

"I Think There Must Be Something Wrong with Us": *Folie à Deux* in Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*

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Abstract

Psychiatrists define *folie à deux* as communicated insanity; a rare psychotic disorder that may be transmitted from the sufferer to a person or persons closely related to him/her. The disorder is often described in the context of schizophrenia, but different varieties of *folie à deux* have been noted in other conditions. In criminology, the term is used in the framework of team killers and seldom involves false or delusional beliefs, but rather deviant behaviour shared by two. Examples of notorious *folie à deux* unions include Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, Fred and Rosemary West, Charles Ng and Leonard Lake, and Angelo Buono and Kenneth Bianchi. In fiction, *folie à deux* with a criminal intent appears in Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1966), where a dominant leader unites with a passive follower to commit felonies. The novel, based on the real-life massacre of the Clutter family in Holcomb, Kansas in 1959, centres on the two men responsible for the carnage, Richard Eugene Hickock and Perry Edward Smith. Capote introduces the process that brings these two warped individuals together, the early stages of their friendship, their personalities, why they are attracted to each other, and how, over time, their relationship becomes more sinister. By exposing the inner workings of their criminal minds the author enters the domain of criminologists and psychologists who are only now beginning to understand the true dynamics behind couples that kill.

Keywords: Capote, *folie à deux*, *In Cold Blood*, killer couples, shared madness

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Forensic psychologist Schlesinger (2000) explains that when two warped personalities interact, the combination is lethal. Criminologists call this toxic partnership "*folie à deux*, or madness for two," a term coined in the nineteenth century by French psychiatrists Charles Lasègue and Jean-Pierre Falret in relation to emotional contagion (Amone, 2006, p. 1). When this happens, it is usually because "a dominant character interacts with a weak one, and enjoys the sense of exerting power so much that he looks for ways to savour it more fully" (Wilson, 2007, p. 149). Criminologist Berry-Dee (2005) elaborates on *folie à deux* thus:

Psychiatrists have established that *folie à deux* is not due to mental disorder. By legal and clinical definition it is not madness at all. However . . . it appears in many cases, if not all, where exists in one or both participants a latent psychopathic antisocial personality disorder—again, not madness—which only manifests itself in a destructive manner when the individuals unite. Neither individual has any real structure to their life, or any moral inhibitions: they are able to destroy lives with as much compassion as one would swat an annoying fly, without the least concern about the far-fetched consequences. . . . In genuine *folie à deux* relationships . . . the crimes are almost always underpinned with strong homicidal . . . fantasies. (pp. xx-xxii)

The earliest recorded case of a *folie à deux* union with criminal intent occurred in 1828, when William Burke (the dominant personality), and William Hare (the passive of the two), joined forces in Edinburgh, Scotland to commit murder. The deadly duo killed sixteen men and women and sold their corpses to Dr. Robert Knox for anatomical study. Police soon became aware of their cadaver trade, and the two were arrested, tried, and punished. A similar case of *folie à deux* is that of psychopathic married couple Fred and Rosemary West, who murdered at least eleven girls, including their eldest daughter, in their home at 25 Cromwell Street in Gloucester between 1967 and 1987. The two predators lured young girls to their home and raped and tortured them before ultimately killing them. In October 1995, Rose West stood trial alone as Fred, the more dominant partner, had hanged himself in prison. She was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, aka "The Moors Murderers," also typify a *folie à deux* union. The two were ruthless to the extreme, committing as many as four murders, all of young children. However, both were eventually caught and received life sentences without the possibility of parole. Although Hindley aided Brady in the killings, it was the latter who was "the more sinister figure of the two" (Smith, 2005, p. 154). Another example of team killers is the case of murderous cousins Kenneth Bianchi and Angelo Buono, "The Hillside Stranglers," as they came to be known. Buono and Bianchi tortured and killed ten women and girls in the 1970s in Glendale, California before being incarcerated. The duo made a good team. Buono was the dominant, aggressive, and streetwise partner, while Bianchi was the gentler, more sensitive partner. Other *folie à deux* couples include Raymond Fernandez and Martha Beck in the late 1940s, Henry Lee Lucas and Otis Toole in the 1970s, David and Catherine Birnie in the 1980s, Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka in the 1990s, and John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo in the 2000s.

