

When I read in Howard Goodman's Philadelphia Inquirer report on Mailer spending days at the University of Pennsylvania telling its history majors what what they were studying was false and a waste of their time and money, that "nothing in history is ~~zazz~~ true," I wondered about more than the obvious possibility that Mailer was using his usual offbeat way of promoting his book then in manufacture.

But then I ~~s~~ read,

"Mailer said he decided 'it was ~~probable~~ likely' that Oswald acted alone in killing President John F. Kennedy - not from the evidence, 'which is impenetrable,' but 'because I got to know his character.'"

This told me, before Mailer's book was out, that after three decades Mailer was merely assuming Oswald's guilt and that his sole basis for this was because Mailer believes he "got to know" Oswald's "character." How could Mailer have known from what he believed Oswald's "character" was that he killed the President? I did give this some thought. All that came to mind is that Mailer, while using what he had "decided" as a substitute for evidence, for proof, might be drawing on what he had written in the past about violence or from his personal experiences with violence - his own violence. And that reminded me of Mailer's having stabbed his first wife about 40 or 45 years earlier

He could have killed her!

I asked my friend, Paul T. ^Waller ^Haller if he could locate a source for me on that in the researches and reading he was enjoying. After a lifetime of working with words in cold Minnesota Paul had retired to Margate, ^Florida. He sent me the following ~~pages~~ ^{pages that} photocopied from Carl Rollyson's The Lives of Norman Mailer. (

) . Paul also checked several other volumes, including the better-known Mailer: His Life and Times by Peter ^Manso. ()

In his accompanying letter Paul told me that Mailer's first wife's maiden name was Morales and that in the sources he checked "there is also reference to Norm ('sneaking' ~~in~~ into the hospital to try to convince Adele not to talk to the police and

to inform the hospital authorities that she 'fell on some glass.' The locale is New York City where Mailer was ...running for mayor."

While what Paul xeroxed and sent me may begin with an incomplete sentence that can be ambiguous, because it can be an additional insight into "character" as Mailer understands character from his own life I use it despite the possible ambiguity and have not altered a word on pages 136-7 from Rollyson's book:

Mailer was “fucking around a lot,” and he had seen Norman and Adele turn one spat into a fist fight. Doc Humes, one of Mailer’s Provincetown friends, saw his anxiety skyrocketing. He was “hunching his shoulders as though in expectation of a blow,” talking like a Texan, badgering and nagging himself about unfinished work, and behaving as though “everything somehow related to him.”

Mailer planned a big party for Saturday evening, November 19, 1960—his political coming out, at which he would announce his candidacy on behalf of the underprivileged and the disenfranchised masses of the city. He began to pester George Plimpton to invite power brokers like David Rockefeller of Chase Manhattan, so that there would be no mistake about his pull. Plimpton did his best, but it was completely unrealistic to expect corporation executives, city commissioners, and diplomats to show up. When Plimpton got to the party, he saw a rowdy crowd full of unfortunates who looked like they had wandered in off the street. Everyone seemed ill at ease—the disenfranchised as well as the intellectuals. The apartment was packed with two or three hundred people and tension mounted. When Plimpton arrived, Mailer hit him across the face with a rolled newspaper and demanded to know where the “power structure” was.

The atmosphere turned violent. Allen Ginsberg, not known for a harsh temperament, got so hysterical in an argument with Norman Podhoretz that Podhoretz backed off as if he expected the poet would hit him. A drunken Roger Donoghue took hold of an eight-foot-long table full of liquor and food and heaved it into the air. Mailer warned his good friend Barbara Probst Solomon to stay away from him. If provoked, he would really “let fly,” he let her know in the surly tones of someone looking for a fight. After the event, Richard Gilman wrote about witnessing “fights quickly broken up in corners, sexual stalkings and contretemps, envies and jealousies staging themselves as group therapy.” The columnist Leonard Lyons wrote that Mailer had prowled the party with a photograph of himself at the jazz club Birdland, where he had been arrested after a dispute over a check. “If you want to see it . . . try to take it from me,” he challenged one of his guests. Jason Epstein of Random House turned down Mailer’s invitation to box—as did Roger Donoghue. When Plimpton tried to edge away from a Mailer invitation to box, he got kicked in the leg.

