

The Big Empty →

~~Hodge Podge interviews~~

Norman Mailer
John Buffalo Mailer

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GENERATIONS

pp 1-14
Section 2
Generations

①

JBM: ~~Question one:~~ Although most call my generation Gen Y I believe a

better label might be the "Bridge Generation." I think of us, the ones that

^(from) graduated high school in the mid-nineties, as the last generation to go begin discovering what the world was all about,

~~through it before the technological revolution~~ When I graduated ~~from~~ high school, we had something to the effect of four computers in the library that

had access to the internet. There was this tool called the internet, on which

you could go and do research, if you liked, but you certainly didn't have to

and in fact it was recommended that we use the library stacks instead. Four

years later when I graduated from college you had to register for your

classes on line. There was no alternative way to do it. Every one had e-mail

and a cell phone and the world was suddenly faster and smaller and filled

^{near-} with infinite possibilities and in turn a great deal more confusing. After my

generation ^{is gone} no one will remember what life was like before the technological

revolution. We are the last ones old enough to remember and my hope is that

we also speak the language of the following generations enough to teach

No one will have a ^{clear} ~~better~~ sense of ^{because of it} them, what we've gained and what we've lost for our technology ~~as we~~

And that scares me. But it also makes me ~~feel a huge~~ ^{feel a} responsibility to preserve what I

As we move towards a digital record of history, as more and more tangible ^(of) forms independent media disappear—magazines and newspapers become web sites

stop printing ~~and go completely to the~~

only—the chances of history being re-written ^{by the powers that be} to serve the interests of the

elite become more likely. What advice would you give my generation in

trying to hold on to the positive elements of the twentieth century and

passing them on to the next?

generation ~~being~~ ^{beginning} to come up now.

NM: ~~I'm not sure I know how to answer your question.~~ As you spoke I

was thinking about the vast gap between your generation and mine. It isn't

as if, after all, I'm ^{just} ~~old~~ for your father. I'm more than fifty years older than

you, which makes me ^{ancient} ~~old~~ enough to be your grand-father in a sense. ~~But it~~ ^{Go, it}

isn't ^{as if} ~~there~~ there are two generations between us, I feel as if there are four or ^{rather}

five. Not because we're ~~not~~ ^{far apart} close personally, but when we ~~talk~~ ^{talk} ideologically

when we try to address certain questions, I feel the world is taking turns in ^{our conversation takes}

conversations I ~~can't~~ ^{I don't} comprehend. As you know, I don't even know how to ^(routinely)

turn a ^{PC} computer on. And I make it a point of honor not to use ^{one} a computer

of course ^{computer} at the same time, I have all the advantages of a computer because I

have an excellent assistant, Judith McNally, and she's been working with me

for many years ^{and} ~~she~~ ^{you} loves computers and I get the ^{agreeable} positive aspects without

having to suffer with the toil. ^{diving into the mail} ^{newsworthy but not} ^{newsworthy} (To me there is a kind of ^{curious} toil to the

computer, ^{working with the} ^{computer} to the internet to the ^{can't} ~~can't~~ it's when one looks at a screen all

day is to take one down below the spiritual ^{hang away} ^{or those} ~~penetration~~ ^{day one is below the level of those who had to use typewriters all their lives.}

There is something ^{do} ~~it's~~ hard to explain how agreeable it is to write in

^{one's writing in} longhand. You feel that all of your body ^{and some of your spirit} has come down to your finger tips.

And this writing, this cursive, is coming out of you and there's something

Even if you have bad handwriting as I do—there's something ^{nevertheless} elegant about it all.

^{after you've written in longhand} the process. Then of course, to see it typed up by someone else—if you are

fortunate enough as I am to be able to afford that sort of work all the time—

^{I can read it} means that ~~it is~~ ^{write} as if someone else has written it. And if I ^{therefore} could proceed on a ^{can}

double basis, ~~I could~~ ^{original} move forward as the original ~~to use a big word~~

^{yet now I am also} ~~creator of the text and at the same time I am the editor.~~ ^{at once when I look at the typescript.} All these matters

~~I can employ the~~ ^{both styles of writing} ~~distances~~ ^{you could say} ~~whereas when people work~~ ^(a clearing of throat & pause) ~~working self thereby~~ ^{then are}

directly with the computer, what happens is they're typing as they go, they're

~~even and also~~ ^{two essentially} ~~editing as they go they are conflating the process.~~ ^{of processes} ~~And to me, again, it is~~ ^{that call upon different sk.} ~~processes~~ ^{part of the (new aesthetic?) toll of your generation.}

~~that, to me, is part of the psychic toll~~ ^{one small} ~~visited on your generation.~~

JBM: I agree completely. Personally I write longhand first and

^{Most of the time} ~~Unfortunately I don't have anybody to type it up for me, I type it myself~~ ^{the luxury of someone to type it up} ~~for me~~ ^{ster}

but the good thing about that is that I get the immediate editing. ~~But whenever I~~
However, when I compose on the computer, it's ^{something is lost in the lack of} the tangible quality of the pen to the paper.

^{which it} affects the art. ~~affects the words that come out as opposed to typing in the~~
^(too) key. There's something ^{it} sterile about that.

lose when you do not type yourself. I become not only (to use your big word) the Creator as the Editor but the Craftsman who turns the idea into the tangible reality. ~~And~~ I think there's something gained in that.