In fiction, Truman Capote's (1924-1984) *In Cold Blood* (1966) offers a tantalising account of *folie à deux* in the form of Richard (Dick) Eugene Hickock and Perry Edward Smith, two ex-convicts who get together while in prison and form a bond that turns sinister. The novel re-enacts the events leading up to the real-life massacre of the Clutter family in Holcomb, Kansas, on November 14, 1959, and the aftermath of the brutal killings. Detectives assigned to the case, namely Alvin Dewey, consider two theories regarding the killer: "[a] single-killer concept" and a "double-killer concept" (Capote, 1966, p. 82). Addressing the press, Dewey informs reporters that he favoured the latter theory. The killer, he believed, was not alone. He had an accomplice who aided in subduing, taping, and tying up the family. Nonetheless, Dewey "found it difficult to understand how two individuals could reach the same degree of rage, the kind of psychopathic rage it took to commit a crime." He asks, "Where did he find a partner, someone crazy enough to help him?" (Capote, 1966, pp. 82-83). It later turns out that two killers were indeed responsible for the carnage: Richard Eugene Hickock and his accomplice, Perry Edward Smith.

At first, Capote's (1966) evildoers seem to have nothing in common. Hickock is charming, persuasive, masculine, and "an athlete." He is also highly intelligent, "an I.Q. test taken in prison gave him a rating of 130; the average subject, in prison or out, scores between 90 and 110" (Capote, 1966, pp. 30-31). Smith, on the other hand, is naive, socially awkward, insecure, and a dreamer, who fantasises about deep-sea diving for sunken treasures. Despite their differences, both are resentful, envious, greedy, and violent to the extreme. Out of the two, it is Hickock who sees an opportunity in Smith, thinking him worth cultivating. So, he sets about to shape him into a first-rate assassin. Hickock seems to exert powerful control over his cohort, who is so smitten by his new friend that he starts doing everything to please "the masculine Dick" (Capote, 1966, p. 33). Both men typify a *folie à deux* union, where a dominant leader and a compliant follower join forces to commit brutalities. Schlesinger (2000) maintains, "The interpersonal dynamics between [deadly twosomes], as well as the distinguishing characteristics of the dominant and subservient offenders, remain unresearched and unknown" (p. 269). Yet, Capote (1966) writing in the sixties shows a remarkable understanding of *folie à deux* (even though he does not use the actual term). In the novel, the author introduces the process that brings his two fictional murderers together, the early stages of their friendship, their personalities, why they are attracted to each other, and how, over time, their relationship becomes more menacing. By providing a thorough report of their pairing, the author enters the domain of psychologists and criminologists who are only now beginning to understand the true dynamics behind murderous partnerships.

Capote (1966) first learned of the Clutter family's massacre when he read about it in the *New York Times*. He became fascinated by the story and decided to travel to Kansas accompanied by his friend Harper Lee, author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, to learn more about the case. Once Capote had collected all the facts, learned the identities of the killers, and later corresponded with them, he set out to write his ambitious novel. This made him anxious, as "he would have to weave together a bewildering collection of characters, facts, legal explanations and psychological studies" (Clarke, 2010, p. 331). Undiscouraged, "he flew to London, where he talked with psychiatrists who helped him unravel the psychology of his two murderers" (Clarke, 2010, p. 332). He even visited the prisoners in Kansas State Penitentiary on three separate occasions, especially since the last part of his novel was "mainly a history of their lives in those

tiny cells" (Clarke, 2010, p. 333). In addition to visiting Hickock and Smith, Capote further exchanged letters with the two prisoners. Over time, the author "became the chief focus of their lives, their main contact with what Dick called 'the free world'" (Clarke, 2010, p. 361).

It took Capote (1966) six years to complete his work because he needed an ending for his story, and the only way to obtain it was to wait for the outcome of Hickock and Smith's countless appeals to overturn their death sentences. When they exhausted their appeals, their execution date was set for April 14, 1965. Thus, Capote finally had his ending. He even attended the hangings. Afterwards, *In Cold Blood* was released to the general public. It was first published in four instalments in the *New Yorker*, and then independently in book form in 1966. Upon its publication, the novel received an exceptionally warm reception. Reviewers, law enforcement officials, and even Capote's high school teacher declared it "a perfect accomplishment" (Clarke, 2010, p. 362). Literary critics also commended the work for its artistry and for Capote's mastery in interweaving facts with poetic and lyrical language. Knickerbocker (1966) in the *New York Times Book Review* proclaimed, "*In Cold Blood* is a masterpiece . . . agonizing, terrible, possessed, proof that the times, so surfeited with disasters, are still capable of tragedy." He added that the book "manages a major moral judgment without the author's appearance once on stage" (Knickerbocker, 1966, p. 37). Pizer (1971) also praised the work, particularly the "sequential narrative," which "achieves narrative suspense as well as documentary authenticity" (p. 113). Capote biographer Clarke (2010) likewise applauded the novel, writing:

On a superficial level, *In Cold Blood* is a murder story of riveting vitality and suspense. On a deeper level, it is what [Capote] had always known it could be, a Big Work—a masterpiece, in fact, that he has infused with the somber energy of Greek tragedy. (p. 363)

Capote (1966) basked in the attention. He was so proud of his literary accomplishment that he professed it a first of its kind. In his own words, he had created a new form of genre, "the nonfiction novel," a literary style that conjoins actual events with fictional techniques (Clarke, 2010, p. 357). Literary critic Voss (2011) in *Truman Capote and the Legacy of In Cold Blood* states that Capote believed "that there was far more latitude than other writers had ever realized, freedom to juxtapose events for dramatic effect, to re-create long conversations, even to peer inside the heads of his characters and tell what they are thinking." Despite his bold assertion of having invented "a new art form" in fiction writing, and "his even more extravagant claim that every word of *In Cold Blood* is true," some critics "took issue with his claim." The novel "had failed to become a contribution to a new art form" (Voss, 2011, p. 40). Levine (1966) is one critic who challenged Capote's declaration, maintaining that "the notion of using actual occurrences in a work of fiction is hardly revolutionary." Levine refers to Joyce's *Ulysses* and Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, two works that "relied heavily on newspaper accounts and public records" to support his point (Levine, 1966, p. 135). The literary critic settles his line of reasoning by labelling *In Cold Blood* a "neorealistic novel," asserting that "though some may see in Capote's work more intimations of the death of the novel, it seems to me rather to confirm and affirm the accuracy of the modern fictive vision" (Levine, 1966, p. 138). Critics disagreed, yet still argued about its proper genre classification (Hickman, 2005, p. 465). Some called it a "documentary novel," (William L. Nance, John Hollowell, and Meyer Levin), while others branded it "the fiction of the metaphysical void" (Mas'ud Zavarzadeh). Kazin (1980) calls the

work "a novel in the form of fact" (p. 210), while Solomon (2008) identifies it as a "hard-boiled work of creative nonfiction" (p. 133). Kerrigan (1998) calls *In Cold Blood* "the factual novel of 1965," and identifies it as "a remarkable work—psychologically penetrating and brilliantly written" (p. 1). Hickman (2005) too notes that the work "offers . . . an angle into the criminal mind" (p. 465). However, rather than elaborate on Capote's insightful penetration into the minds of murderous men, both critics move on to discuss the author's fidelity to the facts.

Capote (1966) insisted that *In Cold Blood* "is immaculately factual" (Clarke, 2010, p. 358). Nonetheless, critics found discrepancies in his declaration, since the final scene in the novel, in which detective Alvin Dewey is shown visiting Nancy Clutter's grave and conversing with her best friend, never actually occurred. Other inconsistencies concern the character of Perry Smith. On this point, De Bellis (1979) writes, "The revisions concerning Perry Smith contain, [to quote the author], 'the poetic altitude fiction is capable of reaching' rather than 'the persuasiveness of fact.'" He adds, "Perhaps Capote's personal involvement with Smith was the chief reason for his extraordinary number of alterations" (p. 533). Noel (2011) also believes that Capote's portrayal of Smith is unreliable. Both critics attribute the inconsistencies to Capote's sexual attraction to Smith, as he was a self-proclaimed homosexual. Noel, in fact, is adamant that Capote "felt romantically attached to Perry Smith" since "information about Hickock is scarce in comparison" (Noel, 2011, pp. 51, 53). Hickman (2005) also maintains that "Clearly, Capote feels some degree of personal interest in the depiction of Perry Smith that he does not feel for the depictions of Dick Hickock" (p. 471). This study, however, argues against such reductive readings of *In Cold Blood*, since the author repeatedly stated in countless interviews that "my portrait of him [Smith] is absolutely one hundred percent the way he was" (De Bellis, 1979, p. 531). He was also quoted as saying, "Over the years I'd become very devoted to Perry. And Dick, too" (Clarke, 2010, p. 361). Hence, *In Cold Blood* is not just about Perry Smith, but rather it is about team killers, a point the present study highlights.

