I'm not a bot



Did truman capote finish answered prayers

1986 novel by Truman Capote This article needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed.Find sources: "Answered Prayers" – news · newspapers · books · scholar · JSTOR (September 2011) (Learn how and when to remove this message) Answered Prayers First EditionAuthorTruman CapoteCover artistCraig DoddLanguageEnglishPublisherHamish Hamilton (London)Publication date1986Publication placeUnited StatesMedia typePrint (hardback & paperback)Pages181ISBN0-241-11962-6 (Paperback edition)OCLC29357384 Answered Prayers is an unfinished novel by American author Truman Capote, published posthumously in 1986 in England and 1987 in the United States. The title of the book is taken from the novel's epigraph: "More tears are shed over answered prayers than unanswered ones", attributed to Saint Teresa of Avila.[1] According to Random House senior editor Joseph M. Fox, Capote signed the initial contract for the novel on January 5, 1966—envisioned as a contemporary American analog to Marcel Proust's In Search of Lost Time. This agreement provided a $25,000 advance with a stipulated delivery date of January 1, 1968.[2] Distracted by the unprecedented success of his "nonfiction novel" In Cold Blood amid the gestation of the Black and White Ball (at the Plaza Hotel in November 1966), various television projects, short pieces and increasing personal demons, Capote missed his 1968 deadline. In July 1969, the superannuated 1966 contract was renegotiated, granting a "substantially larger" $750,000 advance in exchange for a trilogy to be delivered in January 1973.[3][4] The delivery date was further delayed to January 1974 and then September 1977.[3] A final agreement in early 1980 would have yielded Capote $1 million to have been paid only if he submitted the manuscript by March 1, 1981. This final deadline was not kept.[5] On The Dick Cavett Show in May 1971, Capote referred to the book as his "posthumous novel", explaining, "either I'm going to kill it, or it's going to kill me". The book is a tale of the mixing of high and low social classes, drawn from his experiences as best friend and confidant to prominent female socialites of the era and their husbands. The first chapter ("Unspoiled Monsters") chronicles the "picaresque" exploits of P.B. Jones, a young writer (enmeshed in the process of writing a novel, Answered Prayers) and "bisexual hustler" who "beds men and women alike if they can further his literary career" in the 1940s New York literary milieu; accordingly, both Katherine Anne Porter and Tennessee Williams are depicted in a vituperative light.[4] Jones (who later appears as the main interlocutor in "La Cote Basque") is believed to be a composite of Capote, Perry Smith from In Cold Blood, and Capote's late friend Denham Fouts. The eponymous protagonist of the comparatively obfuscatory chapter "Kate McCloud" (and the ostensible heroine of the novel) was inspired by Mona von Bismarck, the eldest of Capote's society friends.[6] By 1975, Capote's increasingly outrageous public behavior—fueled by alcohol, drugs and sexual indiscretion—led many to believe that he had no intention of ever publishing Answered Prayers and had essentially given up writing. Capote sold four chapters ("Mojave", "La Cote Basque", "Unspoiled Monsters", and "Kate McCloud") of the novel-in-progress to Esquire at the behest of Gordon Lish in 1975 and 1976. "Mojave" was published in the magazine's June 1975 issue to little fanfare. However, with the publication of "La Cote Basque" in the November 1975 issue, there was an uproar of shock and anger among Capote's friends and acquaintances, who recognized thinly veiled characters based on themselves. Both "Mojave" and "La Cote Basque" were exposés of the dysfunctional personal lives led by the author's social benefactors, including CBS head William S. Paley, his wife Babe (then terminally ill with cancer), Gloria Vanderbilt (depicted as being insufferably vacuous), Happy Rockefeller, and Ann Woodward. The Paleys never again socialized with Capote, and they led an exodus of ostracizing friends. Subsequently, "Unspoiled Monsters" and "Kate McCloud" were published in the periodical in May 1976 and December 1976, respectively. From a literary viewpoint the chapters received mixed reactions. Some, like Capote biographer Gerald Clarke, consider Answered Prayers to be the culmination of the factual novel form first employed by the author with In Cold Blood and a testimonial to his talent's ability to transcend substance abuse. Norman Mailer praised Capote's technique but questioned the seemingly frivolous plotline of escapades among the socially outmoded jet set. In the introduction to his 1980 collection, Music for Chameleons, Capote detailed the writing process of the novel: For four years, roughly from 