~~But~~ and these are some of the ^{nuances} ~~some of the~~ differences that I'm

^{referring to} ~~talking about~~ When I speak to ^{myself} generations younger than I, they don't

^{they don't} understand ~~that~~ They don't understand the feeling one has ^{of} holding the

newspaper in ^{your} their hands in the morning as opposed to getting ^{your} their

information online. ~~When you go to sports are made~~
~~as to them the watching a ball game~~
~~or worse yet playing the actual game~~

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NM: Let me ratchet ^{this} up several notches at once. ~~Because to answer your~~
~~to give advice to your generation, my God!~~
question in any real way I would have to explain to you that I'm in a deeper

~~intellectual~~
state of pessimism now than I've ever been ~~and~~ ^{clinical} this is not depression as

~~The irony is that~~
such, my pessimism is not at all bad I'm probably happier and more

~~(believe)~~
composed than I've ever ~~been in my~~ life. But that's because I can look back

on my life ~~and~~ ^{And I can still} feel that I've laid certain things to rest, and I'm ready to do

~~For example,~~
others. I still want to ~~work~~ ^{do (keep on working)} It's so important. ~~Elia Kazan once said at The~~

~~Elia Kazan said,~~
Actor's Studio, "Work is a blessing." And I tell you I could just as well put

that remark up, typed ~~up~~ in big letters, ~~and put it~~ over my desk because if all

else fails, the work is there ~~and the work does give you~~ ^{the} an inner sense of

~~also beside~~ purpose. But that's ~~beneath~~ ^{perspective contains} the point. My larger perspective is that I have a

a ~~great~~ fear which is that we may not reach the end of this century ~~and my~~

~~reason for this is as follows:~~ ^{By the measure} We've advanced enormously ~~not three or~~
~~at least~~ ^{history it's as if we've progressed}
in my life ~~not three or~~ ^{four generations}
four generations ~~It's as if we've advanced eight or ten generations in terms~~

but ~~at~~ eight, even ten, as if we've
of the movement of history. We've squeezed two ^(to) three centuries into

fifty years. And ~~as~~ ^{the world is} a result we're ^{not} vastly more powerful and ~~at the same time~~

more and more ^{sensually} deprived. There's more noise ^{more} and ^{more} din and interruption in the

I feel as if we're losing the
world. The act of going on at great lengths without the interruption of TV—

we'll get to that later—is what they lose is human sense equipment; the

Everyone seems to suffer from
ability to ~~read, the ability to~~ concentrate. They forget. We're engaged in a
a sense that they are getting dim in their
memories. Yet, ^{more and more} we are engaged in
a huge race where man looks to conquer nature on man's own terms which is

undeniably ^{and} sort of a large general remark, but it's as if under ^{back of} everything a great war is going
on ^{harder} ~~tougher~~ even than we realize ^{we're seeing in effect}
between the liberals and conservatives. The conservative say, "You guys are

trying to wreck ^{existence} the ^{vain, too} joint by becoming too Godless." And the liberals are

replying ^{obsession that} saying, "Your absorption in God as judgmental is forcing all humanity into

very rigid patterns that ^{won't} ~~don't~~ work ^{is any longer}. And the worst of it
is that they ^{are} both right. It's a war

What you've got is a war of extremes between the left and the right in
between extremes

at all on their own
(in America right now and they're both right. Not on their own. Each has

beliefs and suppositions, but
nothing to say on their own. They're each right in the criticism of each
other. ^{so this creates a certain gloominess in me, I have to tell you, My}
^{that} feeling is we'll be lucky to get through this century. ^{Over} In the last century ^{with our} we
^{became} fear of nuclear war, that ^{was a prime concern,}
~~used to worry about it. We used to worry that we would never reach the~~
~~twentieth century.~~ ^{Would we even reach the}
twenty first century. Well, we were wrong. We did reach it. And the cold
war ended ^{in a most} with an astonishing fashion in a certain sense. ^(given) After all the
^(that existed) it ^(how peacefully it ended) paranoia on both sides, was remarkable. And that may happen again. It may
~~well happen again and life may go on. But we're in greater danger than we~~
~~ever were before because we have more power that we can ever come near~~
and we just don't begin to know ^{what to do with it} ~~or~~ how to deal with it.

The war in Iraq, parenthetically, is a perfect example of how when it comes
to looking to build societies, ^{we Americans are} we're all thumbs. The more powerful we ^(cultures)
^{we reveal of the nature of them} become, ^{ignorance} the more ignorant we become. ^{As I look upon the speed of}
technology and the speed of communication, and the speed of the internet as

the most direct
~~being one of the direct~~ factors in all of this. Technology is now too easy ^(my bag) ~~ing~~ if you
to acquire. In my ancient times ~~(how hard)~~ ^(my bag) you wanted to learn something you had to get
~~certain sense~~ it used to be ~~if~~ you

(on Saturday)
up in the morning, go out to the library, pass through a kindly or cruel

librarian—especially if you were a kid—and end up having to ^{search} look for the

information you wanted. And in the course ^(of it) you came into contact with
You could feel a little of the people who had read it before you
~~(reading something)~~
books which had their own resonance. And so you were living in a cultural

^{felt} medium that ~~was~~ resonant. And now it's ^(electronic) all in a clutter.

JBM: Absolutely. And now ^{when} you go to the library stacks and you

~~research whatever you are researching~~ you have a tangible sense of what you
^{researching} are going through. ^{How old the book is, How much it has been read, Was this topic of interest to other people}
^(all) It's there on the page. ^(information) But when it comes too easily

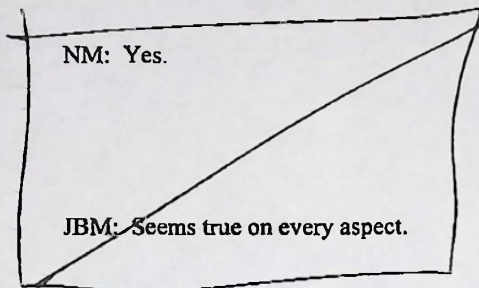
through the internet it's hard to keep it all in your mind. There's ^{endless} ~~infinite~~ ^{amounts of text}
~~of information~~ ^(we can) out there to access and as a result we don't know anything. And ^{for sure}

What can we trust?

NM: Well, it isn't as if we don't know anything. But it's very likely that we ^{that} ~~I would say that the internet gives us~~ ^{that we're} ~~have a false sense of how much we know.~~ ^{knowledge we own,} Because it comes too easily.

Yes, can you trust your ^(historical)
 IBM: And what is the source? It's one thing to have a book published that ^{is historical.} It's another thing to write an historical document on the ^{its authentic} internet. How do you trust that ^{that it's even remotely representative of the truth} when anyone can put it up there? ^{only} They don't ~~even need someone else's~~ ~~have to convince someone it's~~ ~~good enough to be published.~~
 NM: Yes. You know in boxing terms, ^{it's as if} when you had some kid who was tough but was always fighting push-overs, ^(complete) he never had anyone he could ^{to} battle ^{or tougher} who was bigger and better than his little sister. He could end up with ^{Objective.} an idea of power that wouldn't be at all ^(sounds like "changed")

JBM: You have a great line about technology: "More power, and less pleasure."