In Cold Blood is divided into four parts. Each part is divided into chapters that alternate between the Clutter family, the community, the investigators, and the two ex-convicts. The first part, entitled "The Last to See Them Alive," centres on the Clutter family and the two killers twenty-four hours before the gruesome crimes occur. It ends with the arrival of Hickock and Smith at the Clutter home and the consequences of their visit. The second part, entitled "Persons Unknown," follows law enforcement officials as they piece together the crime. Meanwhile, Smith and Hickock evade justice and head to Mexico. Along the way, Hickock forges checks and cons store owners into giving him electrical equipment and clothes on credit that he later sells for hard cash. When the money is spent in Mexico on alcohol and prostitutes (for Hickock), and Smith's dreams of deep-sea diving come to an end, Hickock suggests they head back to the United States. In this section, much of Perry's personality and history is revealed as he goes through his two boxes of maps, books, songs, poems, souvenirs, and old letters in a run-down Mexican motel while his partner sleeps. The first item he examines is a yellowed, badly typed letter from his father bearing the title "A History of My Boy's Life," written to obtain a parole from Kansas State Penitentiary for his son. In the letter, the father speaks of Smith's troubled childhood and describes his son as "very touchie [sic], his feeling is easily hurt" (Capote, 1966, p. 129). He also refers to the accident that rendered his son disabled and unemployable. He calls him "a Cripple and almost middle-aged man." He adds, "Perry knows he is not wanted now by Contractors, cripples can't get jobs on heavy equipment" (Capote, 1966, p. 129). The narrator

notes that the letter "always set racing a stable of emotions—self-pity in the lead, love and hate running evenly at first, the latter ultimately pulling ahead" (Capote, 1966, p. 130). Pizer (1971) is correct in calling this part of the novel a purposeful section that "create[s] an impression of character rather than to narrate an event" (p. 114).

The third part, entitled "The Answer," details how the detectives are finally able to identify the killers and track them down due to a tip from a man named Floyd Wells, who was Hickock's cellmate and who informed him of the wealthy farmer in Kansas. On December 30, 1959, Hickock and Smith are finally caught in Las Vegas. When police arrest the two men, they find a pair of boots that match the bloody footprints found at the crime scene. Once in police custody, both men confess and are extradited to Kansas. The final part, "The Corner," shows the men locked up in separate cells, appointed lawyers, and assessed by a psychiatrist. When insanity is ruled out, the men are convicted and sentenced to death by hanging. They are then transferred to Kansas State Penitentiary and sent to Death Row, also called "the Corner." There they meet fellow inmates of a similar fate. The men attempt to appeal their case, but each appeal is denied and both are hanged on April 14, 1965.

According to forensic psychologist Bartol (2014), the risk factors that predispose a person to become a murderer include "genetic makeup . . . upbringing . . . social environment, and ultimately the developmental path that circumstances lead [him] to take" (p. 305). Capote (1966), although not a psychologist or a criminologist, proves himself to be fully aware of the factors responsible for creating a felon. Consequently, the author provides minute details of the history of both delinquents to shed light on why these two seemingly normal men turned bad.

In the novel, the reader is informed that Smith grew up in an unhealthy environment marked by abandonment, neglect, and cruelty. His mother, Flo Buckskin, was a rodeo performer, as was his father, Tex John Smith. The two met, married, and produced four children. At first, their union was a success; they even formed a team named "Tex & Flo" that succeeded on the rodeo circuit. Despite their success, their children suffered greatly because they were constantly on the road. They lived in an old truck and survived on a diet of "Hershey kisses and condensed milk." Smith was to later claim that it was the sugar that "weakened [his] kidneys . . . which is why [he] was always wetting the bed" (Capote, 1966, p. 131). When the parents retired, and settled in Nevada, they fought endlessly, especially since "Flo took to whiskey" and became promiscuous. She then left for San Francisco and took all four children with her. Smith retaliated by running away and thieving, for he had come to "despise" his mother, who lost all self-respect (Capote, 1966, p. 131). As a result of his delinquency, Smith was sent off to a Catholic orphanage, where the nuns repeatedly beat him for wetting the bed, "which is one reason I have an aversion to nuns. And God. And religion," he was to later state. After a brief stay at the orphanage, his mother sent him to a children's shelter run by the Salvation Army. There he was also beaten for wetting the bed. Smith recalls, "They hated me . . . for wetting the bed. And being half-Indian" (Capote, 1966, pp. 131-132). One nurse there used to fill a tub with ice-cold water and hold him under until he was blue. She would then force him to wash the sheets. Later on, she thought it was amusing to rub ointment on his penis. It was unbearable and burned him terribly. He later caught pneumonia, and the nurse was discharged from her job. Smith would later write in his biography for the prison psychiatrist, "what I wished I could have done to her [the nurse] & all the people who made fun of me" (Capote, 1966, p. 275). After the incident, his father took him in, and he went to school. When he reached the third grade, he and his father roamed the