1968 through 1972, I spent most of my time reading and selecting, rewriting and indexing my own letters, other people's letters, my diaries and journals (which contain detailed accounts of hundreds of scenes and conversations) for the years 1943 through 1965... in 1972 I began work on [Answered Prayers] by writing the last chapter [presumably "Father Flanagan's All-Night Nigger Queen Kosher Cafe"] first (it's always good to know where one is going). Then I wrote the first chapter, "Unspoiled Monsters". Then the fifth, "A Severe Insult to the Brain". Then the seventh, "La Cote Basque". I went on in this manner, writing different chapters out of sequence. I was able to do this only because the plot—or rather plots—was true, and all the characters were real... I hadn't invented anything... If this chronology is to be believed, Capote stopped work on Answered Prayers in September 1977 after suffering what he considered to be a "nervous breakdown". After a period of consideration and reorganization, he claimed to have completed substantial revisions on the chapters published in Esquire with the exception of "Mojave", a vignette situated outside of the diegetic framework of the novel that was intended to be the second chapter before Capote elected to excise it from the work; in 1980, it was republished as a standalone short story in Music for Chameleons. However, further evidence makes Capote's statements seem less credible. Fox corroborates Capote to a large extent and claimed to have seen all four of the Esquire chapters in 1975, but Gerald Clarke's biography indicates that only the recently written "Mojave" and "La Cote Basque" were in any sort of publishable condition by that date. (Nevertheless, both "Unspoiled Monsters" and "Kate McCloud" were published in 1976, a period coinciding with one of the lowest ebbs in Capote's personal life.) Capote's legendary and almost stenographic journals, considered by a minority of friends to have been the foundation of his literary output, have never surfaced after his death, let alone in a revised form. By all accounts, he spent those years in a drug- and alcohol-induced haze. Comparable in length to Capote's earlier works of long fiction, the three chapters published in Esquire were collected by Random House in 1987 as Answered Prayers: The Unfinished Novel. An unpublished short narrative bearing the title of one of the missing chapters ("Yachts and Things") was later found among Capote's papers in the Manuscripts and Archives Division of the New York Public Library and published in the December 2012 issue of Vanity Fair,[4] which billed it as the long-lost work. Apart from its title, however, the piece appears to be a separate work, and in 2013 it was added to a Modern Library edition of The Complete Stories of Truman Capote as a self-contained story. Revised versions of the Esquire chapters and "Yachts and Things" that were purported to have existed, along with "A Severe Insult to the Brain" (a vignette about Jerry Zipkin, a prominent real estate heir, social escort, and friend of Nancy Reagan); "And Audrey Wilder Sang" (an account of "the beautiful people of Hollywood and New York... and how they're not so beautiful"); and "Father Flanagan's..." (the final chapter) have never been located.[7] In the years prior to his death, Capote frequently read from these chapters to friends at dinners, but such was his gift of storytelling that few could discern whether he was actually reading from a manuscript or improvising. He arranged to sell "Father Flanagan's..." to Esquire during Clay Felker's editorship in the early 1980s for $35,000; although he claimed that he only "needed to tighten a few screws," the excerpt was never submitted.[8] Capote alleged that lover John O'Shea had absconded with "A Severe Insult to the Brain" in 1977 and subsequently sued for repossession, but he eventually reconciled with O'Shea and dropped the lawsuit in 1981.[4] According to Joseph Fox, at least four of Capote's friends (including John Knowles and Lester Persky) reportedly read or listened to Capote read selections from "some of the... chapters... probably 'Father Flanagan's All-Night Nigger Queen Kosher Cafe' and 'A Severe Insult to the Brain,'" while Persky professed to have copied and bound a complete manuscript that subsequently vanished.[9] Longtime Capote confidante Joanne Carson contended that she read three "very long" chapters ("And Audrey Wilder Sang", "Yachts and Things", and "Father Flanagan's...") that completed the novel in the early 1980s. On the morning preceding his death, Capote handed a key to Carson for a safe deposit box or locker that contained the completed novel, stating that "[the chapters] will be found when they want to be found." When Carson pressed Capote for a precise location, he proffered myriad locations in various locales that he frequented, including Manhattan, Palm Springs, Los Angeles and New Orleans. An exhaustive search for the manuscript after Capote's death yielded nothing.