

XIV How-and Why-History Lies

The real "American Mystery" of Mailer's subtitle is why he put his name on this terribly bad book and why Random House published it.

It is not even good fiction.

It is boring, not at all entertaining. And it has nothing to do with fact, It is not as claimed nonfiction. It is the cheapest kind of childish, immature fiction in which Mailer merely makes up what he wants and ~~says that is~~ <sup>to have been</sup> the Oswald he <sup>says</sup> got "inside" of with his monumental ego telling him that because he believes what he made up it is true.

And then he ~~extends it~~ <sup>burdens its dullness</sup> with verbosity that, as he <sup>lets</sup> sees it through that Olympian ego, is not verbosity but is <sup>his</sup> literary genius.

It is in fact Mailer's belief in his literary genius and his extending that into other fields in which he has no qualification at all other than <sup>perhaps</sup> ~~perhaps~~ what lingered in his mind from his claptrap of his novels of years earlier that, along with his World-class ego, led him into this book that should be the ruin of any earned reputation. that any self-respecting established writer would ever let anyone else see. It is a book that is so bad in every way it is hard to believe.

Thus I wonder why he submitted it for publication and why Random House published it.

Unless Mailer had an advance he would have had to return if he did not submit his book and Random House had that advance to recover <sup>and</sup> when he submitted it decided that for it the lesser evil would be its publication <sup>and trade</sup> on Mailer's name for sales.

Mailer holds forth at length <sup>and reads dantly</sup> on what he knows nothing about and can know nothing about. This is particularly true of his juvenile amateur shrinkery and his pretense that he is "inside" Oswald and reading his mind and his emotions.

As an <sup>le</sup> example of the certain dishonesty of this irrational basis of his book, of all I cite above that is established fact, is not what a deep desperate and failed writer imagines as he gropes to escape the failure he constructed for himself, In all <sup>of this</sup> ~~of this~~ <sup>and overblown</sup> ~~of this~~ overlong time Mailer makes no mention of Oswald's actual political beliefs. They were known as soon as the Commission published its twenty-six volumes of appendix. They

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were more widely known with the publication of the first book on the Commission, my <sup>That early!</sup> 1965 Whitewash, Mailer could not have had the interest he claims in the JFK assassination and not have gotten that book. In it, as we see above, <sup>the actuality of Oswald's</sup> virulent ~~the~~ hatred of Communism, domestic and in the USSR, is established by the official records I used it it. And that happens to be the source Mailer says he uses for the second half of his book.

He could not have ~~studied the secret sources, the exclusives,~~ made what he described as a "thorough" study of them and not have seen what I saw and used from them.

This alone makes an entirely different ~~of~~ person of Oswald than the man Mailer made up and called Oswald.

So also does what Mailer also suppressed, for it was available to him and offered to him along with all else I have, the fact that Oswald as a Marine did have an exceptionally high security clearance, CRYPTO, which requires a prior TOP SECRET clearance.

Mailer claims to have read all the many books but <sup>as sources</sup> but he uses ~~only~~ that like ~~his~~ were written by those who began with the intent of confirming the official assassination mythology and did nothing, learned nothing, avoided everything that was not in support of that official mythology. As Mailer then did himself. But <sup>if</sup> he had any interest at all in what he ridicules himself in his handling of, Oswald's career ~~in~~ New Orleans, he could hardly have not know<sup>about</sup> and read my Oswald in New Orleans. It was in that book that Oswald's high security clearances were brought to light. In it alone.

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Mailer not only had no reason not to believe my genuineness when I offered him access to all I have and he not only knew that I was suing the government and getting copies of its records that had been withheld, he uses Gerald Posner's knowingly mis-titled <sup>closed</sup> ~~Case~~ as a source. In it he read that I was so open it surprised Posner and he commented on it. He also knew that I did not agree with anything that Posner wrote. So there is no question about it, Mailer knew that all the extensive amount of official information so pertinent to his book, ~~know that it~~ was all available to him as it was to all others, <sup>Instead</sup> and he decided that what was sloshing around in his mind was superior to

what the government said is fact.

He also knew all of this and more from his contact with Jim Lesar, who had been my lawyer in all those FOIA lawsuits.

