

thought of the other. He tells us a little about the background of each, but not enough to sound like a case history. He brings the couple to the lane leading to the Clutter home, then leaps abruptly to the discovery of the four corpses.

When he has an effective witness, Capote makes use of him. Larry Hendricks, a young teacher, tells what he saw in the house. He concludes: "And seeing the dog—somehow that made me *feel* again. I'd been too dazed, too numb, to feel the full viciousness of it. The suffering. The horror. They were dead. A whole family. Gentle, kindly people, people I knew—*murdered*. You had to believe it, because it was really true." The shock spreads through the community, and Capote, who was on the spot and talking with people only a few days after the crime, describes the consequences.

But his principal concern now is the detection of the criminals, and this process we see largely through the eyes of "a lean and handsome fourth-generation Kansan of forty-seven named Alvin Adams Dewey," who was the agent of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation in nearby Garden City. Handsome though he may have been, Dewey was not much like the detectives of fiction and television. Following him and his numerous assistants in their search, we see him as persistent, systematic, and rather dull. "We must keep going," he tells his team, "till we know the Clutters better than they ever knew themselves." Meanwhile, in alternating chapters, Capote has taken the young murderers into Mexico and has told us much more about them, especially Perry, partly by means of letters and other documents that were brought into the case later on.

One advantage the reporter has over the novelist is that he does not have to worry about probability. (It is a fact, amazing though irrelevant, that Herbert Clutter took out \$40,000 in life insurance, with double indemnity, the day before he was killed.) The first significant clue comes to the investigators in a way that one would have to smile at if he read about it in a mystery story. And the case against the boys is clinched by a coincidence of the most outrageous kind—as one of the detectives gloatingly points out.

The high point in the book is Perry's confession, for now we know how the murders were committed, but the trial and the appeals are still to come. The trial was not particularly dramatic, and Capote does not try to make it seem so. More exciting is his account of the condemned men in Death Row at Leavenworth, in which, it is to be presumed, he is drawing on personal observation. He tells about the other inhabitants of what the prisoners called "the Corner," and, though moving rapidly through the

years, gives us some sense of what Perry and Dick were feeling. (Among his tasks of preparation, Capote appears to have made a study of relevant aspects of criminal law.)

When there is a spectacular event, most of us are curious about what "really" happened, and there is always some sensational journalist who will give us, in his meretricious way, what purports to be the inside story. Capote, with no cheapness, has given us what comes close to being the whole story, and it is fascinating. If Dreiser had done the same sort of thing with the Grace Brown-Chester Gillette case, had limited himself to ascertainable facts, *An American Tragedy* might have been a better book. (I have always felt that Roberta's letters, which reproduce almost verbatim the letters of Grace Brown, are the best things in the novel.)

Capote's first aim was to show the effect of a gratuitous crime, and in this, thanks to his indefatigable interviewing, he was highly successful. When he asked a schoolteacher why the people of the town were so terrified, she replied: "Feeling wouldn't run half so high if this had happened to anyone *except* the Clutters. Anyone *less* admired. Prosperous. Secure. But that family represented everything people hereabouts really value and respect, and that such a thing could happen to them—well, it's like being told there is no God. It makes life seem pointless." Another reason for fear, as Capote goes on to say, "was that this hitherto peaceful congregation of neighbors and old friends had suddenly to endure the unique experience of distrusting each other."

Why did the boys do it? Capote is careful to offer no personal analysis of their motives. He gives the facts, and he

prints several reports by psychiatrists, but the reader is left to draw his own conclusions.

The book is written with extraordinary skill. Many conversations are reported and, in essence I am sure, accurately reported, but Capote has not inflicted on his readers exact reproductions of the way people talk; he gives the effect of reality, and that is enough. He advantageously manipulates the point of view: Mrs. Dewey, for example, tells how her husband behaved when he heard that the boys had been apprehended, and we see Perry in jail through the eyes of the undersheriff's wife. The style is direct and straightforward, but Capote does not hesitate to use effective images: "Like a lizard at siesta," "like a peacock trapped in a turkey pen," "some unkind cupid aiming envenomed arrows." His taste almost never falters, but I am not happy about "Hickock's lips writhed as he whispered atrocious words." And the ending, surprisingly, is a touch on the sentimental side.