[10] In his editor's note, Fox "hesitantly" theorized that the chapters did exist at one juncture but were "deliberately destroyed" by Capote in the early 1980s.[11] Andreas Brown likewise believes that Capote, a trenchant perfectionist, "may well have destroyed the manuscripts" during his intermittent periods of sobriety.[12] A third and less tantalizing belief held by a minority of Capote's friends (including Andy Warhol and Capote's life partner Jack Dunphy) was that the high-society backlash that followed the publication of "La Cote Basque" so traumatized Capote that he ceased all work on Answered Prayers after finishing "Kate McCloud" and was incapable of finishing it. In his diary, Warhol made frequent mention of drunken ramblings related to the novel by Capote, but he never was able to secure any serious plot details. He did discuss the contents of one of the chapters with Brigid Berlin, and Warhol was incensed that she did not tape the discussion.[9] The fall out of the book, as well as the contents, is dramatised in the second season of the American anthology television series Feud, subtitled Capote vs. The Swans. Notes ^ Trueheart, Charles (September 20, 1987). "TRUMAN CAPOTE'S TABLE TALK". Washington Post. Retrieved February 24, 2024. ^ Capote Truman: Answered Prayers: The Unfinished Novel, page xi. Random House, 1987 ^ a b Capote Truman: Answered Prayers: The Unfinished Novel, page xii. Random House, 1987 ^ a b c d The Self-Destructive Spiral of Truman Capote After Answered Prayers | Vanity Fair ^ Capote, Truman: Answered Prayers: The Unfinished Novel, page xiii. Random House, 1987 ^ The New York Times: Book Review Search Article ^ Capote Truman: Answered Prayers: The Unfinished Novel, page xviii. Random House, 1987 ^ Plimpton, George: "Truman Capote", page 442. Anchor Books, 1998 ^ a b Plimpton, George: "Truman Capote", page 448. Anchor Books, 1998 ^ Plimpton, George: "Truman Capote", page 449-51. Anchor Books, 1998 ^ Capote Truman: Answered Prayers: The Unfinished Novel, page xxi. Random House, 1987 ^ Plimpton, George: "Truman Capote", page 440. Anchor Books, 1998 Bibliography Clarke, Gerald (1988). Capote, A Biography (1st ed.). New York: Simon and Schuster. ISBN 978-0-241-12549-6. PBS bio (American Masters) Retrieved from " Our cultural touchstones series looks at influential books. In November 1975, Truman Capote, the proudly gay author of Breakfast at Tiffany's and In Cold Blood, unveiled the hotly anticipated second instalment of his unpublished novel, Answered Prayers. It was published in Esquire magazine. To say it caused a scandal would be a gross understatement. Reputations were trashed and real harm caused. Capote ended his days a social pariah in his former New York society circles, incapacitated by a lifetime of prodigious substance abuse. The unprecedented moral and social uproar that stemmed from the scandal has captured the attention of many writers, and is now the subject of the new anthology television series, Feud: Capote vs. The Swans. The story to blame, La Côte Basque, 1965, takes its title from its setting: an achingly fashionable French restaurant in Manhattan. Industrial quantities of expensive champagne are consumed over lunch. All of a sudden, everyone in the room starts to stare and whisper: Mrs. Kennedy and her sister had elicited not a murmur, nor had the entrances of Lauren Bacall and Katharine Cornell and Clare Booth Luce. However, Mrs. Hopkins was une autre chose: a sensation to unsettle the suavest Côte Basque client. As her all-black attire suggests ("black hat with a veil trim, a black Mainbocher suit, black crocodile purse, crocodile shoes"), Mrs. Hopkins is in mourning. This doesn't go unnoticed: "Only," said Lady Ina, "Ann Hopkins would think of that. To advertise your search for spiritual 'advice' in the most public possible manner. Once a tramp, always a tramp." What, the reader wonders, has Ann Hopkins done to deserve such an admonishment? Lady Ina Coolbirth leaves us in no doubt whatsoever. Ann Hopkins is simply not to be trusted. If Ina is to be believed, we are dealing with someone who once quite literally got away with murder: But it could have been an accident. If one goes by the papers. As I remember, they'd just come home from a dinner party in Watch Hill and gone to bed in separate rooms. Weren't there supposed to have been a recent series of burglaries thereabouts? – and she kept a shotgun by her bed, and suddenly in the dark her bedroom door opened and she grabbed the shotgun and shot at what she thought was a prowler. Only it was her husband. David Hopkins. With a hole through his head. This is a true story. The only difference? Capote changed