



RANDOM HOUSE

BERTELSMANN

March 11, 2003

Mr. Norman Mailer
627 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
BY FED EX and FAX 508-487-2136

Dear Norman,

Enclosed are sample pages for the proposed interior design. Please let me know what you think as soon as possible.

All best,

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Norman Mailer

WHY ARE WE AT WAR?

Subtitle tk



**RANDOM HOUSE TRADE PAPERBACKS
NEW YORK**

PART ONE

part title tk?

stand, as if I had no one. It was very strange. I started walking downtown--it was a bright, almost hot day in New York. I was supposed to have lunch with a friend at 11th Street and I was walking down Third Avenue to meet him at the restaurant. When I reached 9th Street, I looked out the bags, walking cloud in the sky above Manhattan week of me. The sun of the sky was blue and blue. I didn't know what to see. And then, looking down Third Avenue, as far as I could see, I suddenly noticed a sea of people, a flood of people. Like a slow wave walking north up the avenue. Many of them were men in white shirts. They were the office workers from Wall Street fleeing the disaster. The great mass of people rose at thousands, was walking up the street like a sea of people, and walking at 11th Street and then walking to see across the Tribeca Bridge to go over out of the island. And I thought, "This is the Church's Second Coming!" Because they were in white, and they looked

1

DOTSON RADER: I was at home in my apartment on East 85th Street in Manhattan when the first of the Twin Towers was hit by one of the planes. But at the time I didn't know it had happened. Later that morning I tried to make a phone call and my phone was dead. So I got dressed and went outside. I live four blocks from Gracie Mansion, the official residence of the mayor. None of the pay phones on the street worked. People were wandering oddly about, sort of

dazed, as if kind of lost. It was very strange. I started walking downtown—it was a bright, almost hot day in New York. I was supposed to have lunch with a friend at 57th Street and I was walking down Third Avenue to meet him at the restaurant. When I reached 64th Street, I noticed this huge, bubbling cloud in the sky above Manhattan south of me. The rest of the sky was blue and clear. I didn't know what it was. And then looking down Third Avenue, six or seven blocks away, as far as I could see, I suddenly noticed a vast throng of people, a flood of humanity, like a slow wave rolling north up the avenue. Many of them were men in white shirts. They were the office workers from Wall Street fleeing the disaster. This quiet mass of people, tens of thousands, was walking up the island like a funeral procession and turning at 57th Street and then moving as one towards the 59th Street Bridge to cross over out of the island. And I thought, "Jesus! Is this Christ's Second Coming?" Because they were in white, and they looked

stunned, and they were speaking in whispers like kids in church, I thought it was the Rapture, and Jesus was calling his saints home, and I'm being left behind. That was my initial feeling.

NORMAN MAILER: Wouldn't that be it? Jesus had come and everybody has gone to meet him by crossing the bridge from Manhattan to Queens. That does capture my pessimism concerning cosmic matters. [laughter]

DOTSON RADER: Okay. Where were you on September 11? How did you learn about the terrorist attacks, and what was your initial reaction?

NORMAN MAILER: I was in my house up here in Provincetown. I remember a phone call telling me to turn on the TV. While I was watching I called my youngest daughter, Maggie. I have an apartment in Brooklyn Heights, and she was staying there with a friend. You can see lower Manhattan and the Twin Towers from that apartment. Our windows look across the East River. So, Maggie had witnessed the first attack and was terribly affected by it. Then while on the

What in God's name was happening? It is one thing to hear a mighty explosion. It is another to recognize some time after the event that one has been deafened by it. The US was going through an identity crisis. Questions about our nature as a country were being asked that most good American men and women had never posed to themselves before. Questions such as: Why are we so hated? How could anyone resent us that much? We do no evil. We believe in goodness and freedom. Who are we, then?

Are we not what we think we are? More pressing—who are "they?" What does it all mean?