Some persons who read *In Cold Blood* in *The New Yorker* complained that there were too many details. Perhaps they wouldn't have felt this if they had waited for the book; I, at least, find it wearying to follow any long piece of writing—and the installments were very long—through the back pages of a magazine. I believe that at almost every point Capote was using the facts he had so painstakingly gathered to make exactly the impression he wanted to make. His success will give ammunition to those who are pleading the claims of journalism as against those of fiction, and that's all right. I will point out, however, that, although this is a very, very good book, *Crime and Punishment* is a great one.

—GRANVILLE HICKS.

The Author: "A dozen oysters," Mr. Capote told the waiter. "The little ones. Those big old ones get too fat."

His voice is high-pitched, but pleasant on the ear. It glides and swoops through the upper registers like some tissue-thin kite at the whim of a breeze. The voice is the only suggestion left of the slender man-child of twenty-three who posed recumbent on a couch, blond hair drooping on his forehead, for the dust jacket of his first novel, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*. At forty-one Truman Capote's short frame has thickened out as if to compensate for the hair, which has thinned and moved back. The blue eyes look out from behind brown horn rims. There is warmth in the eyes, compassion, understanding—and, if you look closely, somewhere far back there is steel.

"That picture," he said. "It was part of my complete naïveté." He pronounces it nah-vit-tay, an echo of his

New Orleans childhood. "A friend took the picture. I had about nine or ten pictures. I didn't think anything about the picture, and when the publishers said, well, let's have a picture on the jacket of the book, I just sent all the pictures I had. I think it was general naïveté, period. There was nothing calculated about it at all. But when people read the book, and realized what the theme was, and coupled that with the picture, I mean the whole thing took on a kind of *outré* peculiar quality that it was never meant to have had. I mean, I could have had a completely simple straightforward picture, or not any at all. I've almost never had a picture on a book since then."

There is no author's photograph on the jacket of *In Cold Blood*, his ninth book (if one counts *Selected Writings*, made up from his other works). *In Cold Blood*, the meticulously detailed factual account of a small-town Kansas

murder from the events preceding the crime through the execution of the murderers, was a guaranteed success, financially speaking, months prior to its publication. *The New Yorker* printed the novel in four consecutive issues and is rumored to have paid \$70,000 for the privilege. Also rumored is the \$700,000 paid by New American Library for the paperback rights; the motion picture rights have gone to Columbia Pictures in a near-million-dollar deal, and the work is the February selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club, another whopping source of author money. Whatever the hard facts and figures pertinent to *In Cold Blood* are, Truman Capote has worked hard and long—five years—for his reward.

"Well, for two years I had been looking for the subject to do this non-fiction novel about, and I had two or three that I had evolved one way or the other, and had done just a certain amount of work, when, one day, it suddenly occurred to me that a crime might be an excellent subject to make my big experiment with. *In Cold Blood*, you know, is what I call a nonfiction novel. It's a peculiar sort of hybrid form. I think it's a great unexplored art form.

"I wrote what I called a short comic nonfiction novel, *The Muses Are Heard*. About the people going to Russia. And then I got this idea of doing a really serious big work—it would be precisely like a novel, with a single difference: every word of it would be true from beginning to end. I called this, in my mind, a nonfiction novel.

"To get back, once I had decided on the possibility of a crime—and I am not interested in crime per se; I hate violence—I would half-consciously, when looking through the papers, always notice any item that had a reference to a crime. Well, one day in November 1959 I was thumbing through the *New York Times* and I saw this little headline, just a few paragraphs about this case. It was sort of as though one had been sitting for a long time watching for a certain kind of bird—if you were a bird-watcher—to come into view, and there it was. Almost instantaneously I thought, well, this is maybe exactly what I want to do, because I don't know anything about that part of the world. I've never been to Kansas, much less western Kansas. It all seems fresh to me. I'll go without any prejudices. And so I went.

"The book wasn't something reconstructed from some great distance. I did it right along as it was happening. I lived the whole thing. The whole investigation of the case, the capture of the boys, the trial, all of the years on Death Row. All I really had to recon-



—Rudy Valenzuela.

Truman Capote: "I lived the whole thing."

struct, in an historical way, was the last days of the Clutter family's lives. It's not so awfully difficult to do—I was there three days after the murder, and I could talk to everybody who had seen the family.