the names. The real-life 'Mrs. Bang-Bang' Ann Hopkins is a fictional cutout for the socialite Ann Woodward, born Angeline Lucille Crowell on a farm in Kansas in 1915. In 1943, she married one of America's richest men, William Woodward Jr. On 30 October 1955, the Woodwards, whose marriage was violent and fractious, were guests at a dinner party held in the honour of Wallis Simpson, the Duchess of Windsor, in Oyster Bay, New York. There was talk of the spate of burglaries that had recently occurred in the area. Ann, who suffered from insecurity and social anxiety, drank more than usual. Returning home with her husband, she washed down some sleeping pills and went to bed, not long after midnight. At two in the morning, Ann was woken by the sound of her dog growling. Thinking there an intruder in the house, Ann grabbed the shotgun she kept by her bedside. She moved out into the hallway, where she saw the silhouette of a man. She opened fire without issuing a warning. The body crashed to the floor. Ann Woodward and husband William Woodward, 1955. This photo was taken a few days before she killed him. Bettman/Getty Images Or rather, as the researcher Roseanne Montillo notes, "that is the story she would tell the police, her mother-in-law, and all who asked during the rest of her life. Many would doubt her, including Truman Capote." Capote crossed paths with Ann Woodward in the Alpine town of Saint Moritz in the autumn of 1956. Ann did not take kindly to having her meal interrupted. She dismissed Capote with a homophobic slur. He returned fire, calling her "Mrs. Bang Bang". The sobriquet stuck to Ann for the remainder of her life. Montillo adds that Capote "would repeat the story of how he had met the notorious Ann Woodward whenever the opportunity presented itself, embellishing his tale and relishing each detail". Read more: The Clearing's investigation of The Family invites us to ask: what's the appeal – and risk – of crime stories based on real events? 'What I'm writing is true' While they would have been loath to admit it, Truman Capote and Ann Woodward were similar in certain ways. Both overcame childhood hardship and adversity. And much like Ann, the precocious Capote, who was born Truman Streckfus Persons in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1924, craved success, stardom and access to the trappings of elite society from a very early age. Regardless of whether he truly appreciated this, it seems fair to say Capote's encounter with Ann Woodward made quite the impression on him. Capote's authorised biographer, Gerald Clarke, reveals Ann Woodward was on the author's mind when he came up with the initial idea for Answered Prayers in 1958. Clarke describes how Capote originally "planned to make Ann his central character; in a list of eight names he jotted down in his journal, hers was the only one he had underlined". Capote's conception of Answered Prayers, which he struggled with and talked about for decades, developed over time. Marcel Proust loomed large in Capote's imagination. In his monumental novel-cycle Remembrance of Things Past, Proust scrutinised the social machinations of the Parisian upper classes at the turn of the 20th century. Capote conceived of his project – which took shape as a roman à clef – in equivalent terms. Clarke quotes Capote as saying: I am not Proust. I am not as intelligent or as educated as he was. I am not as sensitive in various ways. But my eye is every bit as good as his. Every bit! I see everything! I don't miss nothin'! What I'm writing is true, it's real and it's done in the very best prose style that I think any American writer could possibly achieve. […] If Proust were an American living now in New York, this is what he would be doing. Capote clearly wasn't lacking confidence. Answered Prayers was going to depict "American society in the second half of the twentieth century. This book is about is about you, it's about me, it's about them, it's about everyone." Capote was to tell the story of American society via thinly fictionalised versions of some of the wealthiest and most fashionable women in the world. As journalist Laurence Leamer tells it, everyone knew these characters were based on his closest friends, the coterie of gorgeous, witty, and fabulously rich women he called his "swans". Capote coined the term in an essay written for Harper's Bazaar in October 1959. He claimed that as is generally conceded, a beautiful girl of twelve or twenty, while she may merit attention, does not deserve admiration. Reserve that laurel for decades hence when, if she has kept buoyant the weight of her gifts, been faithful to the vows a swan must, she will have earned an audience all-kneeling; for her achievement represents discipline, has required the patience of a hippopotamus, the objectivity of a physician combined with