Simple questions. Blank as white and empty pages. We were going through an identity crisis and that is an incomparable experience. The ego has been disrupted. It has been preempted. Most of us look to command an ego that will keep us reasonably efficient while carrying out our personal projects. We see ourselves as husbands or wives, as brave or prudent, reliable or decent or—certain egos may depend on the right to excuse themselves—as flighty, or in search of friendship which, once found, will take care of all else.

In that sense, it hardly matters what kind of firm notion the ego attaches to itself. That, from the need of the ego, is less important than the ongoing expectation that the notion will rest reasonably stable. Upon that depends our identity, that firm seat which offers the psyche an everyday working notion of who we are (good-looking or good-looking enough—whatever serves.)

An identity crisis builds slowly, or it can land like

a thunderclap, but the effect is unmistakable. One can no longer offer a firm declaration of who one is. The seat upon which the ego depends has been slipped out from under. The psyche is in a sprawl. The simplest questions become difficult to answer.

A mass identity crisis for all of America descended upon us after 9/11, and our response was wholly comprehensible. We were plunged into a fever of patriotism. If our long-term comfortable and complacent sense that America was just the greatest country ever, had been brought into doubt, the instinctive reflex was to reaffirm ourselves. We had to overcome the identity crisis—hell, overpower it, wave a flag.

We had had a faith. The ship of the United States was impregnable and had been on a great course. We were steering ourselves into a great future. All of a sudden, not to be able to feel like that was equal to seeing oneself as a traitor to the grand design. So, we gathered around George W. Bush. That he had not been elected by a majority even became a species of new strength for him. The tran-

sient, still-forming, fresh national identity could not for a moment contemplate the fact that maybe Bush should not even be in the White House. Why? Because now the country had to be saved. A horror had come upon us—there were people on earth so eager to destroy us that they were ready to immolate themselves. That went right to the Biblical root. Samson had pulled down the pillars of the Temple. Now, there were all these Muslim Samsons. A ripple went through the country, a determining wind. In its wake, flags rippled everywhere. Nearly everyone in America was waving a flag.

For a few of us, this great indiscriminate wave of patriotism was not a joy to behold. "Patriotism," after all, "is the last refuge of a scoundrel." So said H.L. Mencken, or was it Samuel Johnson? One could argue over the source, but not the sentiment.

as many organs as it can. So, too, the greater number of people that the terrorists can wipe out, the happier they're going to be. Before you feel too righteous and outraged, however, let me ask: Did Harry Truman shiver in his bed at the thought that a hundred thousand people had been killed in Hiroshima and another hundred thousand in Nagasaki two days later, or, was he proud that he had won the war?

And, one could add, had won it by extraordinary means, never employed before. The explosion of the first atom bomb had an immensely greater effect upon human identity, world-wide human identity, than 9/11, yes, an order of magnitude more. We've never recovered from the knowledge that our earthly universe is chained to a bomb larger than human measure. So many of the roots of human history were pulled out by that bomb, and we have been paying the price ever since.

ADDRESS TO THE COMMONWEALTH CLUB

It is probably true that at the beginning of the present push of the administration to go to war, the connections between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden were minimal. Each, on the face of it, had to distrust the other. From Saddam's point of view, bin Laden was the most troublesome kind of man, a religious zealot, that is to say a loose cannon, a warrior who could not be controlled. To bin Laden, Saddam was an irreligious brute, an unbalanced fool whose boldest ventures invariably crashed.

The two were in competition as well. Each would look to control the future of the Muslim world—bin Laden, conceivably, for the greater glory of Allah, and Saddam for the earthly delight of vastly augmenting his power. In the old days, in the nineteenth century, when the British had their empire, the Raj would have had the skill to set those two upon each other. It was the old rule of many a Victorian crazy house: Let the madmen duke it out, then jump the one or two who are left.