But instead of using any of the simply enormous amount of official information so accessible to him he ~~did~~ decided on the formula he liked so much in the Jean Davison <sup>1983</sup> (W.W.Norton, New York), Oswald's Game, he used that, which he had praised, and studiously ignored the government information all that was not published by the Commission.

That is a formula for assuring professional and personal dishonesty and for assuring literary disaster for anyone presuming to write in the field.

In becoming his own Harlot, <sup>the character he created for</sup> of his novel Harlot's Ghost, Mailer failed to remember the lesson any honest man proud of his writing would not have forgotten, that he put out ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> enormity of a book based ~~entirely~~ <sup>entirely</sup> on all the nonsense with which he had stuffed his mind and ~~and the end was admittedly enormously ignorant.~~ <sup>of the facts and the realities.</sup> end 519

In being his own Harlot in what is not really Oswald's Tale and is really the pathetic Mailer's Tales, he did not heed the lesson a writer with any self-respect, a writer with no more than an exalted self-concent would have learned, that an honest writer intending an honest book cannot preserve the ignorance with which he began and instead is controlled by the ego he cannot and did not control.

How he could have believed that the KGB had secrets for him for Schiller's money and would give it all to him is incredible. That ego again blinding him to common sense. Especially after what he makes no mention of, what Yuri Nosenko, the defected KGB official, told the FBI. (I published the essence of that in 1975, as Mailer should have known and any consultation with standard co sources would have told him.)

Perhaps <sup>gr</sup>eed, perhaps his financial condition, persuaded him that he would return <sup>from</sup> for the KGB's kindnesses with the book he had announced, Oswald in Minsk. But before he returned he knew that the KGB had come to him and Schiller and if he did not come to that understanding, he knew before he left Minsk that he had no book in Oswald in Minsk and had <sup>It was in Minsk, he says, that he</sup> begun trying to salvage that disaster by his "thorough" study of the Commission's volumes. Albeit in xerox.

But even then he lacked the common sense and the simple honesty of consulting more than the fictional supports of the official mythology in the faulty books he uses as sources. He does not cite a single one of the books that are not in support of <sup>the</sup> that official mythology that was thoroughly <sup>long</sup> discredited, before he left for <sup>A</sup> ~~Wink~~, years before then.

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This is deliberate, the most calculated intended dishonesty and his book defames him for it.

The result, the inevitable result, is that what he evolved and published is accurately described as a towering pile of what the Associated Press ~~would~~ <sup>would</sup> offend fewer editors and newspaper readers by substituting ~~it~~ "(expletive)" for it.

After reading his what my friend Paul Haller refers to accurately as "Oswald Stale" in shifting the apostrophe to where it really belongs, I still found it hard to believe that so justly honored a writer would pull himself down to those lowest of literary depths, would have so little concern for his reputation, or was-could be-sick enough in the head to actually believe he could pull it all off.

But the proof of the stink is in its stench - he did publish it.

Mailer, despite his Harvard qualifications and his long writing career with those honors in it he did <sup>nevertheless</sup> learn, also lacks plain, ordinary common sense when his self-concept is involved. As we saw to a slight degree he ~~spouts~~ <sup>spouts</sup> off all sorts of stupidities and inanities with the slightest opportunity. He even makes those opportunities. So, perhaps with the considerable attention to Posner's pap and mindful of what he himself had written for his foreword to Jean Davison's disgracing of the human intellect and all ~~stand~~ <sup>stand</sup> standards of honest <sup>w</sup> writing, he used the Davison formula.

Her childish approach was to pretend that nothing existed other than what the Commission published and that it would be honest to use only what she could select from that which supported the prejudice with which she began. And, however joyously the sycophantic media greeted her book, it remains her own monument to her own personal and professional dishonesty.

(I have a fat file <sup>for</sup> the record for history of her dishonesty, in detail and with what she ignored <sup>in</sup> ~~of~~ the official evidence <sup>she used</sup> ~~only~~ <sup>to</sup> make her intended <sup>dish</sup> honesty absolutely certain.)