the involvement of an artist, one whose sole creation is her perishable self. There is a lot to unpack in this passage. Capote is essentially suggesting there is more to beauty than youth and looks alone. He considered style and self-presentation to be infinitely more important when it came to determining whether a beautiful women might be elevated to the position of a swan. Leamer holds that there were probably only "a dozen women who Truman could have deemed true swans. They were all on the International Best-Dressed Lists, they were each celebrated in the fashion press and beyond, and they all knew one another." Lee Radziwill dancing with friend Truman Capote, at his famed Black and White Ball. Santi Vasalli/Getty Images Babe Paley (wife of CBS chairman William S. Paley). Slim Keith, ex-wife of director Howard Hawks and producer Leland Hayward (and the model for Lady Coolbirth). C.Z. Guest, a renowned beauty painted by Diego Rivera and Salvador Dalí. And Lee Radziwill, deemed, in La Côte Basque, 1965, so superior to her sister Jackie Kennedy, she was "not on the same planet" (the sisters are also described as "a pair of Western geisha girls"). This is a partial list of the world-famous women who counted Capote as their close friend throughout the 1960s and 70s. He dined with them, holidayed with them, and spent countless hours talking with them. Having earned their trust, the swans told Capote everything. This gave the writer, an outsider and perceived social inferior, unrivalled access to the upper echelons of American aristocracy. Capote spent years getting to know and understand these women. In Leamer's retelling, Capote appreciated the challenges of their star-crossed lives, what they faced, and how they survived. He had everything he needed to write about them with depth and nuance, exploring both the good and the bad, the light and the darkness. Answered Prayers would be his masterpiece, he knew – the book that would give him a place in the literary pantheon alongside the greatest writers of all time. Capote seems to have genuinely believed this. But things did not go according to plan. Diane Lane as Slim Keith, one of the 'swans' exposed in Answered Prayers, in Feud: Capote vs the Swans. Binge Masturbation, misogyny, murder In retrospect, it is clear that the odds were stacked against Capote from the very beginning. At the start of January 1966, Capote signed a contract with Random House for a novel titled Answered Prayers. The advance was an eye-watering US$25,000 (equivalent to approximately US$240,000 today). However, by the time he actually sat down to write the book, he was already under a great deal of pressure. Part of the problem had to do with his "real-life novel" In Cold Blood, which appeared in print just two weeks after he signed the paperwork for Answered Prayers. In Cold Blood is a creative recounting of the brutal Clutter family murders of 15 November 1959, which took place in the small farming community of Holcomb, Kansas. It was a massive hit with American readers, selling over 300,000 copies in 1966 alone. The book made Capote the most famous writer in America. Everyone now wanted a piece of him. He was interviewed in countless magazines and appeared on numerous television talk shows. An indefatigable self-promoter, he talked up Answered Prayers whenever he possibly could. In Cold Blood, which took six years to research and write, left Capote physically, mentally and creatively exhausted. He struggled to maintain focus and missed multiple deadlines. Answered Prayers kept getting pushed back. People started to wonder if it would ever see the light of day. Truman Capote on the set of the film of In Cold Blood. Hulton Archive/GettyImages Things came to a head in 1975. Under pressure to deliver the goods, Capote, who had until this point been incredibly secretive about the contents of his book, agreed, against the advice of his editor, to publish four chapters of Answered Prayers in Esquire. The first excerpt – Mojave – appeared in June, but garnered little attention from readers and critics. In contrast, the October publication of the scabrous, sexually explicit La Cote Basque, 1965 shocked the literati and set the tongues of socialites wagging. Capote had spent years tantalising friends and readers with the promise of an epoch-defining, Proustian masterpiece, only to deliver something else entirely. Masturbation, menstruation, misogyny, murder. Adultery, gossip and gallons of alcohol. Readers who thought they were getting a finely wrought piece of social critique were left scratching their heads in bemusement. What on earth could have possessed Capote? What was he hoping to achieve by besmirching the reputations of those closest to him? Read more: In Killers of the Flower Moon, true crime reveals the paradoxes of the past Was the book any