Today, however, these aims are different. Security is considered insecure unless the martial results are absolute. So the first American reaction to September 11 was to plan to destroy bin Laden and al-Qaeda. When the campaign in Afghanistan failed, however, to capture the leading protagonist, even proved unable, indeed, to conclude whether he was alive or dead, the game had to shift. Our White House decided the real pea was under another shell. Not al-Qaeda, but Iraq.

Political leaders and statesmen are serious men even when they appear to be fools, and it is rare to

find them acting without some deeper reason they can offer to themselves. It is those covert motives in the Bush administration upon which I would like to speculate here. I will attempt to understand what the President and his inner cohort see as the logic of their present venture.

Let me begin with Colin Powell's presentation before the UN on February 5. Up to a point, it was well detailed and looked to prove that Saddam Hussein (to no one's dramatic surprise) was violating every rule of the inspectors that he could get away with. Saddam, after all, had a keen nose for the vagaries of history. He understood that the longer one could delay powerful statesmen, the more they might weary of the soul-deadening boredom of dealing with a consummate liar who was artfully free of all the bonds of obligation and cooperation. It is no small gift to be an absolute liar. If you never tell the truth, you are virtually as safe as an honest man who never utters an untruth. When informed that you

paucity of Arab spies in the Muslim world, cannot afford to do without Sharon's services.

These are all good reasons Bush can find to go to war. As for oil, allow Ralph Nader a few statistics:

The United States currently consumes 19.5 million barrels a day, or 26% of daily global oil consumption . . . The US [has to import] 9.8 million barrels a day, or more than half the oil we consume . . .

The surest way for the US to sustain its overwhelming dependence upon oil is to control the sixty-seven percent of the world's proven oil reserves that lie below the sands of the Persian Gulf. Iraq alone has proven reserves of 112.5 billion barrels, or 11% of the world's remaining supply . . . Only Saudi Arabia has more.

I would add that once America occupies Iraq, it will also gain a choke-hold on Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Near East. One can also propose that we

wish to go into Iraq for the water. To quote a piece by Stephen C. Pelletiere in The New York Times of January 31:

There was much discussion over the construction of a so-called Peace Pipeline that would bring the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates south to the parched Gulf states and by extension, Israel. No progress has been made on this, largely because of Iraqi intransigence. With Iraq in American hands, of course, all that could change.

So, yes, oil is a part of the motive, even if that can never be admitted. And water could prove a powerful tool to pacify a great many heated furies of the desert. The underlying motive, however, still remains George W. Bush's underlying dream: Empire!

"What word but 'empire' describes the awesome thing that America is becoming?" wrote Michael

America, early flag conservatives, who felt that an extraordinary opportunity was now present. America could now take over the world. The Defense Department drafted a document which, to quote Jay Bookman once more,

envisioned the United States as "a colossus astride the world, imposing its will and keeping world peace through military and economic power. When leaked in its final draft form, however, the proposal drew so much criticism that it was hastily withdrawn and repudiated by the first President Bush . . .

The defense secretary in 1992 was Richard Cheney; the document was drafted by [Paul] Wolfowitz, who at the time was defense undersecretary for policy.

Now he is deputy defense secretary under Rumsfeld.

Afterward, from 1992 to 2000, this dream of world domination was not picked up by the Clinton

administration, and that may help to account for the intense, even virulent hatred that so many on the right felt during those eight years. If it weren't for Clinton, America could be ruling the world.

Obviously that document, "Project for a New American Century," projected prematurely in 1992, had now, after September 11, become the policy of the Bush administration. The flag conservatives were triumphant. They could seek to take over the world. Iraq could be only the first step. Beyond, but very much on the historical horizon, are not only Iran, Syria, Pakistan, and North Korea, but China.

Of course, not every last country had to be subjugated. Some needed only to be dominated or brought into partnership. There could be firm and mutual understanding. To speak of China as existing in a symbiotic relationship with us is too exceptional a remark to make without some projection into possible reasons and causes. It is not inconceivable that some of the brighter neocons do see some fearful possibilities in our technological development. Iraq and the Near East can hardly be the end.