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Mailer also <sup>had</sup> adopted her sin, although perhaps <sup>if</sup> he had not liked it in her writing it would have occurred to him in this desperation anyway.

Davison not only ignored all the many books that proved her the deliberate liar she was, she also pretended that the many hundreds of thousands of pages of available official records did not exist.

Like her, Mailer did precisely that, <sup>too</sup>.

~~He~~ Mailer knew, if only from me, that they did exist and were available to him. <sup>Q</sup> ~~He~~ he could not read the papers without knowing it.

I was so stunned that a man with any <sup>self</sup>-respect, any concept of personal and professional ~~integrity~~ integrity, could ignore that wealth of official information that could have saved the reputation he ruined, ~~that~~ on <sup>the</sup> last page of his notes I wrote for anyone who would look at that book in the future that in all those eight <sup>hundred</sup> and twenty-eight pages he not only cites not a single page of that vast volume of available official records - he does <sup>not</sup> even refer to their existence.

Not even in the futility of trying to defend himself for such blatant dishonesty, personal, professional, to his publisher and to his reader.

With all the many who knew and could criticize him for it, he would run ~~that~~ the risk that one of them might get some attention in exposing it? Attention more likely from the enemies he had made?

Or if one <sup>major</sup> ~~major~~ reviewer knew and ~~best~~ <sup>best</sup> that and reported it?

If he read Davison's book before writing his foreword to it he knew that is what she did. But then he also knew that she got away with ~~it~~ it, so he could have believed <sup>that</sup> he also did.

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In terms of it being used against him, he <sup>was</sup> ~~as~~ correct, It was not mentioned by all those who instead referred to him as "shrewd," "definitive" and yes, as "brilliant."

It was daring. But it was also stupid and, of course, quite dishonest.

Yet Mailer has a record of doing and saying the stupid and of surviving all those many stupidities. I quote some of them ~~to~~ herein.

He begins his foreword for Davison with one:

**I**N field artillery, forward observers are told to bracket a target. If, in their estimation, the first shot falls three hundred yards short, they call for the next to be six hundred yards farther. They want to be certain to land on the far side; that way, by comparing the near and the long, they can approach a direct hit. The target is not found as well creeping toward it. One wants to make certain that errors fall to opposite sides of the mark.

*Oswald's Game* by Jean Davison fulfills such a purpose. Considering the difficulties surrounding one lonely researcher, she does it well, and here I may as well confess that the author came to my attention when she wrote me a letter full of gentle but determined criticisms to *Conspiracy* by Anthony Summers (McGraw-Hill 1980). I suggested then that she write her own book. Indeed, she has, and I think it may enter the small canon of acceptable words about Lee Harvey Oswald and the Kennedy assassinations, and say this although I am still not sympathetic to her point of view which would argue that Oswald was not an agent for the KGB, CIA, or FBI, nor any part of an anti-Castro Cuban conspiracy with the Mafia to kill Jack Kennedy (which possibilities are carefully investigated in Anthony Summers's book) but to the contrary, Davison here makes the case that Oswald was what he purported to be, an isolated Marxist, half-crazed, who killed for his ideas—in other words, we are given the Warren Commission ...7  
*rewritten (pages 7-8)*

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I do not know if Mailer was in the artillery in the Marines in World War II

or if as we have seen in this woeful Mailer's <sup>a</sup>files of his he just makes up what he thinks will serve his purpose and having made it up believes it is true because, after all, it is he who made it up. But when before World War II ~~he~~ was in an artillery unit of college ROTC and we were trained by ~~the~~ regular army officers and sergeants, what Mailer <sup>says</sup> ~~says~~ about overshooting by the amount of undershooting was not what we were taught and I believe was called "bracketing." We were taught that with each shot the object was to get closer to the target, that war was not a child's game and that the purpose of artillery was to hit the target and not dance around and risk getting killed by unnecessary delays.

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What is both remarkable as a Mailer's eye view of Mailer is that with the depth and profundity of the subject-matter ignorance he ended up with how he could have

said that Davison made "certain<sup>ly</sup> not to err and that she did "well" in her book. The only possible ~~basis~~ basis for his saying that is first his ignorance and then that she said what he had <sup>4/</sup>much earlier decided for himself, that <sup>U</sup>Oswald was the assassin.