NM: ~~The only thing I'd say is~~ Take out "great line." From now on no compliments. You're my son. ^{and} ~~(both laugh)~~ You can't go around giving me compliments.

JBM: All right, I'll never compliment you again.

NM: Not, never again. Just for the purposes of this book.

JBM: There is a time of yours. More power less pleasure. And what I find

of the people I know, they do

When I talk to most people these days the ones I'm in business with my

feel that. Technology does mean more power less pleasure,

friends, they all feel that. And yet there is a sense that there is nothing we

to slow the rate at which power is destroying our pleasures. ^{our} can do about it. Because we can do things five times as fast, we have to do

Instead, we do five times more

In a capitalistic system someone else is going to do that than we used to.

What is it? How do we overcome that? Is it possible?

essentially an office that follows you everywhere,

If you're not working as hard as you possibly can, you've got to have a Black Berry and a cell phone.

The promise of Technology was that because we could do things five times as fast, we would have more time to play with our children and enjoy life.

NM: Well, I'm out of answers. The strength of capitalism is its weakness.

Capitalism is greed. What makes it strong is that there is creativity mixed in

with it. No question about it. It tends to be that capitalism achieves more

creativity than socialism. However it does it at a terrible price, and that is

that greed is paramount. Greed becomes respected. It's the beginning of all

sorts of corruptions and horrors. And I don't know how you fight it. I've

Clarification: If you are not working as hard as you possibly can, you've got to have a Black Berry and a cell phone. That follows you everywhere.

and that is the commencement of

many new

Because

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seen America dumbed down by capitalism. I've seen ^{our country} it become more and

more powerful economically over these last thirty or forty years, but I've

^{Less civilized} also seen it become less cultivated. And this is ⁱⁿ where democracy,

^{this is} ~~presumably the greatest democracy of all democracies, the greatest of~~

^{all experiments} ~~of the experiments~~ in democracy. ^{is always an} Democracy ^{And} as the ultimate experiment. Instead

of improving we're getting worse. You could point to our President.

^{Compare him to Roosevelt Eisenhower Kennedy}
^{even Johnson, what a fall in stature in capability}
Presidents are not of the same stature that they were fifty years ago. And the

^{in mental grace}

~~same is true of the~~ ^{moves} ~~same is true in the way we speak~~ ^{of these days} I have

^{this belongs but I believe}
made the remark ^{which} that one of the things that kept England together was

Shakespeare. Through all of ^{their} its ups and downs the English have ^(kept all) great pride

in their language. We don't. We ^{are} ~~we've been~~ violating our language. Part of

that is hard sell. Part of that is ^{due to itself to its endless} capitalism. Part of that is advertising. Part of

^{the dumbing down comes from the constant}
~~that is the interruption of advertising in our lives.~~ ^{implies}

^{Interruption of our attention on television.}
Part of the dumbing down is our
excessive show of patriotism.

JBM: We have a great pride in our flag.

NM: Well, ^{exhibit} ~~all~~ fascist countries always ~~had~~ great pride in their flag. Flags make me uneasy.

JBM: We ~~get into that later~~ ^{On to the politics} Question Two: ^{What}

~~What~~ would happen if we pulled out of Iraq tomorrow?

NM: That's ^{that one up later} a huge question. Can we pick it up later?

JBM: ^{I'd prefer you to answer it now} Absolutely. Question Three: What happens in Iraq after the Bush administration is out of office?

Why Don't we just Get out of Iraq?

NM: That's sort of the same question. Going back to the first one. I've

Well, to
thought about it a great deal. To begin with, you don't pull out tomorrow.

The close argument comes down to)

There will be large arguments about how fast you pull out. Three months?

, and this ^{is} for there is no pull out,

Six months? Nine months? What would happen if we did pull out no one

and nobody in power can give an answer. That is

is nobody could say. In other words there is a very good possibility that it could all

is that there's a

break down completely into civil war. You have the Kurds as one enclave,

you have the Sunnis and the Shiites, who are more used to war. And you have the

You also have the highly conservative

Iran who would move into Iraq with the Shiites. It's quite likely that you

we might have to go back again.

It would end up with three countries. It's also quite likely that you would have

hordes of Shiites and Sunnis who

various people who are not Iraqis, who are not Kurds. And that (can't get)

but now want to get out. Probably not a

Kurdistan probably. Not all but many would. So you'd have them moving

out. You'd have the Shiites certainly moving out of the Sunni area and the

Sunnis moving out of the Shiite area. So you begin to have some of the

problems that occurred in Yugoslavia. The problem could be enormous.

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compromises all ^{the} people who live in it. And so ^{under it} doesn't make for nicer

people, it makes for uglier ^{ones} people. In Russia, after the Soviet Union broke

down as an example of that, ^{one} corruption and ^{and greed} greediness and self-centeredness

came ^{roaring} roaring to the fore. So you don't just "inject" democracy. But we decided

we could. And now we're paying a huge price. We're in a quagmire. ^{the}

And you can lose your ^{back} back, ^{one} getting out of

Given all this, given the possibility of disaster, we don't pull out. However,

~~a~~ ~~figure~~, So, we don't ~~pull out~~ ourselves, ^{leaving Iraq in a} not a disaster.

there is also the possibility that it wouldn't ~~be a disaster~~. What would

^{void} The ~~idea~~ that the Iraqis might feel on

happen is that all the terror these people feel that all these things could

could ~~replicate~~ the beginning of a real sense

happen might bring a certain sense of national unity. Or the recognition that

of the need for national unity, the impulse

next to have ^{at the head} at the head, ^{they have} they have

they are going to have a federated republic with three separate areas. It has

There could even be a wounded ~~state~~

got to be respected. The key thing is to give them some chance to grow, with

for growth. A number of European countries, at present, closed ~~out~~ might be going to invest,

if international cooperation. Because you could have any number of countries

Of course their profits which the Iraqis would resent less than ^{this new} our ~~profits~~ ^{that would}

then beginning to make deals with these countries. You have to enable them

them, would, of course, ~~en~~ because our

to find ways to re-build their country and feel that it is their country. Now to

economic interests go, to leave them

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^{considerable moral}
 do that would take enormous personal courage on Bush's part. Which ^{is} the
~~one virtue~~ ^{is} first of the many virtues
 he is lacking,
 doesn't have. Doesn't even begin to have. ~~It doesn't occur to him~~
~~I could not~~