"But there was a tremendous amount of research. All those endless interviews with all of those people, and I traveled all over the country and to all of the places that appear in the book, all those motels where the boys stayed, all those sordid motels and hotels in Acapulco and Miami. And I wrote 6,000 pages of notes before I ever sat down to write the book.

"I only write in longhand. Six thousand pages of interviews. Then I typed them, all by myself. Of course, Harper Lee helped me with the research the first two months. She went out to Kansas with me as my friend—we grew up together—and assistant. You know, I didn't exactly want to arrive out there all by myself, not knowing what I was walking into with the town in the grips of this immense murder case. A little town like that. So Harper Lee very kindly said she would go along for company, and then she did a lot of research and some special sort of interviews. At the time she had just finished her book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and it hadn't come out yet.

"Five years is a long time, you know, and I had to do so much more than research. I used to have to write sometimes up to ten letters a day to people just in connection with tiny little details. To give you an example, you know in the last part of the book where the notes appear that Hickock and Smith wrote to the psychiatrist at the time of the trial?

"Well, Hickock and Smith, who were very very good friends of mine (I mean became very close friends, very very close intimates in every conceivable way), would have gladly given me the things they wrote. They tried to reproduce them for me, but they couldn't,

and it took me two years of constantly writing to Dr. Johnson before he finally gave me these things that they had actually written. That's just a small example. I used to have a chart up on the board of people I'd written to, things to be done, people who have answered, who haven't answered—the most minute little details—I would never do it again, I mean, if I had known what that book was going to cost in every conceivable way, emotionally, I never would have started it, and I really mean that.

"You know, you mustn't read the book all in one wave. The last half is so terribly complex and complicated, and by that time you're too tired, just too tired. When anybody asks me about it, I say, well, read parts one and two, put it away for a day and then read the last two parts.

"Yes, I have a very detached attitude about work *vis-à-vis* myself. I think it's a very valuable quality to have if you want to do the work that I do. I feel detached, but that doesn't mean I don't feel moved. I always have this theory, that if you want to move someone else as an artist, you yourself must necessarily be deeply moved by what it is that you are writing, but you must keep exploiting that emotion in yourself over and over and over until you can become completely cold about it, or fairly cold, and then you write it, because from that area of detachment, you know exactly how to reproduce what it was that moved you about it originally."

The steel in his eyes now seemed closer to the surface. "If you've been training yourself since you were—let me see . . . I began to write so-called seriously certainly by the time I was fifteen, and I'd already been writing four years. That sounds silly, but the fact of the matter is, it wasn't. I saw every thing in literary or writing terms. I was a highly trained and accomplished writer by the time I was eighteen. All I had to do then was something to myself. As far as technical ability, I could write as well when I was eighteen as I can today. I mean technically. But I had to do something to myself. You see, I had to recreate myself."

The oysters had long been removed, the coffee had grown cold, and the last cigarette was butted. Truman Capote rose to say goodbye. "About *In Cold Blood*: after I had worked on it for three years, I almost abandoned it. I'd become so emotionally involved that it was really a question of personal survival, and I'm not kidding.

"I just couldn't bear the morbidity all the time. There's just so much you can give to art. Nevertheless I didn't abandon it. I went through the whole damn thing. I did everything very thoroughly, and in the end I simply reduced it down. I built an oak and reduced it to a seed."

—HASKEL FRANKEL.

Thinking Big

THERE are four million persons in this country whose vision is sufficiently impaired so that they cannot read books printed in standard ten-point type. An equal number from among the over-sixty-five population have "fading vision," which means that reading is difficult without a magnifying glass.

Until recently, publishers ignored these low-vision readers; then, about a year ago, a former Viking Press executive who had been rusticated in Vermont got to thinking about the visually handicapped, not as a problem group but in terms of a market for books. The result was Keith Jennison Books, a series of adult classics and semiclassics that are a pleasure to read even for the man with normal vision.

