

# LITERARY PRESS RELEASE



## NEW ARTICLE ALLEGES THAT TRUMAN CAPOTE PLAGIARIZED WORKS BY PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR WILLA CATHER

ALTO, NEW MEXICO, 30 January 2025 - Writer Shiloh Richter, known for her work with Books of the Southwest, has recently published a comprehensive article alleging that Truman Capote plagiarized works by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Willa Cather.

In Cold Blood is the second of such works Shiloh Richter has compared Truman's patterns of writing to that of Willa Cather's works. Richter first considered Truman's novella Breakfast at Tiffany's where she sought to show close commonalities to Willa's "Coming, Aphrodite!", A Lost Lady, My Ántonia, and The Song of the Lark, among other of Cather's works. Within that study Richter then examined the movie version of Breakfast at Tiffany's starring Audrey Hepburn and compared screenwriter George Axelrod's script to both Capote's and Cather's works seeking to show Axelrod's allusions on screen to each writer. "That would suggest," Richter is quoted as saying, "George Axelrod was showing that he was aware that Truman was coming very close to Willa's characters and storylines. That changes insight into what the filmmakers were doing with the movie."

"One really recognizable example that rings of too close similarity between their works," Richter offers, "is Truman's opening in Breakfast at Tiffany's where he writes, 'It never occurred to me in those days to write about Holly Golightly, and probably it would not now except for a conversation I had with Joe Bell that set the whole memory of her in motion again,' and how close that is to Willa's opening in My Ántonia with Jim Burden (with the same initials as Truman's Joe Bell):

“During that burning day when we were crossing Iowa, our talk kept returning to a central figure, a Bohemian girl whom we had known long ago and whom both of us admired. More than any other person we remembered, this girl seemed to mean to us the country, the conditions, the whole adventure of our childhood. To speak her name was to call up pictures of people and places, to set a quiet drama going in one's brain [ . . . ] ‘I can't see,” he said impetuously, “why you have never written anything about Antonia.”

Of her article Richter suggested that, “By taking In Cold Blood line by line, it is possible to see where that line came from in Willa Cather’s One of Ours. From that point one can see that he matched up characters, descriptions, novel structure, even minute biographical details such as pairing up Willa Cather’s character of the young WWI soldier Claude Wheeler, a real-life character who died in the war in France based on the death of her own cousin, to Truman Capote’s characterization of the convicted murderer Perry Smith.”

Richter’s study, she asserts, had to take into account why a writer would allegedly infringe on another person’s intellectual property repeatedly, from Breakfast at Tiffany’s to In Cold Blood over the expanse of six years, with evidence further back into the 1940s and 50s. “It couldn’t go without noticing. It wasn’t a normal situation that the motive could be defined by the works themselves or that he was simply enigmatic,” Richter says, “and it didn’t make much sense until I could look at the research of psychology experts where like patterns are known to exist, such as described by Dr. Les Carter, an expert in narcissism, and Dr. Frank Yeomans (Yeomans was interviewed for the documentary Borderline (2016)). “And of course, that opens into another subject beyond the literature that psychological experts would have to attest to. But there’s something more than just closely adhering to someone else’s work and claiming it as his own publicly and believing it, and all the while seeing and presenting himself as the victim.”

Richter stated that, “Of all the biographies, films, and research on Truman, I couldn’t find anyone willing to say that what was happening in the social perception wasn’t normal. They were attributing it to talent and fame. By looking into the case of evidence of plagiarism I think we can start to open a conversation that hasn’t been able to take place yet. There were people deeply hurt that we are aware of, such as Babe Paley and her family, as her daughter has written about. But when it happens to surviving members of murdered families, or with an author such as Willa Cather, you’ve got monumental works that open to so much more. It’s worth opening a new kind of informed conversation based on what we can now know.”

### **Additional Documents:**

Article: “In Colder Blood: How Truman Capote Plagiarized His ‘Masterpiece’ from Willa Cather’s *One of Ours*”

“Press Kit Addendum: Line by Line Comparison Willa Cather’s *One of Ours* to Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*, Over 100 Pages of Evidence Examining Truman’s Alleged Plagiarism”

### **Press Contact:**

Shiloh Richter (writer, editor)  
press@booksofthesouthwest.com





## Shiloh Richter, M.A.

Shiloh Richter was the only one who was in a romantic relationship with musician John Mayer in 2010, contrary to stories purposefully fed to the press, an experience of fifteen years parallel to that of this story and literary history of Willa Cather and Truman Capote. She is on a mission to set the story straight not through easy sensationalism and paparazzi titillation, but through the content and eternal value of the art. Shiloh taught college literature and writing including Southwestern Literature, Creative Writing, and Folklore for a decade and for years edited the historic *Books of the Southwest* literary journal begun in Los Angeles in 1957 that for over four decades went out on subscription to university libraries the world over. She now writes literary expose on [booksofthesouthwest.com](http://booksofthesouthwest.com). She is the author of *Coyote Weaves a Song: A Mythological Song from the Beginning of Time Volumes I & II*; *My Love Affair with Moonbeam: Ten + Years of Wonder, Bursting Love and Creativity*, and *On Being: Snow White and the Emergence of Presence and the Real Poetic: Unseen Visions of 'Being' in the Woods* and the art print tapestries *'Until Shiloh Comes' Cosmic Flow Tapestry* and *Hermesque: The Grateful Universe*.

### BOOKS OF THE SOUTHWEST

CRITICAL REVIEWS OF CURRENT  
SOUTHWESTERN AMERICANA

Vol. 41.7 No. 463 July 1997



**BOOKS  
OF THE  
SOUTH  
WEST**

A CRITICAL CHECKLIST OF CURRENT  
SOUTHWESTERN AMERICANA  
\*\*\*\*\* COMPILED MONTHLY BY  
LAWRENCE CLARK POWELL  
AND ISSUED BY THE LIBRARY OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
AT LOS ANGELES \*\*\*\*\*