good? With the benefit of hindsight, I think the overwhelming majority missed the memo when it came to Answered Prayers. To be sure, the work is infinitely more explicit and graphic (in terms of tone and subject matter) than many, if not all of Capote's earlier literary ventures. By the same token, it is clear Answered Prayers responds to (and even builds on) advances made in his earlier work. Take, for instance, In Cold Blood: Capote's conceptual breakthrough came when he realised "objective" forms of journalistic inquiry could be brought into productive dialogue with practices more closely associated with creative writing. My hunch is he thought he could pull off an equivalent trick with Answered Prayers. Only this time, he uses gossip. As the art historian Gavin Butt reminds us, gossiping is a serious business. Gossip can serve a positive, even joyous function: it is a "social activity which produces and maintains the filiations" of community. To put this another way: if used in a strategic and appropriate fashion, gossip can bring people together. It can help to build and sustain social groupings predicated on the basis of shared knowledge (of sexual matters). But when it came to Answered Prayers, Capote took things a step too far. Pretty much all we get is a constant stream of gossip. Characterisation, for one thing, goes entirely out of the window. So does plot. We see this, of course, in La Cote Basque, 1965. But the same is true of the other available sections of the novel. Consider Unspoiled Monsters, the first chapter in the posthumously published book. Our narrator, P.B. Jones, is an aspiring writer and bisexual gigolo. (His clients include an acclaimed American playwright who is a thinly veiled Tennessee Williams: "a chunky, paunchy boose-puffed runt with a play mustache glued above laconic lips".) This is how Capote introduces his narrator to the reader (note, here, the emphasis on journalistic reportage): "My name is P. B. Jones, and I'm of two minds whether to tell you something about myself right now, or wait and weave the information into the text of the tale. I could just as well tell you nothing, or very little, for I consider myself a reporter in this matter, not a participant, at least not an important one. But maybe it's easier to start with me. Having offered his greetings, Jones, whose hardscrabble biography reads very much like his creator's, starts gossiping and name-dropping indiscriminately. He never lets up. Certain of the swans crop up from time to time, as does Capote's literary touchstone: Think of Proust. Would Remembrance have the ring that it does if he had made it historically literal, if he hadn't transposed sexes, altered events and identities? If he had been absolutely factual, it would have been less believable but […] it might have been better. To which the reader of Answered Prayers might simply reply: touché. Capote's swans as portrayed in Feud: Capote vs the Swans. Second from left: Chloe Sevigny as C.Z. Guest. Far right: Diane Lane as Slim Keith and Naomi Watts as Babe Paley. Binge Settling scores Be that as it may, Gerald Clarke is surely right to suggest Capote had "more than literature on his mind" when he agreed to publish parts of Answered Prayers. In part, he was looking to settle scores. Answered Prayers represented an opportunity "to get back at some of his rich friends who, for one reason or another, had offended him over the years." The psychologist William Todd Schultz concurs. He reasons that with La Côte Basque, 1965 in particular, Capote "bit down hard on the smooth, socialite hands that fed him." Capote's decision to do so came with some unintended, yet disastrous consequences. Having gotten hold of an advance copy of La Cote Basque, 1965, Ann Woodward, who had a long history of depression, overdosed on barbiturates and passed away. She was a few months shy of her 60th birthday. Schultz makes the point that Ann Woodward's reaction to Capote's story "was the first, by far the saddest and most anguished, but hardly the last". Capote's swans, having recognised their fictional selves, recoiled in horror and disgust. They immediately cut Capote out of their lives. Try as he might, Capote, who claimed his intentions had been misunderstood, couldn't win the swans back over. Many of them never spoke to him again. Capote never recovered. And he never came close to finishing Answered Prayers. Dulled by a poisonous cocktail of drink and drugs, his literary skills deserted him long before he died on 25 August 1984. As chance, or maybe fate would have it, he died at exactly the same age as Ann Woodward. From start to tragic finish, it really does seem as if the lives of these two ambitious social outsiders ran along parallel lines. Given how much they despised each other, I can't help but wonder what Capote and Woodward would