In what he says next Mailer also says that his belief in the possibility of a conspiracy ~~was~~ was not based on evidence of any kind, ~~and~~ would have involved ~~the~~ The KGB, the FBI <sup>anti-</sup>Castros or the mafia. This is really to say that aside from what stewed around in his head his belief was based on the nutty and crappy literature from which ~~as~~ he took those alleged conspirators he personally was inclined to ~~of~~ favor.

The concluding sentence of what I quote from the beginning of ~~his~~ his foreword is convoluted and ~~is~~ in its own <sup>right</sup> ~~right~~ both crazy and unfactual. Oswald did not "purport" himself to be "an isolated Marxist" or "half-crazed" or a "killer" who "killed for his ideas," *which is what Mailer says,*

Contrary to Mailer's unoriginal and no less <sup>notion</sup> silly ~~nothing~~, rather than killing for the fame he believed that would ~~bring~~ bring him Oswald never <sup>of</sup> stopped saying he had killed nobody and that he had been framed - "I'm a patsy" ~~are~~ are his exact and recorded and well-reported words.

Or is that <sup>in saying this</sup> ~~it~~ that Mailer was ~~propagandizing~~ propagandizing that long in advance what he would write? end  
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Weaving his own notions in as he goes he ~~says~~ says that Davison wrote about Oswald as though she were writing a novel and as a result "Her product...has lucidity and Oswald emerges as <sup>o</sup> the protagonist of a novel" (page 8).

To him "Her work...has conviction, and offers a recognizable Oswald, a desparately fouled up young psychopath..." (page 8).

<sup>This</sup> ~~That~~ Mailer knew before he did any work at all on the subject? By his own account he did not begin to go over the Commission's published-only material until he was in L<sup>h</sup>insk.

Again, Mailer's ~~delinking~~ delinking of Davison's corruption of even the published official records can be attributed to no more than her <sup>of</sup> saying what he had long earlier decided to say.

Is this not also a confession by Dr. Shrink Mailer that his book certifies him as a psychopath?



Mailer like that "psychopath" line and say that "to a great degree" he accepts her "portrayal of Oswald as a psychopath" (page 9). His reason is "it becomes difficult to see him pursuing one course to the exclusion of all others. Psychopaths have a prodigious sense of their own talents..." (page 9), 3584

Mailer was able to see Oswald himself only as a novelist because he has no knowledge at all about the man and as of then none at all about the Commission's work and beliefs.

Here as ever so much more years later Mailer is Dr. Mailer of Shrinkery, Inc.

He concludes his brief foreword saying:

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"... So I can read *Oswald's Game* as a most legitimate attempt to perceive the terrain on that other side of the moon where people's lives are always less interesting than they ought to be, and less sinister, less manipulated. Though I belong to the Summers's school of conspiracy, I still think Jean Davison has delivered an invaluable tool, a corrective, a clear measure of the other possibility to be kept in mind by all us other amateur and professional investigators of the great American mystery. From my side of the debate, I choose then to greet her work." (page 10).

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He is correct in placing Davison on "other the other side of the moon."

Her ignoring most of the readily available evidence started her there and kept her there.

So, too, did her dishonesty in her ~~cut~~ quotations of the official transcripts.

As it happens, Mailer quoted them identically and with the identical omissions,

One ~~example~~ <sup>sample</sup> we have seen earlier suffices to make the point but where they are made earlier as relating to Mailer, they all apply to her, too.

Davison and then Mailer quote the testimony of some of those who served in the Marines with Oswald. Quite a few of them testified -in the testimony Davison cites- that Oswald had at least a SECRET security clearance. Mailer Davison merely eliminates that part in quoting the rest ~~or at least the part of the very large "rest"~~ that supported the prejudice and belief with which she began. <sup>So also did.</sup> ~~The same one~~ Mailer later <sup>as he</sup> commercialized and exploited, as she did. They both use the same testimony from the same pages and edited out the references to Oswald's security clearances from those very pages.