The greatest example of giving up ^{on} the peace
 a bad war is probably General
 De Gaulle made ^{De Gaulle's}
^{De Gaulle}

De Gaulle making peace with Algeria. It took someone of his stature to
^{he had a lot of} ~~he had a lot of~~ ^{been the leading figure of}
~~after symbolizing a~~ ^{France}
 actually represent French liberty during the second world war ^{go, he} to be able to
 was able to make peace. But ^{obtain} ^{leisurely}
 do it. What does Bush represent? The ability to have an easy life. The air
 service in the national guard and not be
 head in the national guard reserves not being called to the front. He can't do
 So he has to maintain the iron chain of
~~solid, tough~~ ^{solid} ~~gold~~ ^{gold} ~~chain~~ ^{chain}
 He has to pretend to be a big tough soldier. He can't say, "I made a
 He can't afford to say, "There's been a ~~mistake~~ ^{mistake}
^{of} ^{mistake} ^{that is} ^{we've}
 mistake and we went into the wrong place." And that's why we're not going

~~to move~~ ^{to move} ~~then~~ ^{then} ~~we~~ ^{we} ~~are~~ ^{are} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~going~~ ^{going}
 to pull out. If we do pull out ~~there is a~~ ^{there is a} ~~50,000 people in that country~~
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~~is going to break down in chaos or it could develop. It could develop~~

through areas in cooperation with the UN, With foreign countries, with
 loans, with various structures with the inner need of the country to have
 some peace and security to have the Americans gone. Given all that, I would

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JBM: Do you think it's possible that some ^{sort} kind of under the table

agreement was made to the effect of "You don't attack American soil while I'm
^{won't look for you as hard as we could."}
~~am~~ in office, and we're ~~not going to be pitched out.~~"

I think it's a dead end

*Delete
Bar*

NM: I don't think so. It's rank speculation. We're far enough out on a limb

without going ⁽ⁱⁿ⁾ for rank speculation. Rank speculation ^(consists of) is "Here I am, way out

on a limb. Let me see if I can jump from here to that tree that is pretty far

^{and get out on the limb}
 away ~~(can't get)~~ that is over there." That's rank speculation. Let's avoid it.

Future Problems

PP 24-~~25~~
 Biggest Problems
 Facing America

JBM: Fair enough. Question Four: Where do you see America in ten

years?

NM: I can't answer. That's beyond my powers.

JBM: Then what would ^(you) say is our biggest concern over the next ten years?

IBM: What's the biggest?

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NM: I don't know.

NM: We have so many. We have China, ^{ready to take} hit by bit, taking over huge chunks

~~over sizable portions~~

of our economy. We have North Korea who will ~~either~~ become reasonable in the nuclear sense

or won't become reasonable. Those are two huge concerns, ~~that would~~

~~offer us an advantage if we get~~

~~incidentally (???) One word:~~ the advantage of getting out of Iraq. Yes, we

might lose some respect in the world but that ^{would} ~~will~~. But that will be for a matter of

~~no more than a~~ couple of years. ^{as it was with Viet Nam} ~~as it~~ It wasn't like the rest of the world ^{then said} will be like, Oh, America

is a soft target. Not at all. What it ~~was~~ is, we took a blow and a lot of

^{in the world were} people are happy that we took a blow and look embarrassed. We can look

embarrassed again. The point is ^{we would then} that we have all these soldiers available for

~~a~~ much more serious purpose. Right now if the Chinese decided to take on

^{in no good situation militarily} Taiwan, we're pretty profoundly embarrassed. In fact even Pat Buchanan, ^{to quote him} ~~again~~ we're ~~really~~ committed for much too little. suggested in his column, let Taiwan go. It is not worth fighting over. And

he's right. But what I'm getting at is that we're in a situation now militarily

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IBM: Let's go back to the problems facing America over the next ten years.

Question four:

N/A: Besides China, besides North Korea, besides the ^{Iraqi} quagmire in Iraq,

~~we have~~ ^{we have} ~~out-sourcing to face.~~

~~There are other problems facing us.~~ Outsourcing is a symptom of the fact,

~~we are~~ ^{many of} ~~that we're~~ no longer making the quality products that we used to ^{manufacture} ~~make.~~

~~I think the~~ ^{of the} ~~The~~ most serious single problem, I think, facing the American

economy, ^{an emphasis on} ~~is~~ that we've moved from production to marketing. In other

^{over} ~~words,~~ advertising has taken over. ^{For more than a century,} ~~it used to be that the essential heroes~~

^{stalwarts} ~~of~~ the American economy ^{over a century} used to be the engineers, the ^{workers in}

^{heavy-duty factories,} ~~the~~

~~producers,~~ the inventors, the capitalists who were willing to make their

^{that} ~~fine new products fine and extraordinary; they were pushing forward the advance of~~

~~technology if you will, of heavy-duty technology.~~ The people who worked

in the steel mills ~~in my mind~~ ^{to my mind (man and woman)} were more heroic than the people who now
^{a touch more}

work with computer nets. For obvious reasons; they were taking chances

with their bodies ~~every day they went to work~~ shoveling that red-hot puddle

before them ~~from one area to another~~; from ^a furnace to a pot ⁱⁿ to another,

~~what have you. Now what there is~~ we don't want to do that ^{heavy} ~~work~~

~~Now we~~ ^{have done the work} as our
 anymore. We outsource it. And we look upon marketing for that skill. And

~~We said this over and over again~~

JBM: ~~Sorry to interrupt~~, but I don't think it's that we don't want to do it, it's

^{such work}
 that ~~it's~~ being outsourced because labor is cheaper in third world countries.

NM: Alright, alright. Of course the labor is cheaper but also there is a great

relief in it. I don't think we have to disagree here. I'll accept your answer if

you accept mine.