APPENDIX

PREFACE

There are bits and pieces left over from both interviews which have enough interest (at least in my own slanted opinion) to be reprinted, but they are not directly germane to the argument. Still, one would hope these paragraphs are worthy of being looked at. They sit here in the Appendix to be perused or ignored.

Since I did not wish to interrupt the Common-

wealth Club text with footnotes, it will be sufficient to note at the head of each item in the Appendix a suggestion as to where the piece might have been tucked into the formal address.

DREAD

This war, if it proliferates over the next decade, could prove worse in one respect than any conflict we have yet experienced. It is that we will never know just what we are fighting for. It is not enough to say we are against terrorism. Of course we are. In America, who is not? But terrorism compared to more conventional kinds of war is formless, and it is hard to feel righteous when in combat with a void for then the action smacks of rage and relative impotence—a frightful combination that deprives warrior and citizen alike of any sense of virtue. Be it said, the sense of national virtue is crucial to waging a war.

THIS WAR—A LARGE AND UNANCHORED UNEASINESS

We violate Christianity with every breath we take. Equally do the Muslims violate Islam. We are speaking of a war then between two essentially unbalanced and inauthentic theologies. It may yet prove to be an immense war. A vast conflict of powers is at the core, and the motives of both sides do not bear close examination. It is natural, then, to feel a large unanchored uneasiness. We may not get through this century. We could come apart—piece by piece, disaster after disaster, small and large, long before the final conflagration.

AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE: The conflict between communism and capitalism seems so much more sensible and manageable in comparison.

NORMAN MAILER: Looking back, it was kind of logical. Capitalism and communism had clear and opposed objectives but neither was ready to destroy the world. Certainly, the more that conflict ebbed into its end days, the less danger was present that the big bang would come.

AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE: You have cast the fight as Allah versus moolah—Islam versus money. If ours is indeed a post Christian society in which materialism is the highest good, and it takes a faith to fight a faith, are they not better suited to combat us?

NORMAN MAILER: Are they better suited? No, I don't think so. It does seem to me, on the face of it, that if we did nothing in terms of attacking them, that might delay such a war for 50 years. The next argument would be, well, can we afford to delay? We can win it now and we might lose it in 50 years. But my notion is that this war is so unbalanced in so many ways, so much power on one side, so much true hatred on the other, so much technology for us, so much potential terrorism on the other, that the damages cannot be estimated. It is bad to enter a war that offers no clear avenue to conclusion. It is not that complicated to be an effective terrorist after all. Pick up the phone, make a call, and disrupt traffic for half a day. The real question is how pervasive

can terrorism get, not whether you can wipe it out. There will always be someone left to act as a terrorist. If we try to become an empire, the real question will soon be whether we are able to live with terrorism at the level that the Israelis, let us say, are living with it now.

FLAG CONSERVATIVES

Back when the Soviet Union fell, flag conservatives felt this was their opportunity to take over the world. They felt they were the only people who knew how to run the world. So their lust was fierce. They were furious when Clinton got in. That was one reason he was so hated. He was frustrating the world takeover. That seemed so open, so possible to their point of view back in 1992. How that contributed to hatred of Clinton! This attitude, I think, deepened and festered through the eight years of Clinton's administration. Moreover, they loathed the ongoing increase in sexual liberties. White House principals may not talk to one another in pri-

PREFACE

the reader
As you will see by turning the page, this book begins with a full disquisition by *an account*
my old friend Dotson Rader on his experiences during the morning and *afternoon* of 9/11.
One year later, we got
We were together to do an interview for the London Sunday Times Magazine
about the reverberations of *that* the event upon American life *still* a year later, and I remember the
stimulation, the kick-start, if you will, that was provided by Dotson's eloquence on the
subject. Before it was over, I talked a great deal that day and much of it is reprinted here,
as well as a number of remarks I have added to what was said then and *has been* thought about *a good deal*
since. *Yes, how much it has been thought about*

9/11 is one of those events that will never fade out of our history for it was not
only a cataclysmic disaster but a symbol, gargantuan and mysterious, of we know not
what, an obsession to *that* which we will return through decades to come..