As far as Mailer was concerned, everything had gone wrong. He was getting very, very drunk and indulging in self-pity, feeling that his

entourage had let him do a psychodrama. At about 11:00 p.m., he told the remaining guests to assemble in the living room. Nobody moved. So he went into the line of his opponent. Marie Biddle, represented by her husband, he muttered about treachery.

At least one Mailer friend was in the bathroom with a girl in the bathroom and suspicions about Adele. On this particular night Mailer was baiting him, denigrating him as an inadequate lover. By 4:30 a.m. he had been out on the street and had walked into his apartment. He found a bloodstained bullfighter’s shirt on the floor, and the incident is well known. Evidently she sized him up and decided not matter if she said, “You’re a sailor in the back streets’ mouth.” The point was that she hit her husband. He took out a knife and carried with him. All Adele saw was a knife in his eyes before he stabbed her in the back.

Mailer said nothing. After the event, she kept her husband, she kept her friends, she kept people like us. They happy people like us. . . . I went to bed on a mattress and called a doctor. I went to University Hospital at 10:00 a.m. also called Mailer’s sister, who had left the party at 3:00 a.m. about 5:30 a.m. Barbara Probst Solomon her mother. Instead she arrived at the hospital, finding his daughter at the hospital. It was 8:00 a.m. after the stabbing. One of the lungs had been punctured.

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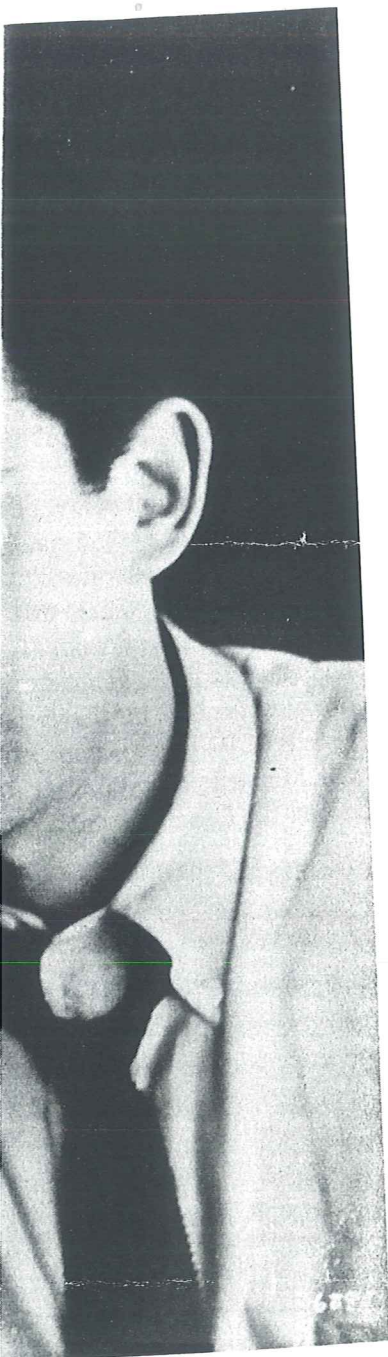
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entourage had let him down. To prove it was so, he staged his own psychodrama. At about 3:00 A.M. he ordered the small number of remaining guests to assemble into two lines—those for him and against him. Nobody moved. So he shoved nearly everyone, including Adele, into the line of his opponents. A few friends and the family maid, Nettie Marie Biddle, represented (in his mind) the remnant of his forces. While he muttered about treachery people slipped away.

At least one Mailer friend had seen Adele spend part of the evening with a girl in the bathroom looking "very cozy." There had been rumors and suspicions about Adele's bisexuality, and there is no question that on this particular night Mailer believed she had betrayed him. She had been baiting him, denigrating his work, and suggesting he had been an inadequate lover. By 4:30 A.M. nearly everyone had gone. Mailer had been out on the street chasing people and getting into scrapes. He walked into his apartment with a black eye, a bloodied face, and a bloodstained bullfighter's shirt. Versions differ as to what Adele said to him, and the incident is still so painful that she cannot discuss it. Evidently she sized him up and made a caustic remark. It probably did not matter if she said, "You look like you've been rolled by a couple of sailors in the back streets" or "You look like a woman with lipstick on your mouth." The point was that she did not recognize or accept him as her husband. He took out the two-and-a-half-inch penknife he usually carried with him. All Adele remembers of this moment is the funny look in his eyes before he stabbed her—once in the upper abdomen and once in the back.