JBM: I agree with that. But looking back, what is gained for them for

~~having gone into Iraq at this point?~~

NM: You're not looking at what would have happened had they not gone

into Iraq. In other words, the country was in bad shape and they ~~didn't see~~ ^{couldn't locate}

~~any way~~ ^{the poor} to clear it up, ~~they had no real ideas on how to clear up a country.~~ ^{not when they were ground camp}

~~determined to give all that money upstate~~ ^{to the rich}

~~They were giving all the money to the rich. How is that going to pay over~~

~~four years if they didn't have something bigger than giving money to the~~

~~rich?~~

^{they send}
~~they send~~ ^{the poor}

JBM: So, instead you send a boy to die in Iraq?

NM: Well, ^{of} don't you think that is one of the themes ^{which} in history that repeats

itself over and over and over?

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JBM: My question is, why ^{is} not that chain ever broken? Because it never works.

NM: ~~Well,~~ That's the question. Why is the chain never broken? [?] And ^{the} reason may be ~~simply~~ that there are too many people ^{who spend their lives} working to keep the chain intact. ~~chain in tact.~~ And they work at it reverently. They do their best to keep the So they succeed in keeping the majority stupid majority of the populace, even if it's just fifty-two percent of the populace, ^{asset, the political genre} stupid. ~~Because~~ They know that stupidity is their greatest weapon. They work, systematically, to enhance it. And they take pride in ^{it} ~~it~~ ^{generating} more and more stupidity even as, to repeat, advertising men ^{are proud} take pride in being able to sell a piece of crap, because ^{market} ~~anyone can~~ ^{palming off news leaze,} sell a Rolls Royce. But try selling a piece of crap. ^{And} on a 519 scale. "Bring 'em on!"

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PP 47-50
~~State of Journalism~~
~~in America Today.~~

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JOURNALISM

JBM: What is your assessment on the state of journalism today? Here in

America.

NM: I don't feel authoritative on it. I certainly read the New York Times today much more than I ever did when I was younger. It's a much better paper today. And I'm using that as a state of journalism, The New York Times. I certainly don't know a lot about the state of journalism all over the country. The feeling I have most generally is that the writing is getting

better over the years, and that's a good sign. That's the best thing to be said

about journalism is that the writers are getting better; the editors are getting

better. They are more tolerant. The owners are probably even getting a little

better in that they are less restrictive than they used to be. Fifty years ago or

a hundred years ago, the owners were hideous. You had a right to satisfy

them, the editors were equally as hideous because they were working for the

That forced the average reporter/
 owners, and the writers were forced to get into a species of private life,
 They'd write their story—~~phony~~ ^{they'd} ~~and then~~ ^{because they had their own life and they'd go out and get drunk, but they'd}
~~write phony stories. They'd write their phony stories and then go out and get~~
~~drunk together and tell the real story to each other.~~

JBM: You don't think that's happening now?

NM: Much less. It's still happening, but not the way it was happening.

~~Now what's happening is before a story even gets told, there's~~ ^{Sometimes the real} ^(at least its) ^{for the first}
~~approximation~~ ^{After all,} ^{can be no more than}
~~approximation of history. As the first approximation to be god-awful. But~~
~~these first passes, today~~ ^{let's keep it straight} ^{journalism is always the first}
~~its first approximations today are usually better than they were fifty years ago.~~

JBM: What about for the White House Correspondents?

JBM: I guess it is analogous to a ^{why} ~~mid-level~~ ^(mid-level) CIA agent who has

evidence that there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq might not

push that forward. *He needs to advance his career and pushing information that is not wanted higher up is no way to do that.*

NM: ~~Yes~~ *Analogous is the word. But,*
let me add: Journalism has
built-in vices → p 31-97

JBM: ~~The problem is people take~~ *largely because of the white house press corp,*
~~People don't trust journalists any more.~~ *as much,*

And I think there are a number of factors. For instance, ^{with} the internet, ~~people~~ *lots of people*
^{their} ~~put up all these blogs.~~ *6/95*
 People put up all their opinion pieces and do their

~~quote-unquote journalism~~ ^(the) *and there is the traditional standard legitimate*
~~but you don't even know the angle they are coming from~~

^(s-y) ~~journalists, who work for the Times, but they're being questioned as well, it's~~

~~whose legitimacy been brought under question~~
~~by the administration, as well.~~

It's ~~as if this administration has succeeded in taking legitimacy away from them,~~ *(all of)*
~~but~~ *manages to*
~~and still pushing their story through.~~

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The Big Empty interviewsGENERATIONS

JBM: Although most call my generation GenY, I believe a better label might be the "Bridge Generation." I think of us, the ones who graduated from high school in the mid-nineties, as the last generation to begin discovering what the world was all about before we got hit by the technological revolution and the age of terror. ^{In the year} ~~When~~ ^{from} I graduated high school, we had ^{only} ~~something to the effect of~~ four computers in the library which had access to the internet. There was this tool called the internet, on which you could go and do research, if you liked, but you certainly didn't have to, and, in fact, it was recommended that we use the library stacks

instead. Four years later when I graduated from college, you had to register for your classes on line. There was no alternative to that. Get on line or get no classes. Everyone had e-mail and a cell phone and the world was suddenly faster and smaller and filled with near-infinite possibilities and in turn a great deal more confusing. After my generation is gone, no one will remember what the world was like before the technological revolution. No one will have a clear sense of what we've gained and lost because of it. And that scares me. But it also makes me feel the responsibility to preserve what I can of the old world, and pass that on to the generation beginning to come up now.

As we move toward a digital record of history, as more and more tangible forms of independent media disappear—magazines and newspapers stop printing and go completely to the web—the chances of history being

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re-written by ~~The~~^{me} Powers That Be becomes more likely. What advice would you give my generation in trying to hold on to the positive elements of the twentieth century and passing them on to the next?

NM: As you spoke, I was thinking of the vast gap between your generation and mine. It isn't as if, after all, I'm just your father—I'm more than fifty years older than you which makes me ancient enough to be your grandfather. So, it isn't as if there are two generations between us—rather, I feel as if there are four or five. Not because we're far apart personally, but when we try to address certain questions, our conversation takes turns I don't comprehend routinely. As you know, I can't even turn ^{on} a PC, ~~on~~.

Indeed, I make it a point of honor not to use one. At the same time, I have all the advantages of computers because I have an excellent assistant, Judith McNally, and she's been working with me for many years and she loves

them. So I get the agreeable aspects without having to dive into the moil.