have made of such dismal symmetries. When Truman Capote died of liver disease complicated by multiple intoxications in Bel Air in 1984, the author still had not completed Answered Prayers, the "magnum opus" he had been touting for 26 years. It was "going to do to America what Proust did to France," the writer told one of his swans, Marella Agnelli, in one of his many conversations about his alleged masterpiece. He described it to friends, read aloud from it for small audiences, and even pressed the bulk of it into a friend's hands—at least, that's how it seemed. But after Capote died and no completed book was found—this, after a $1 million advance, three extensions, and over a quarter century of alleged work—those who stayed loyal to the writer through the "Côte Basque" debacle confronted the possibility that they, too, had been manipulated by the author. But how much of Answered Prayers was actually found? Which society women did Capote write about in the novel? And what are the chances that through the heavy haze of drugs, alcohol, Studio 54 distractions, and painful estrangement from his beloved social circle, the author actually finished the book? In anticipation of the Feud: Capote vs. The Swans finale "Phantasm Forgiveness," we explore those subjects, as well as how Capote ended up going to auction eight years ago. How much of Answered Prayers was found?Capote's journals reveal that Answered Prayers was to be divided into seven chapters, but it appears that Capote only drafted four of them—three of which were excerpted by Esquire, and one of which was published by VF in 2012 shortly after its discovery. One chapter was the infamous "La Côte Basque, 1965" the thinly veiled filleting of Capote's high-society friends, most of whom dropped him the minute the excerpt was published.Another chapter, "Kate McCloud," was reportedly modeled "on Mona Williams, later Mona von Bismarck, another oft married socialite friend of Truman's whose cliff-top villa on Capri he'd visited," according to Sam Kashner's 2012 feature for VF. "Of Mona's five husbands, one, James Irving Bush, was described as 'the handsomest man in America' and another, Harrison Williams, as 'the richest man in America.'" A third chapter, "Unspoiled Monsters," chronicles a gay hustler who beds men and women alike if they can further his literary career. The fourth chapter, published exclusively in VF, is titled "Yachts and Things." It recalls a trip abroad between a narrator believed to be based on Capote and a character who, Kashner guessed, could be a stand-in for The Washington Post's late publisher Katharine Graham. (In the story, everyone seems to do hashish.) Capote told potential readers that his book would be full of thinly veiled characters from his real life—and seemed to thrill in the danger of it all. "He couldn't stop talking about his planned roman à clef," Agnelli said. "He told People magazine that he was constructing his book like a gun: 'There's the handle, the trigger, the barrel, and, finally, the bullet. And when that bullet is fired from the gun, it's going to come out with a speed and power like you've never seen—wham!'"A lot. Two weeks after signing his contract for Answered Prayers with Random House in 1966, Capote's In Cold Blood was published—resulting in a kind of fame and proximity to privilege that suddenly trumped sitting at a typewriter. Capote, then 42, closed out the year by hosting his legendary Black and White Ball, signaling his speedy ascension to the top tier of Manhattan society. By the late '60s, Capote considered Lee Radziwill, the sister of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, one of his closest friends. Deadlines came and went. Capote's unfinished novel became so legendary that, in 1979, the writer published an essay in Vogue attempting to explain the decade-plus-long lag since his last book. For four years, roughly from 1968 through 1972, I spent most of my time reading and selecting, rewriting and indexing my own letters, other people's letters, my diaries and journals (which contain very complete accounts of hundreds of scenes and conversations) for the years 1943 through 1965. I intended using much of this material in a book I had long been planning, a variation on the nonfiction novel. I called the book Answered Prayers which is a quote from Saint Therese. […] In 1975 and 1976, I published four chapters of the book in a magazine, Esquire. This aroused anger in certain circles, where it was felt I was betraying confidences, mistreating friends and/or foes. I don't intend to discuss this; the issue involves social politics, not artistic merit. I will say only this: all a writer has to work with is the material he has gathered as the result of his own endeavor and observations, and you cannot deny him the right to use it. Condemn, but not deny.