Mailer said nothing. Adele was stunned and angry. Nearly as drunk as her husband, she kept muttering, "Things like this don't happen to people like us. They happen to black people in Harlem and to Puerto Ricans but not us. . . . I can't believe this." Doc Humes put her on a mattress and called a doctor, Conrad Rosenberg, who had her admitted to University Hospital at Second Avenue and Twentieth Street. Humes also called Mailer's sister, Barbara, and her husband, Larry Alson. They had left the party at 3:00 A.M. and had to return to Mailer's apartment at about 5:30 A.M. Barbara was shocked and not yet ready to speak with her mother. Instead she and Larry went immediately to Norman's apartment, finding his daughter Betsy there with the maid. Adele was already at the hospital. It was 8:00 A.M. Sunday, about three-and-a-half hours after the stabbing. One of the wounds was near the heart and the cardiac sac had been punctured.



for me to arrive at my own style—I didn't
through my experience" (UPI/Bettmann



ABOVE: *Sent to Bellevue after the stabbing*, Mailer seemed "calm" and "subdued." He was later able to persuade a doctor to vouch for his sanity and to release him after two weeks of treatment (UPI/Bettmann Newsphotos).

BELOW: *After the stabbing*, Norman and Adele tried a brief reconciliation but in March 1961 they separated. At the time of the stabbing, Adele said: "Things like this don't happen to people like us . . . I can't believe this" (UPI/Bettmann Newsphotos).



an unnumbered

Paul also send me ~~a~~ page of pictures from that ~~page~~ hook . The upper one, which show the youthful Mailer going through what seems to be a door inside a jail is captioned:

"Sent to Bellevue after the stabbing, Mailer seem 'calm'" and 'subdued.' He was later able to persuade a doctor to vouch for his sanity and to release him after two weeks of treatment."

The lower one is captioned,

"After the stabbing, Norman and Adele tried a brief reconciliation but in March 1961 they separated. At the time of the stabbing, Adele said; 'Things like this don't happen to people like u . . . I can't believe this.'"

From, From his own life and its man experiences Mailer did know that what "can't happen" does happen: he did it, so he does know.

And he not only tried to lie his way out of it he actually tried to get the wife he almost killed to lie for him. He could have been charged with attempted homicide.

Rollyson's last words quoted above are

"One of the wounds was near the heart and the cardiac sac have been punctured."

Whether or not it is fair to judge another by one's self, what other basis could Mailer have had - assuming that he had a basis and was not writing a novel he would call nonfiction - for finding that Oswald was the assassin "because I got to know his character"?

That Mailer has no other basis for "deciding" that Oswald was the assassin is confirmed by his own publisher, Random House. Its very first words on its dust jacket (other than the price, # "U.S.A. \$30.00 Canada \$39/.95") are:

"In this book Norman Mailer asks the essential question about the assassination of JFK: not 'Who killed Kennedy?' but 'Who was Oswald?' for only by answering the latter questions can we hope to answer the first."

Thus Random House not only confirms-it reinforces Mailer's assumption and assumption on, y t at Oswald was the assassin. Yet this dust jacket hype concludes:

"Oswald's Tales: An American Mystery, is a nonfiction masterpiece, a work of meticulous research and reportage." It then describes Mailer as ~~xxxNot onlyxxx~~

coming "to the task not only with sober respect for the facts but with a novelist's power to bring the facts to vibrant life."

Only, no "facts" about the assassination itself?

In more than 800 pages? And this bulk without an index!

This is a "sober respect for the facts" of the assassination?

Mailer broke the book into two parts. He refers to them as "volumes." In size they are. The first is titled, "Oswald in Minsk with Marine." The second, which begins on page 346 347, is "Oswald in America."

After dedication to his sixth wife who lasted 20 years with him Mailer has what he titled "an appreciation". It reads

to Larry Schiller, my skilled and wily colleague in interview and investigation, for the six months we labored side by side in Minsk and Moscow, and then again in Dallas, feeling as close as family (and occasionally as contentious); and to Judith McNally, my incomparable assistant, whose virtues are so numerous it would weigh upon one's own self-regard to list them—yes, to Schiller and McNally, a full and unconditional appreciation. Without them, there might have been no tale to tell.

Under "Acknowledgement" Mailer's third (page xx) is "to my good friend the private investigator William Najeski for his percipient insights while we worked together in Dallas and New Orleans."