To me there is a kind of neuresthenia built into working with the computer.

To look at a screen all day is to take one down below the spiritual

punishment of those who had to bang away at typewriters all their lives. It's

hard to explain how agreeable it is to do one's writing in longhand. You

feel that all of your body and some of your spirit has come down to your

fingertips. Even if you have bad handwriting, as I do, there's something

nevertheless nonetheless elegant about it ~~all~~. Then, ~~of course~~, after you've written in

longhand, to see it typed up by someone else ~~if~~ if you are fortunate enough,

as I am to afford that sort of work ~~all the time~~ *am able to* means that I ~~can read it as if~~

my stuff as if

~~someone else wrote it. And therefore, I can proceed on a double basis. I~~

I can move forward as the originator of the text, yet now I am also its editor. I

thereby can employ ~~both sides of my working self thereby~~. Whereas when *authors* people

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dealing
are ~~working~~ directly with the computer, they are typing *and editing* as they go, ~~even~~

~~editing,~~ and so conflating two essentially opposed processes that call upon

different skills. That, to me, is one small part of the psychic toll visited on

your generation.

JBM: I agree. Personally, I write longhand fast. Unfortunately, most of the

time, I don't have the luxury of someone to type it up for me. *So* I type it

myself, but *that does give me an* ~~the good thing about that is I get an~~ immediate editing which

I think
~~You~~ lose when you do not type it up yourself. I become not only (to use

your big word) the Creator and the Editor but the Craftsman who turns the

idea into tangible reality. I think there's something gained in that.

However, when I compose on the computer, something is lost *in* the lack of

pen to the paper. *affects* ~~It effects~~ the words that come out. There's something ~~too~~

sterile about it. These are some of the differences I'm referring to. When I

speaking to younger generations, they don't understand the feeling of holding your newspaper in your hands in the morning as opposed to getting your information online.

NM: Let me ratchet this up several notches. To answer your question in any real way—to give advice to your generation, my God!—I would have to

I am now
explain that I'm in a deeper state of intellectual pessimism *now* than I have ever been. *Mind you, this* This is not clinical depression as such. The irony is that I'm

personally,
probably happier and more composed than ever before. But that's because I

~~can look back on my life. I feel I've laid certain things to rest. And I~~

~~still ready to do others. For example, I do (want to keep on working. *still*)~~ *That's*

when you are at my age.
important. Once, at Actors' Studio, Elia Kazan said, "Work is a blessing." I

could put that remark up, typed in big letters, over my desk because if all

else fails, the work is there, the inner sense of purpose. But that's also

beside the point. My larger perspective contains a fear that we may not

reach the end of this century. We've advanced enormously. By the measure

of previous history, it's as if ~~we've progressed in my life~~ ^{during my life-span} not through four

generations, but eight, even ten, as if we've squeezed two to three centuries

~~into fifty years~~ ^{the last}. As a result, the world is vastly more powerful and yet more

~~and more~~ sensually deprived. ~~There's~~ ^{is} more noise, more din, more

interruption ^{is} in the world. I feel as if we're losing the ability to concentrate.

Everyone seems to suffer from a sense that they are getting dim in their

memories. Yet, more and more, we ^{in the West} are engaged in a huge race where man

looks to conquer nature on ^{can} ~~man's own~~ ^{that} terms. Which is undeniably a large

and general remark, but it's as if back of everything, a great war is going on

here, larger even than we realize, between the liberals and the conservatives.

The ~~conservat~~ ^{conservatives} are saying, in effect, "You guys are trying to wreck

existence by becoming too vain, too Godless." And liberals are replying,

"Your obsession that God's judgmental ^{looks to force} is forcing all of humanity into ~~very~~

rigid patterns that won't work any longer." And ^{they} the worst of it is that ~~they~~ are

both right. It's a war between extremes in America now, and ^{they are} they're both

right. Not ^{in relation to} at all on their own beliefs and suppositions, but ^{they are} right in the ~~air~~

criticism of each other. This serves to ^{argue} create ~~my~~ gloominess. At its worst, I

have to tell you, my feeling is that ^{we will} we'll be lucky to get ^{to the year 2100,} through this century.

Over the last century, ^(young) with our fear of nuclear war, that became a prime

worry. Would we even reach the ^{next} twenty-first century? Well, we were

wrong. We did. The Cold War ended in a most astonishing fashion. After

all, given the paranoia that existed on both sides, it was remarkable how

peacefully it ended. That could happen again. Life may well go on. But we

are in greater danger than we ever were before because we have more

power, and we just don't begin to know how to deal with it. The war in Iraq, parenthetically, is a perfect example. When it comes to looking to build societies, we Americans are all thumbs. The more powerful we become, the more ignorance we reveal of the nature of other cultures. I look upon the speed of technology, the speed of communication, and the speed of the internet as being the most dire factors in ~~all~~ ^{all of} this. Because knowledge is now too easy to acquire. In my ancient time (my boyhood), if you wanted to learn something, you had to get up on a Saturday morning, go to the library, pass through a kindly or cruel librarian—especially if you were a kid—and end up having to ^{have had to} ~~search for the~~ information you wanted. ^{It} ~~And in~~ the course of it, you came into contact with books which had their own ^{redolence.} ~~resonance.~~ You were living in a cultural medium that ^{was} ~~felt~~ resonant. Now, it's ~~all~~ electronic.

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JBM: Absolutely. When you go to the library stacks, you have a tangible

sense of what you're researching. How old the book is. How much it has

been read. Was this topic of interest to other people? It's all there in your

hands. But when information comes too easily through the internet, it's hard

to keep it all in your mind. There's ^{may be} endless amounts of text ^{too capacious to} we can access

and as a result, we don't know ^(when we've come to a conclusion) anything for sure. ^{What can we trust?}

NM: I would say ~~that~~ the internet gives a false sense of how much

knowledge we ^{need and can do without.} own. Because it comes too easily.

JBM: You have a great line about technology: "More power, less

pleasure."

NM: Take out "great line." From now on, no compliments. You are my

son. You can't go around giving me compliments.

JBM: All right, I'll never compliment you again.