Like a good many new ideas in publishing, this one got started on a shoestring—a \$17 shoestring, to be exact, which was the cost of printing a set of letterheads on which Jennison wrote to "all those who had a stake in this closed world." This meant chiefly libraries and schools. The replies were encouraging. Librarians reported that for years they have been hearing the complaint, especially from people over sixty-five, that "I can't read this type." School officials pointed out that at least one in every 500 pupils is unable to manage conventional size type, and that only a few

textbook publishers take this fact into account. Supplementary reading material is, so to speak, a closed book for these young people, and any scheme that opened it would be welcome.

Jennison's next step was to get financial backing for what looked like a new publishing company. The more he researched the potential market, the bigger it got. There are millions of borderline cases who can manage ten-point type but not the eight-point that has become standard in a good many paperbacks. (Many classics, for example, are conveniently available only in paperback these days.) In addition, there are sufferers from Parkinson's disease and cerebral palsy for whom large print simply makes reading easier. Next—and this was an unexpected discovery that came only after the first list of books was published—a hard core of both young people and adult "illiterates" are afraid of books; for these, the primer-like appearance of large type serves as a bridge to conventional editions. (Conrad in the old leatherbound, small-type "sets" is formidable; but Conrad on an expansive 8½ x 11-inch page breathes excitement.) Finally, an innumerable number of 20/20 readers prefer a lap-size book because it's easier to hold and doesn't snap shut on their fingers.

Jennison's primary market, however, is made up of the partially-sighted reader, or the senior citizen who has given up books for shuffleboard. As one executive of the book production industry put it, publishers who encouraged "lifetime reading habits" and reading for a "richer, fuller life" did nothing to make such habits optically possible. True, Field Enterprises has a large-type edition of *The World Book Encyclopedia*; but what about the man who just wants a good mystery?

In developing a viable program for these people, Jennison was confronted with a threefold problem: (a) he had to decide to what extent he would cater to the lifetime habits, and how much to the rich, full life (his lists to date have been a delicate compromise, from Zane Grey and Rose Wilder Lane, providing the lighter moments, to Hawthorne, Conrad, and middlebrows like John Steinbeck); (b) he had to design a book that would lie flat once opened, since many readers are bedridden or otherwise disabled and would have to read without hands, and (c) he had to have

money. Two hundred thousand dollars was pledged quickly enough, but before it was picked up the firm of Franklin Watts got interested in the idea and took Jennison into its operation. Watts, in turn, is a division of Grolier, Inc. Thus, as the type got bigger, so did the publisher.

Jennison picks his titles largely from the American Library Association's list of "double stars" (recent books that have been tagged as possible classics) and school lists of recommended reading. This gives him a basic library of about 400 titles, most of which he hopes to have in large type within a few years; fittingly, the first off the press was John F. Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage*. Others: *Ethan Frome*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Mama's Bank Account*, *The Yearling*. Jennison expects no trouble with the censors.

IN selecting his books he seeks out good originals to copy from; since the type is enlarged photographically, bad typography in ten-point is just that much worse in eighteen. He also tries to avoid italics ("they drive the visually handicapped out of their minds") and serif or other fussy typefaces that are hard to read. Finding the right combination hasn't been easy, because book designers, when they were turned loose on a classic, had a tendency to get fancy—on the theory, possibly, that a great book shouldn't look too much like last year's best seller. Another factor in achieving optimum readability was the elimination of glare, as well as the need for a high opacity paper to prevent any show-through; to take care of this, Jennison uses a heavy (fifty-lb.) offset paper which bears the appropriate name of Ruskin Opaque. All of this, plus a page size 25 per cent larger than the original edition, means that a Jennison book costs about \$1 more than similar books that haven't been doctored, or \$6.95 for most titles.

A *panache* has been added to the whole operation with the founding recently of a Large Type Book Society; by signing up for four selections a year, members save \$2 a book. Even more important to many subscribers is that they are saving their eyes, and a surprising number of them are not visually handicapped so much as concerned about becoming so.

The large-type idea doesn't fill all the needs of the low-vision reader—selections are limited to books of proven popularity, and specialized or offbeat items aren't likely to be included. Yet the time may come when every publisher will find it profitable to run off a large-type counterpart to his most important new books. In any case, the trail has been blazed. —DAVID DEMPSEY.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT No. 1172

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1172 will be found in the next issue.

B TCL XK ILMS BL CRR'K QBS

IJ GBHXLRLIFTVCV CRR.

KBGNCM PNFMVCV

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1171

What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered.

—EMERSON.