Truman Capote's "In Cold Blood" is perhaps the first of its kind to scrutinize with great detail and focus on the events surrounding the murder of the Clutter family in Holcomb, Kansas, and the aftermath of the murder from psychological and sociological perspectives. It was published as a four-part series in \*The New Yorker\* in 1965 and later in book form in 1966. The storyline captured the country's imagination and the issues of crime punishment and ethics. Capote created the concept of accurate crime reporting and wrote his own by blending nonfiction with fiction. The Clutter ladies and gentlemen who were prosperous and secure lived the proverbial American dream, which makes their killing shocking. Other aspects of the crime, especially that which featured violence staged at unimaginable levels of sheer idiocy, bring the question: How just is justice? How moral is the death penalty? Highly gratuitous violence characterized their crimes, but as Capote makes clear in detailing the murders and the twisted personalities of killers Richard Hickock and Perry Smith, these were not mere crimes of passion. They were sociopathic killings that one can only agree were a sad reflection of society. I believe that they deserve the death penalty due to the violence they have caused.

Capote commences his account with a jarring headline from *The New York Times*: "WEALTHY FARMER, 3 OF FAMILY SLAIN." This prepares the audience for a crime that will shock the nation. The Clutter family, which included Bonny and Herbert Clutter with their children Nancy and Kenyon, was respectable in their neighborhood. Capote then reflects on the calm environment in Holcomb, where the people—two hundred and seventy of them—are happy and content, straying away from the affairs of the whole town. However, this calm, seemingly everlasting period of rest was violently interrupted in the early hours of November 15th, 1959, when four shots were fired, claiming six lives and instilling a horror-stricken feeling in the remaining residents of the town.

The repercussions of the act of violence in question left the residents suspicious of their previously altruistic neighbors. Capote states, "fantasy recreating them over and again—those somber explosions that stimulated fires of mistrust." The killing of the Clutter family was a tragedy that silenced many innocent people and made a whole society. The reader is thrown into the absurdity of the murders when Capote writes about the crime: Mr. Clutter was a bloody, gagged, almond-eyed man with a slashed neck found inside his obligatory plastic crime scene family dump. The horrific nature of the murder and the way the victims were executed was not an accident; it was a murderous act that was well thought out and planned and changed the community forever.

When Capote talks about Hickock and Smith's history, it becomes evident that both characters have faced issues of abuse and neglect in their pasts. He does dwindle into a history of sorrow and trauma, and in doing so, he underlines the core of Perry Smith's conflict. He thinks, "I didn't want to hurt the man. He seemed like such a nice gentleman. Gentle voice." Still, he does bear some moral and ethical responsibility for what he does. The nature of the crime is also aggravated, looking at the makeup; two of the assaults involved four and six victims, respectively, and committing such acts of violence in that short period demonstrates an extreme level of cruelty. Capote mentions, "They went armed with a shotgun and a dagger. They went to rob and kill," confirming they intended to commit the crime in advance.

The subsequent trial does not escape publicity either, gaining nationwide attention. The prosecutor demands the death penalty, arguing in the famous Australian legal phrase that there was "cold and calculated weighing of so many ounces of silver against so many ounces of blood." The lawyers try to convince the justices that the killers were not really getting it right and that there was something wrong with killing, especially with punishing these people with death. Nevertheless, Capote demonstrated that, owing to the testimonies and confessions, this crime was too evil for there to be any claim of clemency. Hickock shows no remorse by saying, "I just want to say I hold no hard feelings."

Capote's narrative also delves into the psychological states of the killers. Hickock and Smith's upbringing is full of family problems, but still, that is not enough justification for their violent behavior. Capote explains, "I don't know why." Smith reflects, "I was sore at Dick. The tough brass boy. However, it was not Dick. On the other hand, the fear of being identified. I was willing to take that gamble." This reveals the difficulties in understanding and explaining their actions and placing the blame. The disdain of the killers for their victims and their relaxed demeanor about the killings create an additional problem regarding how to punish these offenders from an ethical standpoint.

In conclusion, Capote's "In Cold Blood" speaks volumes about society's problems with violence and the law. The story forces the reader to reckon with the disturbing notion of capital punishment implemented for such extremities. The murder of the Clutter family was not just a crime; it was a savage act that upset the entire community and well beyond. Because of the premeditated murders and, even more, the lack of regret from the murderers, I feel that they deserved the death penalty for the extreme violence they had caused. Capote's writings invite us to consider what it means to be human and what it means to live with laws that have to do with crime and justice, but they also make us wonder about the price violence inflicts on society.

Works Cited

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