country until they settled in Alaska. Smith played the guitar and harmonica. He also liked to read to improve his vocabulary, and taught himself how to sketch. "But I never got any encouragement—from him [his father] or anybody else," he would later confess (Capote, 1966, p. 133).

After a dispute with his father, Smith joined the Merchant Marines at age sixteen, where he was subjected to sexual harassment by fellow marines. He recollects:

I never minded the work, and I liked being a sailor. . . . But the queens on ship wouldn't leave me alone. A sixteen-year-old kid, and a small kid. I could handle myself, sure. But a lot of queens aren't effeminate, you know. Hell, I've known queens could toss a pool table out the window. . . . they can give you an evil time, especially when there's a couple of them, they get together and gang up on you, and you're just a kid. It can make you practically want to kill yourself. (Capote, 1966, pp. 133-34)

Smith suffered from this kind of advance in the army as well when he joined in 1948. He recalls his sergeant giving him a hard time "Because [he] wouldn't roll over" (Capote, 1966, p. 276). While in the army, Smith was badly wounded in a motorcycle accident that rendered him disfigured. He spent a very long time in the hospital as a result, "and though the accident had occurred in 1952, his chunky, dwarfish legs, broken in five places and pitifully scarred, still pained him so severely that he had become an aspirin addict" (Capote, 1966, p. 31). After the accident, Smith joined his father and the two built Trapper's Den Lodge, but the place attracted few lodgers. When his father realised that he had wasted his money and his strength on a failed enterprise, he took out his frustration on his son. The two argued continuously until one day, "My hands got hold of his throat. My hands—but I couldn't control them. They wanted to choke him to death," Smith was to later recount (Capote, 1966, p. 136). His father, however, managed to break free and kick him out of the house. Smith then worked odd jobs and later met a man who tempted him into burglary. Eventually, he was caught and received five to ten years. In prison, he felt "very bitter"; nonetheless, sharing a cell with Hickock would pacify the embittered inmate (Capote, 1966, p. 276).

While Smith came from a broken home and received relatively little attention, Hickock came from a respectable family who loved and nurtured him, and he and his brother hardly ever fought. Accordingly, Hickock excelled in school and became an outstanding athlete. His father was to later tell police that he was "the star player. A pretty good student, too, with A marks in several subjects" (Capote, 1966, p. 166). In June 1949, he wanted to go to college, but his parents could not afford it. Nonetheless, he managed to overcome his disappointment and look for a decent job. He worked with Santa Fe Railways in Kansas City for a while, and shortly thereafter married his sixteen-year-old sweetheart. The marriage resulted in the birth of three sons, whom he later abandoned along with their mother. Hickock then worked as an ambulance driver, a mechanic, and car painter. In 1950, he was involved in a car accident that would alter his personality forever. Soon after, he started gambling, forging checks, and thieving. In 1958, he was convicted and sentenced to five years in Kansas State Penitentiary. His father was to later tell police that the car accident distorted his son's thinking and led him to commit crimes. After a brief stay in prison, Hickock divorced his wife and married for a second time, a move that his

father also attributed to the accident. However, his incarceration did not curb his penchant for criminal activity, since once released Hickock again resorted to forgery and thieving, and within a year he was back in prison.

Prison life hardened the already tough Hickock, and it was there that he met fellow inmate Perry Smith. And although Smith's friendship with Hickock began in his final months in Lansing, still "the intensity of his admiration" was paramount (Capote, 1966, p. 44). Hickock, by contrast, proved indifferent toward Smith. The narrator elaborates on their relationship thus:

He [Hickock] had liked him but not considered him especially worth cultivating until, one day, Perry described a murder, telling how, simply for "the hell of it," he had killed a colored man in Las Vegas—beaten him to death with a bicycle chain. The anecdote elevated Dick's opinion of Little Perry; he began to see more of him, and . . . gradually decided that Perry possessed unusual and valuable qualities. . . . Dick became convinced that Perry was that rarity, "a natural killer"—absolutely sane, but conscienceless, and capable of dealing, with or without motive, the coldest-blooded deathblows. It was Dick's theory that such a gift could, under his supervision, be profitably exploited. Having reached this conclusion, he had proceeded to woo Perry, flatter him—pretend, for example, that he believed all the buried-treasure stuff and shared his beachcomber yearnings and seaport longings, none of which appealed to Dick. It was important, however, that Perry not suspect this—not until Perry, with his gift, had helped further Dick's ambitions. (Capote, 1966, pp. 54-55)

Capote in the above-mentioned quote shows exceptional insight into the phenomenon of *folie à deux* as understood by criminologists and psychologists. Berry-Dee (2005) maintains of *folie à deux* relationships that the "dominant partner . . . becomes the leader, while the other partner . . . becomes the follower. . . . When they join forces . . . heinous crimes are committed that otherwise would not have occurred" (p. xx). Schlesinger (2000) echoes Berry-Dee to a great extent, asserting that in the majority of *folie à deux* cases "a dominant partner . . . recruits or teams up with a more submissive, passive individual" to commit felonies (p. 268). In *Couples Who Kill*, criminologist Davis (2005) argues that in most cases of team killers, relationships are established due to a shared common interest such as a lust for bloodshed, greed, jealousy, or resentment (p. 15). She adds, "What they all have in common is their effect on the victims: duped by two opponents rather than one." The lone killer, according to Davis, takes time to dwell on his crime and to relive the fantasies; however, killer couples "immediately discuss the homicide and move on to the next victim and then the next." Davis (2005) proceeds:

Even when a couple "only" murder once or twice, the results are particularly gruesome, with the individuals often stopping partway through the assault to find out exactly how their co-killer wants to proceed. With physical strength on their side, they don't have to adopt the blitzkrieg methods of the solo attacker. Their duality also complicates matters during the subsequent trial when the jury has to ascertain who did what. (pp. 15-16)

Capote's (1966) *Hickock and Smith* both have underlying compulsions to kill. Moreover, both share the same delusions of grandiosity that culminate in homicide, and both are driven to delinquency by greed. Furthermore, both men harbour much resentment towards the outside world, particularly Smith, who resented growing up unloved and uncared for. Also, Capote's novel establishes from the start that Hickock is the dominant leader, while Smith is the complaisant follower. Hickock is painted as masculine, macho, and self-assured. By contrast, Smith is described as timid, "a loner . . . without any real friends," shy, inferior, and with obvious physical deformities. He is further portrayed as effeminate, evidenced in the references made to his "tiny feet," "delicate hands," "pink lips," "perky nose," and perfectly groomed hair "which he kept brilliantined" (Capote, 1966, pp. 15, 16). In addition to his feminine features, Smith also possesses feminine characteristics such as "mirror gazing." Dick had once noted, "Every time you see a mirror you go into a trance, I mean, my God, don't you ever get tired?" (Capote, 1966, p. 214). Smith enjoyed admiring himself in the mirror; he also enjoyed playing the guitar, singing, and drawing—all stereotypically feminine mannerisms.

This feminization of Smith corresponds with what crime experts conceive of heterosexual team killers; that the superior of the two assumes a masculine role, whereas the passive partner takes on a feminine persona. However, it must be stressed that such role-playing has nothing to do with homosexuality, but much to do with *folie à deux*. The fact that Smith bemoans the advances made toward him by the "queens" in the army and navy confirms this point. Further proof of his sexual orientation emerges when the nurse, Cookie, who takes care of him after his motorcycle accident, is mentioned. On this point the narrator states that "sexual episodes of a strange and stealthy nature had occurred, and love had been mentioned, and marriage, too, but eventually, when his injuries had mended, he'd told her goodbye" (Capote, 1966, p. 98). Smith has affairs with other women as well. Moreover, he often fantasises about marrying a girl who was "not rich, not beautiful; rather, she was nicely groomed, gently spoken." He even envies Hickock for marrying twice and for fathering three boys since, "A wife, children—those were experiences 'a man ought to have'" (Capote, 1966, p. 98). Despite the mounting evidence of Smith's heterosexuality, a plethora of critics refuse to acknowledge this fact, preferring instead to label him a homosexual and to insinuate that the "cosmopolitan gay writer" was attracted to the real-life Smith and thus fictionalised him as effeminate (Hickman, 2005, p. 470). Such views undermine the psychological depth of Capote's killer.