NM: Not, never again. Just for the purposes of this book.

JBM: When I talk to most of the people I know, they do feel ^{that} ~~that~~.

~~Technology does mean more power, less pleasure. It seems there is nothing~~

~~we can do to slow the rate at which our power is destroying our pleasure~~

The promise of technology was ^{that} ~~because~~ we could do things five times as

^{and so} fast, ~~we~~ would have more time to play with our children and enjoy life.

Instead, we do five times more than we used to. If you're not working as

hard as you possibly can, someone else is going to. You've got to have a

Blackberry and a cell phone, essentially an office that follows you

everywhere. How do we overcome this?

NM: Well, I'm out of answers. The strength of capitalism does have its

weakness embedded within it. For capitalism is greed. What makes it

strong is that there is creativity mixed in with the greed. No question about

that. It seems to be demonstrated that capitalism achieves more creativity than socialism. However, it does it at a foreseeable price, which is that greed becomes paramount. Greed becomes respected and that is the commencement of many new corruptions and horrors. I don't know how you fight it. Because I've seen America dumbed down by capitalism. I've seen our country become more and more powerful economically over these last thirty or forty years, but I've also seen it become less cultivated. Less civilized. And ^{ours} ~~this is democracy~~ is presumably the greatest of all the experiments in democracy. ^{Few} Democracy is always an experiment. ^{But} ~~And~~ instead of improving, we're getting worse. You could point to our President. Compare him to Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Kennedy, even Johnson. What a fall in stature, in capability, in mental grace. The same is true of the way we speak these days. I have made the remark before, but I

treasures to keep
believe that one of the ~~things~~ which kept England together was

Shakespeare. Through all ~~of their~~ *the* ups and downs, ~~the~~ *of their history* English kept a great

pride in their language. We don't. We are violating our language. Part of ~~it~~

~~that~~ is hard sell, *and our* Part of that is due to capitalism itself ~~to its~~ endless

advertising. Part of the dumbing down comes from the constant

interruptions of our attention on television. Part of the dumbing down is our

excessive show of patriotism.

JBM: We do have great pride in our flag.

NM: Fascist countries always exhibit great pride in their flag. Flags make

me uneasy.

Future Problems

JBM: ~~Fair enough. Question four.~~ Where do you see America in ten years?

NM: I can't answer. ^{This could be} ~~That's~~ beyond my powers.

JBM: ^{well,} ~~That~~ what would you say is our biggest concern over the next ten years?

NM: We have so many.

JBM: What's the ^{largest?} ~~biggest.~~

NM: I don't know. We have China ready to take over sizable portions of

our economy. We have North Korea ^{ready to} ~~who will~~ become reasonable in the nuclear sense, or ^{not ready.} ~~won't~~. Those are two huge concerns. Right now, if the

Chinese decided to take ~~on~~ Taiwan, we're in no good situation. Militarily,

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too like the 1980s
 we're committed ~~for~~ much too little. Besides China, besides North Korea,

besides the Iraqi quagmire, we have outsourcing to face. We are no longer

manufacturing / fine work
~~making~~ many of the ~~quality~~ products that we used to ~~manufacture~~ *learn out.* I think

the most serious single problem facing the American economy is that we've

moved from an emphasis on *good* production over to *slick* marketing. Advertising has

taken over. For more than a century, the essential stalwarts of the American

economy used to be the engineers, the workers in heavy-duty factories, the

inventors, the capitalists who were willing to make *good* ~~fine~~ new products. The

people who worked in the steel mills were, to my mind, a touch more heroic

than the men and women who *now* ~~work~~ with computer nets. They were

taking chances with their bodies, shoveling red-hot puddle from a furnace to

a pot. Now, we out-source the dirty work. And we look upon marketing as

our sexiest ~~best~~ *commercial*
 our skill. Advertising has taken over from production. If you keep making

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poor stuff, but show you can sell it skillfully, your pride is that you can

purvey crap.

What Took Us into Iraq?

JBM: I know you've answered this in a number of ways, but it just can't be asked enough. Why are we in Iraq? Unlike most people I know who are extreme liberals, I don't believe that Bush and Company are a gaggle of fools, not by a long shot. They are the most calculating administration I've ~~ever~~ encountered in my life.

NM: I like that. ~~By far~~ the most calculating administration. Yes. Lots of know-how, and ^{honorable} no ethic.

JBM: Given their intelligence, how could this administration not have

anticipated the long haul of the war? Because by now, ^{they are} ~~we~~ even losing

^{the way they sell} ~~here in terms of how war and victory are sold~~ to us. Americans are ^{getting hip.} ~~starting~~

~~to get hip.~~ This war is developing into extraordinary political cost for the

administration. Why was it worth it to them? It can't just be the oil. Oil prices are up. How does this supposedly Christian administration justify these hordes of innocent people killed—

NM: Come on, man, save time. These administration honchos are ~~very~~

very intelligent with what they are intelligent at, but they're stupid as ~~stupid~~ *sludge*

where they are stupid. I will say this characterizes almost all political

regimes. Take Camelot. As open and bright and quick as the Kennedy

administration proved to be, look at how wrong they were on the Bay of

Pigs. Why? Because they didn't know a lot about Cuba when they came

into office so they listened to Allan Dulles and the CIA. It was a very

painful lesson but they learned that the CIA wasn't always right.

OK, all I'm getting at is the Bushies ~~came into office after 2000 with~~ *in the wake of the*

2000 election had
victory
large problems. The ~~election results~~ stank of scandal. The Supreme Court

reacted with unseemly predilection. The country's morale was poor. The

Catholic Church was in trouble—remember!—they were having ~~all~~ *fun* ³⁴

exposure with priests and little boys, ~~no snap problem, obviously.~~

corporations were ~~in trouble. They were even~~ in bad repute. So many of

their CEO's
the ~~corporation~~ heads were under investigation or on trial. The market was

in doldrums. There was out-sourcing and unemployment. *A host of* ~~A lot of~~

problems for which ~~war is always~~ *could be* a pro-tem solution. The novelist in me

would even warrant that the cynics among the Bush honchos loved the idea

of selling America on
~~of bringing democracy to Iraq. Think of the pleasure they could take in~~

~~their skill in marketing that poor practice [word cut off by margin] They~~

they may even have known they were
~~probably knew they were not going to bring democracy to Iraq. It didn't~~

not going to succeed on any real level
But then they had
~~matter. They had great faith in the stupidity of the American people. So,~~

They

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one way or another,
they assumed they could carry it off. With our mighty military, how could

they not find something they could paint as a positive?

