simple opposition between "objective" and "subjective" narration because it points to the specific locus of authorial control.

G. Genette links narrative voice to the level of narration and to the relationships among time, focalization, and the subject of the narrative act [6, pp. 60–280]. Non-fiction material requires this scheme to be supplemented by a further question: who is responsible for organizing someone else's reality? In Capote, the ethical boundary runs between reconstruction and an unverifiable entry into the inner world of a real person. In Alexievich, it runs between preserving the testimonial voice and subordinating it to the overall composition. In Murodov, it runs between fidelity to childhood perception and later interpretation [7].

The category of polyphony applies to Alexievich's book only with a qualification, since its voices do not have the novelistic autonomy that Bakhtin associated with Dostoevsky's artistic world [2]. They belong to real witnesses, but they enter the book only after authorial processing. Polyphony therefore does not abolish the architectonic center; it only makes that center less visible and, at the same time, more responsible.

In all three works, ethics is not an external normative addition to poetics; it is built into the choice of narrative technique. Focalization sets the degree of psychological intrusion; montage decides whether a voice will be heard as autonomous testimony or as an illustration of a thesis; retrospection decides whether the distance between child and adult survives. The author-architect thus doubles as an ethical mediator.

Conclusion. The comparative analysis confirms that contemporary documentary-fiction narrative is marked not by the disappearance of the author but by a redistribution of authorial

functions. Direct commentary gives way to selection, focalization, montage, the editing of testimonies, and the organization of temporal perspective. The authorial position grows less visible at the discursive level while holding, or even gaining, weight at the level of architectonics.

In *In Cold Blood*, the author-reconstructor predominates, organizing the event through variable focalization, parallel montage, and psychologically loaded detail. In *Secondhand Time*, the author-editor works by turning oral testimonies into a composition of collective memory. In *Mening bola qalbim [My Childish Soul]*, the author-mediator of memory takes shape: the double perspective of child and adult turns a private biography into historical testimony.

The scientific outcome of the comparison is a single four-part model: event – reconstruction – risk of speculative psychologizing; voice – montage – risk of appropriating another person's words; memory – retrospective mediation – risk of letting later knowledge replace early experience. This model makes the concept of the author-architect testable: it shows up through observable textual operations rather than through a general claim about a hidden authorial presence.

The eight microfragments examined show that authorial evaluation can appear without any directly evaluative statement. It is produced by a sequence of objects, a correction in speech, syntactic fragmentation, a preserved pause, the final placement of a sentence, a pronominal shift, a confessional frame, and the repetition of a traumatic word. The line between fact and literary representation therefore does not run along “author present versus author absent,” but through the author's ways of working with real material.

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