Smith's effeminacy is highlighted in the novel, not because Capote desires his leading protagonist, but rather because he wants to emphasise his vulnerability, a feature of which Hickock takes full advantage. In true *folie à deux* style, Hickock relishes Smith's insecurities and also encourages his effeminacy. For example, he likens his partner to a needy wife on several occasions. He also uses terms of endearment like "baby" (Capote, 1966, pp. 89, 90, 108, 111, 119), "honey" (Capote, 1966, pp. 91, 100, 124), and "beauty," when addressing his companion (Capote, 1966, pp. 15, 192, 195, 199). Hickock does this purposefully to control and manipulate his partner further. He wants power, and the only way to achieve it is to emasculate Smith. The result of such conditioning is that Smith becomes very anxious whenever Hickock disappears. This is evident when the narrator states, "the sound of Dick's voice was like an injection of some potent narcotic, a drug that, invading his veins, produced a delirium of colliding sensations: tension and relief, fury and affection" (Capote, 1966, p. 194). Gaining such power enables

Hickock to always call the shots. Moreover, it proves criminologist Wilson (2007) correct in calling *folie à deux* "the dominance syndrome" (p. 232).

Latent sadism is also a feature of *folie à deux*. On this point, Schlesinger (2000) writes, "the passive partner may have sadistic proclivities that erupt only when that person is under the influence of the more dominant offender" (p. 268). In the novel, Smith's desire to hurt and humiliate others is highlighted several times. The reader is repeatedly told that Smith hates everyone, especially his family. His own sister Barbara later tells detectives she has feared him her whole life:

He can seem so warm-hearted and sympathetic. Gentle. He cries so easily. Sometimes music sets him off, and when he was a little boy he used to cry because he thought the sunset was beautiful. Or the moon. Oh, he can fool you. He can make you feel so sorry for him. (Capote, 1966, p. 182)

Barbara recalls Smith seizing her by the throat once and threatening to kill her simply because she was defending their father. He had said to her at the time:

Oh, the man I could have been! But that bastard never gave me a chance. He wouldn't let me go to school . . . because he didn't want me to learn anything, only how to tote and carry for him. Dumb. Ignorant. That's the way he wanted me to be. So that I could never escape him. But you, Bobo. You went to school. You and Jimmy and Fern. Every damn one of you got an education. Everybody but me. And I hate you, all of you—Dad and everybody. (Capote, 1966, p. 185)

Smith's resentment shows his deep-seated anger at having been denied the privileges he believes his siblings received. His anger and aggression are further referenced when he argues with his father and attempts to strangle him. Both incidents demonstrate Smith's sadism, which lay dormant until Hickock entered the picture and unleashed his compulsion to kill.

According to Schlesinger (2000), in the case of killer couples, murder is encouraged by "the sense of security that . . . [the] dominant person brings" (p. 268). Again, this point manifests itself in the novel when Hickock orders Smith to shoot the Clutters one by one, and he gladly obeys. When the two abandon the scene, Herbert Clutter lies on the floor in a pool of blood with his throat slashed from ear to ear, and a gunshot wound to the face. The life of his son has also been ended with a single gunshot wound to the face. Nancy is shot in the back of the head while she lies in bed facing her bedroom wall, her hands and ankles tied. Mrs. Clutter too has been tied, but her hands are bound in front rather than behind her back. She is shot in the side of the head, her eyes open. Smith later tells investigators that although no money was found, Hickock was mad with power. He wanted the entire family obliterated.

It is greed that triggered the idea of multiple murders for Hickock. However, for Smith, it is mainly the desire to impress his partner. Still, upon closer inspection, other motives emerge. For Hickock, "the glory of having everybody at his mercy . . . excited him" (Capote, 1966, p. 239). He resents anyone with money and power and thus decides that the Clutters should be punished for making him feel inferior. The narrator states that all his life Hickock had been envious of those who were better off financially: "Envy was constantly with him; the Enemy was

anyone who was someone he wanted to be or who had anything he wanted to have" (Capote, 1966, p. 200). While Hickock's motives seem to consist of greed, envy, and a deep-seated psychopathic desire for power and control, Smith's motives are of an entirely different nature. In true *folie à deux* style, he wants to impress Hickock. He also wants revenge on all those who slighted him: the nuns who called him "a half-breed" and whipped him mercilessly, "his father, a faithless girl, a sergeant in the army," and a list of others (Capote, 1966, p. 93). He even confesses once convicted:

I was sore . . . And it wasn't because of anything the Clutters did. They never hurt me. Like other people. Like people have all my life. Maybe it's just that the Clutters were the ones who had to pay for it. (Capote, 1966, p. 290).