Not, however, on the crime itself.

We have seen a bit about Schiller's special skills" and how "wily" he is.

As we go through what is worth any time at all in these 412 ounces of what Schiller earlier described as "ponderous trivia" when he had no idea of his coming alliance with Mailer and how profitable that would be for both of them we may learn if with the special talents of his good friend the professional investigator Najeski they even once sought to learn something about the crime and what kind of other investigations, especially especially about "Oswald in America" other than in terms of the official mythology that Mailer has without question adopted.

Whatever explains the absence of any index at all in more than 800 pages of supposed

nonfiction, one obvious served by this departure from traditional nonfiction publication is that the lack of any index makes ~~being~~ making checking Mailer out

Mailer does have a "Glossra "Glossary of Names" (pages xv-xix) but they are no substitute for an index. They do, hwoever, reflect what kind of "Investigation" Mailer, Schiller and Majeski conducted and its purposes.

I did a bit on investigating in those cities, of both Oswald and the crime. I do not see, relating to Oswald alone, the New Orleans names related to Oswald's phony "Fair Play for Cuba" ploy or to his having what he distributed printed. Douglas Jones owned the Jones Printing Company. His assistant was Myra Silver. The attention-attracting distribution of literature outside the International Trade Mart Oswald staged was reported to the FBI by H. Jesse Core. Jesse was the Trade Mart's information officer then. The FBI agent to whom he complained was Milton Kaack.

Not one of these names does Mailer mention in his glossary of names.

The crime was in Dallas. The initial examination of the President by medical personnel the only examination before he was pronounced dead - was in Dallas. The names of those medical experts are not in Mailer's glossary.

What instead of what is meaningful Mailer finds necessary to include in an appendix. It (pages i-xiv.) It consists of "a few passages from Dr. Howard P. Bone of Mayo Clinic, whose report on dyslexia is buried in Volume XXVI of the Warren Commission papers, Exhibit No. 3134, -pp. 812-817)

This citation is to the very of the very last volume of the Commission's published appendix. It is not the Commission's paper "paper." They were deposited in the National Archives, as Schiller, if not Mailer knew. And if Mailer did not know, what did he try to learn in his three decades of assumption of Oswald's guilt?

But does dyslexia have anything at all to do with the killing? Mailer also has a selection he makes of some of Oswald's writings. Some as we shall see selected with great care to select out what is not conducive to the Mailer assumptions about Oswald.

Not does Mailer trouble his reader with any interpretations of the purposes for

sycsuch writing.

This is not because it was now well and publicly known. It was reported in standard official works on the assassination and the investigation of it. But in the event one might assume that before writing such a tome Mailer familiarized himself with the published dia disagreements with the official mythology - that that "meticulous reasearch" boast of Baby Rand Random House - Mailer was carefull not to taint his mind with any reality.

Mailer does have a bibliography. It takes up one page, in full. Inall he lists 14 books. Of these one is a noyel nis own Harlot's Ghost. He also has a volume of Essays from the previous century, Rap Ralph Waldo Emerson's "The Complete Essays." They certw ainly are infor ative about the assassination of 1963!

As a source Mailer has even "Hitler, Sdolf. Mein Kampf," the 1972 translation bt Ralph Manhiem.

GHe also found relevant to the assassination of President Kennedy a volume enitlted "Portrait of a Revolutionary: Mao Tse-ting," by Robert L. Payne.

The closest Mailer comes to any critical works are Gaeton Fonzi's The Last Investi- gation, whihc is about the House Se.ect Comitteee for which Fonzi was an investigator, not about the assassination; and Tony Sumner's commercialization and exploitation of all the assassination nutttery, Conspiracy.

What else Mailer found use for is five volumes of sycophancy, in supprt of the official mythology, by those who begin with the assumption that Mailer held as a sub- three stitution for information about the crime or any quest for it. The two that are most pre- judiced and least dependable are Epstein's Legend, aa work diminated by the late ~~KIA~~ CIA h chief of counterintelligene who came close to wrecking t e CIA with his world- largely c;ass paranoia, making Epstein's a work of fiction; Priscilla Johnson McMillan's acclount of the life of Marina and Lee together, an ac unt part so f which Marina disagreed with publicly when McMillan waw promoting that book with Marina on nationwide TV; and Gerald Posner's knowing mistitled Case Closed, q a work of the most comcoetent and dililigent shysterism, as among other things I described it in Case Open.

