

one element in common: prospects for both schemes on Capitol Hill were extremely dim. A White House task force, in fact, was already drawing up its own recommendations for a nationwide program of public-private slum rehabilitation. Bobby Kennedy would almost certainly make the next headlines, but the biggest banners in the fertile field of slum housing would very likely belong to Lyndon B. Johnson.

## THE ASSASSINATION: 'Death of Lancer'

For William Manchester, the last few months have been a time of rest and rehabilitation from the rigors of the Great Book Battle. In self-imposed isolation in Middletown, Conn., the harried author has tried to put "The Death of a President" out of his thoughts and return to his work on a history of the Krupp dynasty in Germany, a piece of "orthodox scholarship" that he had sidelined three years ago in order to write about President Kennedy's assassination. But peace of mind is not yet the order of the day for William Manchester.

One more footnote to the Manchester affair was added last week. It emerged in the form of a stinging selective account of Manchester's first draft, a 1,287-page typewritten manuscript titled "Death of Lancer" (after the Secret Service code name for Kennedy). And it surfaced at the hand of assassination critic Edward Jay Epstein, whose own book "Inquest" was dismissed by Manchester in a long footnote. Epstein, writing in the July Commentary magazine, claimed to have read the first Manchester draft months before the Book Battle erupted and found it so virulently anti-Johnson in tone and unbalanced in viewpoint as to cast indelible doubt on the author's subsequent claim to historical objectivity.

**'Crafty Schemer':** Quoting liberally from the Lancer manuscript, Epstein traced a barely subliminal allegory in which a heroic President Kennedy (a "lithe young figure") was pitted against a villainous Lyndon Johnson, who was once "a crafty schemer" but after three Vice Presidential years in Kennedy's shadow had become a "haggard" and "atrophied" ghost of his former self. Expecting help in Congress from the "impotent" former Senate Majority Leader, Manchester was quoted as writing, was "like expecting an erection from a paramedic. It couldn't work. The creature had no member."

Epstein detected, moreover, a MacBird-like theme in Lancer—"the notion that Johnson, the successor, was somehow responsible for the death of his predecessor." He cited Manchester's textual fixation on a "shattering fact" about the assassination—that a "Texas murder had made a Texan President." Kennedy aide Kenneth O'Donnell exclaimed in the Lancer draft: "They did it. I always



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Associated Press

## Epstein vs. Manchester: Traces of 'MacBird!' in the wastebasket

knew they'd do it. You couldn't expect anything else from them." And to this Manchester himself parenthetically added: "He didn't specify who they were. It was unnecessary. They were Texans, Johnsonians."

Lancer's myth-making was completed, Epstein wrote, when Manchester depicted Lyndon Johnson as coming "alive again" after the assassination—suddenly "a full-fledged hypomaniac at the height of his vitality . . . An octopus clutching bunches of black bananas."

Several Kennedy friends who read this first draft objected to its tone and inferences. So, says Epstein, did Manchester's own editor at Harper & Row, Evan Thomas. According to Epstein, Thomas wrote Kennedy representatives that he "was deeply disturbed by some of this. It's almost as though Manchester had become so deeply involved in this tragic narrative that he could not resist turning it into a magic fairy tale."

"Death of Lancer" was eventually overhauled into "The Death of a President." Manchester last week insisted he recognized many of the first draft's problems—"the book was overwritten, verbose"—and edited it heavily himself, but he denied that a power struggle between

Kennedy and Johnson was ever an underlying theme. "He [Epstein] put passages together out of context and evolved an extraordinary theory," said Manchester. "This is a flank attack," he added, hinting that Epstein was put up to his critique by Manchester's opponents in the Book Battle.

Was a first draft fair critical game in any case? Epstein was not saying how he got the original manuscript, but he explained his mission: "I wanted to ask if the original book . . . was a work of sound history . . . I tried to see if the original book was an attack on Johnson. It was . . . My main question was, 'Was the censoring of Manchester's book the censoring of history?' It was not. The book is not sound history."

His brief period of peace now shattered, Bill Manchester himself disagreed vehemently. Epstein's article, he bristled, was like "digging in a reporter's wastebasket."

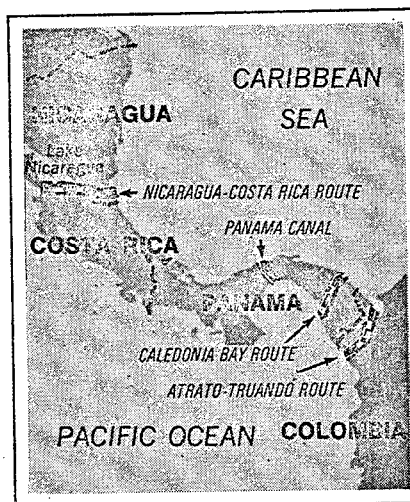
## TREATIES:

### Speaking Softly

In the wake of bloody anti-American rioting in Panama in 1964, President Johnson loudly promised to rewrite the Panama Canal treaty, which has outraged Panamanian patriots since it was imposed on their country in 1903. Mr. Johnson was as good as his word. After nearly three years of secret negotiations, the U.S. agreed to surrender one of the last vestiges of "big stick" diplomacy—its sovereignty over the Canal Zone.

The sovereignty agreement was the key U.S. concession in a three-part package covering not only the existing Canal but also possible construction of a more economical and less vulnerable sea-level artery. Under the treaty terms, Washington sources said, the 10-mile-wide Canal Zone would be replaced by a smaller canal area, which would be jointly administered by the U.S. and Panama. And to sweeten the deal, the U.S. would boost Panama's annual Canal income from \$1.9 million to about \$14 million.

Predictably, as details of the officially secret Canal accords leaked out last



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Next ditch: Options for a new canal