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If British reviews of "The Death of a President" have a common theme, it is "too much." Literary overkill . . . A great doorstep . . . A deluge of trivial detail ("Who cares if Manchester's middle name is Raymond?"). Even Cyril Connolly, who rather admires the book (Sunday Times), leads off by reprimanding American reporters for their "agglutinated" masses of fact.

The New Statesman (Nicholas Tomalin) quite out-Muggeridges Muggeridge: A bad book, vulgar, tasteless, pawing over people's suffering and stupidity with a servant's hall reverence for presidential power. People have turned this "arbitrary tragic event" into a "cheap wearisome bore."

The London Times finds the book "fair and judicious . . . Mr. Manchester is no sycophant." But the Texas tour sounds like the progress of a Tudor monarch. "A regrettable book" (Rebecca West, Sunday Telegraph). "It tells one shocking story after another, either as if they were funny or could be taken for granted." And it shows disrespect for the President (the new President). Still, Manchester wrote in "all innocence."

And then there is Malcolm Muggeridge (Observer), who sees the whole Kennedy saga as a "telly-spectacular": camera-eyes, journalists, "Action!" with the assassination the last tragic sequence, "expertly," if tediously, recounted by Mr. Manchester. "Has any episode in human history, apart from the Crucifixion, been so lavishly described?"

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