It could be <sup>believed</sup> ~~said~~ by suspicious minds that in fact that both copied because what both did is precisely what the Commission did in 1964: it, too, ignored its own probative testimony so it, too, could conclude diametrically the opposite of what its testimony meant and said. And it, too, omitted its own testimony to Oswald's high security clearance. *end 326*

Because Mailer assured me that his work was his and his alone, that he did not use the work of Davison or any others, we are left to face a rather remarkable coincidence: that they both suppressed from the <sup>identical</sup> testimony both cited the identical portions that both wanted their ~~of~~ readers not have have in mind.

Well, life being full of coincidences, <sup>those</sup> that dishonorable, dishonest, distorting, misrepresenting omissions both made they <sup>both</sup> made by coincidence only.

3594 One thing is certain. Davison's 1983 book did not copy from Mailer's 1995 book. perhaps the explanation is in the old saying that great <sup>N</sup> ~~mis~~ runs in the same channel.

Then there is Mailer's <sup>P</sup> ~~ES~~ that is so effective and so penetrating it was still effective for him after three decades and <sup>then</sup> from the grave.

I refer above to those who may not love Mailer. One may be Gore Vidal. Mailer's publisher of ~~Mailer's~~ Tales is Random House. In 1993 it published a volume of Gore Vidal's essays. under the title, Gore Vidal, United States, Essays 1952-1992. The fifth of them (pages 31-40) <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ first published in The Nation of January 2, 1960. It is titled "Norman Mailer's Self-Advertisement." Vidal could have said the <sup>Thirty-five years later,</sup> same things in 1995, after reading this Mailer book.

With regard to the problem posed above, how it happened that Mailer used the same testimony Davison used and omitted from direct quotation of that testimony exactly the same material Davison omitted, Vidal had a comment with which I begin although it is not in the beginning of that essay:

Walent Singh here

Mailer is Bolingbroke, a born usurper. He will raise an army anywhere, live off the country as best he can, helped by a devoted underground, even ~~as~~ assisted at brief moments by rival claimants like myself. Yet when all is said and done, none of this is the way to live. And not a way ~~to create~~ ... to create a literature." ( page 39).

Here are a few other Vidal comments and observations <sup>all</sup> about Mailer:

I am ~~suspe~~ suspicious of people who makes <sup>speeches</sup> ~~speeches~~ at me, and he is a born cocktail-party orator (page 34)

On the same page:

end 527

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Mailer gives us his life and work together, and therefore it is impossible to review the books without attempting to make some estimate of both his character and the corpus of his work, the tension of his present and the shape of his future. Mailer is sly to get himself all this attention.

Two pages later, on page 36:

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Mailer is forever shouting at us that he is about to tell us something we must know or ~~he~~ has just told us something revelatory and we failed to hear him or that he will, God grant his poor abused brain and body just one more chance, get through to us so that we will know.

Speaking of "most of my contemporaries, including Mailer," they are

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"...desperately trying to convince themselves and the audience that they are something they are not. (page 38)

Further on the page from which I quoted first.

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"So each time he speaks, he must become more bold, more loud, put on brighter motley and shake more foolish bells. Anything to get their attention.

Although this <sup>was</sup> written thirty-five years before Mailer's Tales of Oswald's Tale appeared Vidal was writing about the same, the unchanged Mailer, as we have seen in our examination of his current book. If Vidal were to read Oswald's Tale and then reread his 1960 essay he would find not a word to change, only more of the same to add and with that add a bit more, about Mailer's ESP and mind-reading from the grave.

Perhaps this is acceptable in fiction but it is not and should not be in nonfiction and that is what Mailer and his publisher say ~~was~~ Oswald's Tale is.

Much as it isn't.

It is Mailer being the Mailer so well understood and described by Vidal only being more of it, more of the self-presented omniscient who sees what ~~was~~ mere mortals cannot see, with those powers of ESP and mind-reading from the grave Vidal ~~either~~ did not see as he also did not perceive Mailer's acute extra-sensory perception, both indispensable in his unintended effort to prove what he was to say

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at the <sup>u</sup>niversity of Pennstylvania, that history lies.

In this, in making h<sup>t</sup>istory lie, <sup>ff</sup>ailer did succeed.

*and*  
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