Indeed, this book which *looks* will look to give *America* some fresh notion of why we are *is*
in a state of war with *Iraq*, would have no existence without the fall of the Twin Towers,
and so it seemed appropriate to begin with Dotson Rader's description of what must have
been the most surrealistic morning in the archives of New York's history.

why preface draft 1 3/10/03

4

(46)

PREFACE
A NOTE ~~ON~~ THE END NOTE

The title of this publication was decided upon before we knew whether the US would be at war by the time this appeared in print, or, whether, for that matter, the war might already be over.

(must) (that the choice of title occurred)
I can only say this was a chance I felt (no hesitation in taking) War is a state of mind as well as a series of martial events, and in that ~~first~~ sense we have certainly been at war with Iraq now for many a month, and probably will continue to be at war after the immediate hostilities end.

I suppose that the point I am trying to make is stated exactly in the title. Why? Why are we at war? Why are we living ^{with} in a state of mind that ^{knows} tells us we are at war? and there is nothing we can do about it. Not now, not at this juncture.

Enough. Since this all began with 9/11, let us conclude with a thought or two on that. The end note will look to return us to the mystery and judgment of 9/11.

**RANDOM HOUSE****BERTELSMANN**

March 12, 2003

Mr. Norman Mailer
627 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
FAX 508-487-2136

Dear Norman,

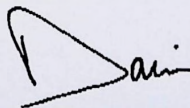
Attached is the copyedited preface.

My thoughts on the Appendix:

- Appendix p. 3: Insert colon or comma into the chaplet title? This War: A Large and Unanchored Uneasiness or This War, A Large and Unanchored Uneasiness
- I suggest you move Part 1, chaplet 7 to the appendix, between Immigration and Israel. Then you will need a title for it – something like "American Plastic".
- My suggested order is:
 - Preface
 - This War: A Large and Unanchored Uneasiness
 - Dread
 - A Note on Presidents (the 2 chaplets on Presidents to become one)
 - Immigration
 - Part 1, Chaplet 7 – Part title TK
 - Israel
 - A Note Preceding the End Note
 - End Note
- Finally, on Appendix p. 17, 7 lines from the top: instead of logo, do you mean slogan?

I'll be here until about 12:15, then at a lunch across town, and back in the afternoon.

All best,

David

572-4966

**RANDOM HOUSE****BERTELSMANN**

March 12, 2003

Mr. Norman Mailer
627 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
FAX 508-487-2136

Dear Norman,

Below is the Note on the Type.

ABOUT THE TYPE

The text of this book was set in Janson, a typeface designed in about 1690 by Nicholas Kis, a Hungarian living in Amsterdam, and for many years mistakenly attributed to the Dutch printer Anton Janson. In 1919 the matrices became the property of the Stempel Foundry in Frankfurt. It is an old-style book face of excellent clarity and sharpness. Janson serifs are concave and splayed; the contrast between thick and thin strokes is marked.

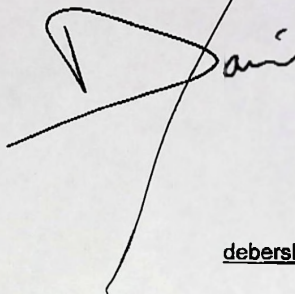
All best,

David Ebershoff
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Rader's few comments, the reader will close the book with Mailer's argument lodged, uninterrupted, in the mind.

Many thanks for your fast work.

All best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David', is written over a large, diagonal, handwritten 'X' that spans across the middle of the page.

David Ebershoff
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