



TYNAN & CAPOTE AT TV STUDIO IN LONDON
Even Uriah would blush.

CRITICS

Cold-Blooded Crossfire

As most literate persons know by now, Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* is a searching and compassionate account of two disturbed young men who brutally murdered a Kansas family, were captured, tried and executed. Capote, who called the book a "nonfiction novel," spent six years on it, from shortly after the murder in 1959 to shortly after their hanging in 1965. He had countless hours with the killers in prison, became their intimate friend, showed them the manuscript of the book. They talked to him so frankly and freely that some readers feel Capote exploited them for his own personal triumph.

One angry fault-finder was London Critic Kenneth Tynan. In a review written for the *London Observer*, Tynan dealt with the book briefly and concentrated on attacking its author. "For the first time," he said, "an influential writer of the front rank has been placed in a position of privileged intimacy with criminals about to die and—in my view—done less than he might have to save them."

Intense Identification? Tynan had been bothered by the book before it was published (it was serialized in *The New Yorker*). He had expressed his disapproval to Capote when the two men met at parties and when Capote appeared on Tynan's TV program in London. He repeated his objections in his review. *In Cold Blood*, said Tynan, seemed callously indifferent to the fate of the criminals it scrutinized. Capote probably could have produced enough evidence to show that the two men were insane and might have saved them from hanging. But he did not bother to search out a psychiatrist to testify for the defense. In fact, Tynan suggested, Capote

was probably just as happy to see them hang. Their death lent an artistic climax to his story; moreover, if they had lived, they might have refused to let the book be published.

Tynan suggested that Capote was probably in need of a little psychoanalysis himself. He quoted from a lady psychiatrist: "Is it possible that Capote was gaining satisfaction out of acting as confessor to the criminals because of an intense identification with them? At some time or other, all of us feel like killing; but now Capote can avoid the real situation, since someone with whom he strongly identifies has done the killing instead."

Serpentine Suavity. Capote, who despite his effeminate manner can be a tough scrapper, struck back immediately. "I don't believe in artists replying to criticism," he wrote to the *Observer*, "and I have never done so myself, for I think it shows lack of pride and really serves small purpose. But this bullyboy chicanery concocted by Tynan is one over the odds." Capote emphatically denied that he could have done anything more to save his "pitiful friends." A competent psychiatrist had offered his testimony, and the Kansas court was not likely to be impressed with any more medical men. Nor did he have anything to gain from the deaths of the criminals; each had read parts of the book and signed releases for it.

As for the lady psychiatrist, Capote warmed up to the accusation that bothered him most. "The manner in which Tynan introduces this character," he wrote, "is McCarthy technique at its serpentine suavest. He means to use her the same way a ventriloquist uses a dummy. Tynan is a bully; and true to tradition, he is also a coward. There are some very rotten things he wants to say about me, but he hasn't the guts to come

right out and say them himself. Even a man with the morals of a baboon, the guts of a butterfly could not do a thing sneakier or more cowardly than that: it would bring a blush to the cheeks of Uriah Heep."

To date, Tynan has got in the licks: "Capote seems to have invented yet another art form: after the fiction novel, the semi-documentary tantrum."

MAGAZINES

Humor in the Moral Middle

One night, while listening to a radio announcer spilling a tasteless commercial, Gagman Roger Price exploded. "I can't stand it any longer," he shouted at the obnoxious squawk. Then he began to think about all the other things he couldn't stand any longer: soft frozen butter pats, astrology, karate, clergymen who discourse learnedly on sex. But what was the point in ranting and raving when nobody else was listening? "That's when I decided to complain out loud in public," recalls Price. "The thing every man wants to do."

No Labels. Such were the origins of *Grump*, a year-old, 16-page bimonthly magazine that ridicules in print, photo and drawing what Price considers the "excesses of today's consumer culture—everything from hamburgers named 'Big Daddy' to 'the proliferation of venality' to newspapers that 'congratulate you during a blackout for not starting a riot.' *Grump* even invents some excesses of its own: a game called 'skull diving,' for example, in which a man wearing a football helmet topples by a large spring bounces on his head out of the window onto the street. The instant the skull strikes the pavement is known as the 'Moment of Migraine.'

The current issue contains a story about an archprotector named Shepp;

ALFRED SHATZ



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