The Clutters thus serve as surrogates for the emotionally damaged Smith, providing an outlet for his simmering rage.

For Hickock and Smith the experience of bloodshed is exhilarating, and several days later they want to murder again. This is evident when they hitchhike across the Mojave and decide to wait "for some solitary traveler in a decent car and with money in his billfold—a stranger to rob, strangle, discard on the desert" (Capote, 1966, p. 154). When a travelling salesman offers the two hitchhikers a ride, Hickock instructs Smith to strangle the man upon receiving his signal. Once in the car, Smith wants to finish the job quickly, especially after hearing the man laugh. He dislikes the outbursts as they "sounded very much like the laughter of Tex John Smith, Perry's father" (Capote, 1966, p. 174). Just as Smith is about to knock the driver out upon receiving the signal, the latter stops his car for a third hitchhiker, and thus saves himself from a murder most foul.

In addition to the characteristics mentioned above as typifying *folie à deux* unions, Davis (2005) adds, "Surprisingly, it's not unusual for a deadly duo to tell a third person about their crimes" (p. 18). In Capote's novel, Floyd Wells, Hickock's former cellmate, tells police that he strongly suspects Hickock and Smith of the murders because when he celled with Hickock, he had boasted about working for a wealthy farmer in Kansas named Herb Clutter, who kept thousands of dollars in a safe at his home. The greedy Hickock soon entertains fantasies of robbing the farmer and leaving no witnesses alive. He tells Wells that he would recruit Smith, described by Wells as "a half-Indian fellow [Hickock] used to cell with" (Capote, 1966, p. 161). So, Hickock and Smith are ultimately apprehended due to the involvement of a third party.

Despite the strong connection established in a *folie à deux* union, experts maintain that it can end; this normally occurs when the dominant partner tires of his weak accomplice (Berry-Dee, 2005, 269). Hickock demonstrates this point when the two arrive in Las Vegas and Smith visits the post office to collect his box. While waiting for Smith to return, Hickock begins to contemplate the idea of getting rid of his partner. The narrator elaborates thus:

Dick was sick of him [Smith] —his harmonica, his aches and ills, his superstitions, the weepy, womanly eyes, the nagging, whispering voice. Suspicious, self-righteous, spiteful, he was like a wife that must be got rid of. And there was but one way to do it: Say nothing—just go.

(Capote, 1966, p. 215)

As Hickock prepares to take off, he is captured along with Smith and forced to stand trial. However, in true *folie à deux* style, he refuses to take responsibility for his actions, blaming his accomplice instead. Hickock paints himself as the weaker of the two, repeatedly stating, "It was Perry. I couldn't stop him. He killed them all" (Capote, 1966, p. 230). His behaviour typifies what criminologists theorise about killer couples; that when apprehended, the dominant of the two minimises his role and lays all the blame on his meek accomplice, who continues his idolisation nonetheless (Berry-Dee, 2005, p. xxiv). In the novel, the reader is told that Smith has become so psychologically dependent on Hickock that he actually misses him. Even on Death Row, he thinks of nothing else but Hickock. "Many thoughts of Dick, he wrote one day in his makeshift diary. Since their arrest they had not been allowed to communicate, and that, freedom aside, was what he most desired—to talk to Dick, be with him again" (Capote, 1966, p. 259).

In Cold Blood offers a fascinating account of a *folie à deux* with all the "potent ingredients of the self-sacrificing accomplice and a conspiracy between two warped individuals who share a fantasy and pursue a common goal" (Berry-Dee, 2005, p. 220). The relationship between Hickock and Smith comes about due to fate stepping in and allowing the two men to meet and to share their perverse fantasies. In joining forces, the duo becomes extremely dangerous. Had they not encountered each other in the Kansas State Penitentiary in 1959, the Clutter murders would never have occurred. Berry-Dee bemoans that no pragmatic study of the phenomenon of *folie à deux* has ever been carried out. Nevertheless, Capote, a novelist, appears to be fully aware of "this little-understood criminological curiosity" when he presents it with superior accuracy in *In Cold Blood* (Berry-Dee, 2005, p. xxii). This fact alone makes him a subject worthy of further scholarly attention.

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