I do not suggest that Mailer used this work of which I said Paoner had trouble telling the truth even by accident only because it was published by his publisher, Random House. In fact Mailer cites the paperback reprint. That reprint begins with reference to my Case Open, so Mailer as not unaware of its existence. And if he had done the most superficial rather than a what Random House describes as "meticulous" research he would have known the true truth.

But if Mailer ever let himself get into the room with the truth, could he still have written this book?

So "meticulous research" consists in ignoring all the basic books that do not agree with the official mythology. Which is to say that do not agree with him and his preconception and what he "decided" as his substitute for fact and reality.

The rest of Mailer's bibliography is the published work of the Warren Commission and of the House committee I always referred to as "the House assassins" because that is what they did, assassinate truth and fact.

What Mailer makes no mention of her or in his notes is as little as a single page of the at least a half-million pages of once withheld official JFK assassination records. Of this number, which may be less than the total, I have about a quarter or a million pages. As we have seen, Mailer knew about that because I told him about it in 1973 and then offered him free access to all I had.

(Mailer's rather scanty notes also exclude as little as a single page of an official document unless it was published by the Commission or by the House assassins.)

Thus we see that regardless of what he says about his tome himself or what his publisher says about it, Mailer began with and evolved a novel with the trappings of nonfiction.

His subtitle is "An American Mystery." In fact his Oswald's Tale is 666 two, not one, American Mysteries.

One is why Mailer wrote it. The other is why Random House printed it.

So far as that "title" is concerned, this tome that demeans our history and disgraces serious writing, Mailer's in particular, is really Mailer's tale. Of how he could

besmirch himself and this reputation and his two Pulitzers while ^{casting} caring himself in the Orwellian role we saw earlier, of praising the CIA he had spent much of his life as in condemning and urging it to more assassination.

It is a Mailer's Tale of of his kissing official ass in Macy's window with the streets jammed.

Mailer could write this massive book because he "got to know" Oswald's cha "character"?

From this book he has yet to "know" his own "character" as a human person and as a writer.

No, the Mailer's proud of kicking official ass has become the kisser of official ass-in his book, in his interview, in his multitudinous appearances on nationwide TV-in every way possible or for him.

Who cares about Oswald other than as the assassin or as framed with the assassination?

Nobody at all.

So, for Mailer to have a book as for all those years he had thought of it, he had to assign Oswald's guilt.

And his assumption, referred to as investigative reporting, is the sole basis for his book or for Random House's acceptance and publication of it.

Oh, how the mighty have fallen!

Mailer knew when he finished Minsky's treatment of Minsk that he had a problem, a rvery real problem. (For these too young to know "insky's was big in New York a vaudeville when wasting time and bein titillatex while doing it with by srippers was a popular diversion.) With the realization he did what he thought he had to do, what really was necessary not to be laughed a at openly, and then true to conert that into as asset.

The Book of the Month Club went for Oswald's tale. To make a big thing of it in its advance promotions to members to sent not only its Creative Director, Joseph Cummins for the interview- o a mere four paragraphs that a reasonable intelligent college freshman could have writte-unless his intelligenfe rebelled at it*- along with its executive editor and a photographer.

In this mailing Cummins says,

"By the time he finished writing the 'Russian' part of the book, he was ready to add a little 'epilogue' about Oswald in America. ('My publishers said, 'Oh, don't make it too long,' and I said, 'No, I won't' Mailer burst out laughing: the epilogue has become the bulk of Oswald's Tale..."

Interviewed by Newsweek, copies distributed by Random House's publicity on April 17, Bob Sawhill of Newsweek asked Mailer, "Did your book change direction?" To this Mailer respojded,

"I strted with one book and ended with another. When [our work] was ~~xxxx~~ all over in Belarus, I got fascinated with, of all things, the Warren Report. Not that it was a good piece of investigat r porting; it wasn't. But it is a marvellous spurce of minimalist stories about life in America in that time."

What else does to take in the United States in 1995 to make a se best seller, if not the best sm ller?

In fact, in his book Mailer masks the tota; failure of the concept that there was a viable, legitimate book on Oswald in Minsk in the very first chapter of his second "e volume" as he styles it. We get to that in time.