JB: I was 24 years old at the time, a writer/actor in LA and I saw what

was going to happen if we went into Iraq. How could they not have seen it?

I refuse to believe that they didn't know this is what would happen.

NM: Listen, these are ^{men}~~guys~~ who have been successful all their lives.

They've gone through many crises. Their feeling is, "Yes, there's going to

be trouble. A lot ^{of} shit will hit the fan, a ^{a good deal} lot is probably going to go wrong.

^{we will}
But ~~we~~ handle it." Not Bush, but Rove, Cheney, Rumsfeld. Take a guy

like Cheney. His whole attitude is: "Can do. Will do." I would say their ^{house}

^{gives like this:}
feeling ~~way~~ "We'll take the shit that comes our way, but it will be a lot

better than ~~having a little action in Afghanistan and chasing bin Laden~~ ^a
~~over Afghanistan and Pakistan.~~

That won't do it. The Democrats will be too ready to carp ~~and criticize us~~

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about everything that's going wrong in America. So we'll have the war.

This

The country is so patriotic. 9/11 brought us back again to operating speed *and*

now we can

"

~~on that. We will just coast on that patriotism. If there are problems, we'll~~

~~find a way to float above it.~~ You have to understand the depth and breadth

of the cynical optimism these guys possess. They ~~can~~ *are able to* live with very bad

odors, *spiritual* stinks most of can't endure. ~~Another one of their strengths~~ *is in their*

a ability to

~~skill at avoiding bad conscience. Immoral is not even a good word for these~~ *is apply to*

guys. Amoral is ~~not a strong enough word.~~ *no better.* They ~~are~~ *have* a god-given or

diabolically-driven capacity to live with innate bad conscience. ~~And~~ *they really*

don't give a damn. "Hey," goes their credo, "I'm tough. So I can live with

this. Others couldn't, but I can take it. I will endure. And even if it don't

work, it ~~can~~ *will* work. Because we will always be able to find a slew of

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democracy is beginning to work in Iraq. All those neo-cons. They keep

saying that the Middle East is ready for democracy. Well, if they're right I

I think they are a bunch of ~~self-serving~~ ^{*Iraq-serving*} sons-of-bitches myself, but if they are

right, then we get the oil, and if they're wrong, we'll yet be able to blame

them." So, yes, John, to speak for myself again, I take them ~~most~~ seriously.

As they saw it in 2001, the country was in bad shape and they ~~couldn't~~ ^{*needed*}

a tool Big-Time
locate the tool ^{*especially when there were*} to clear it up, not when they were bound and determined to

~~send~~ ^{*send*} ~~the~~ ^{*the*} ~~money~~ ^{*money*} upstairs to the rich.

JB: So, instead, they send the poor to die in Iraq.

NM: Don't you think that is one of the themes of history which repeats

itself over and over?

JB: My question is, why is that chain not broken? Because it never

works.

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NM: That's the question. Why is the chain never broken? The reason may

be that there are too many ~~always~~ strong and skilled people who spend their lives working to keep the

chain intact. They ~~work~~ (labor) at it reverently. So they succeed in keeping the

majority stupid, even if it's just fifty-two percent of the in a democracy / voting / ~~populace~~. They

know that stupidity is their greatest asset, their political

~~margin~~ Mojo,

~~margin~~. They work, systematically, to enhance it. They take pride in

generating more and more stupidity even as, to repeat, advertising men ~~take~~

pride in selling After all, anyone ~~pride in selling~~ a piece of crap. Anyone can market a Rolls Royce. But try

palming off Hell, yeah! ~~new~~ sleaze on a big scale. ("Bring 'em on!")

The Cost of Kerry's Loss

JBM: In "Myth versus Hypothesis," you say that if Kerry had been elected, that might have proved disastrous for the Democrats. Since Kerry did not, during his presidential campaign, disavow the war, Democrats would now be paying for our situation in Iraq.

NM: Yes.

JBM: Now, eight months after the election, in light of Supreme Court Justices retiring on this President's watch, do you still feel that in the long run it's better for the Democrats that Kerry did not win?

NM: It may be that the price we'll pay with the Supreme Court will prove too large. But my strongest feeling is that if Kerry had won, he would have reaped all the bad cess of the war in Iraq. All the blame. The Republicans

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would have been claiming, "We had a winning situation until the Democrats came in." The shame, the ignominy, the humiliation of that venture in Iraq

would ~~have all~~ ^{Now, at} been laid on Kerry. ~~At least~~ Bush is beginning to pay for his

sins rather than passing them on to Iron-Jaw John. On the other hand, the

~~Democrats came up with a~~ ^{deserved to lose. They offered} dreadful presidential campaign.

JBM: Painful.

NM: Painful ~~and stupid and~~ slack and soft. They didn't bite the bullet.

They didn't come down on that war in Iraq; they went along with it. They ~~deserved to lose.~~

JBM: Dean was the only one who attacked the war flat-out and look what

happened to him. Although, I found out recently that when Dean gave his

famous "howl" and came off as a lunatic, in truth, the audience was

screaming at the top of their lungs. Dean was simply ~~with them in spirit and~~

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~~was~~ trying to yell over them, but the audience was not miked. So ~~TV over~~
~~the TV screen, only Dean was heard,~~
 watchers only heard Dean. Now, I'm wondering, how did they let that ~~his~~
 still sail to win him that he was
 on a standard network feed?
 happen? [Note: John it's called a network feed and it's standard]

~~"Nightline" (ABC) did a whole program on the "I Have a Scream" fiasco a~~

~~few days after it happened. Fox played and re-played the moment,~~

~~something like 3-4 times the number of replays the other networks used]~~

Was it just incompetence that his people let him come off as a fool? Or was
 it deliberate?

NM: Recognize that a candidate's staff is under enormous strain when

they're campaigning. There are eighty-five things you have to think about

and maybe your brain, which is getting more and more run down ~~all the~~

~~time,~~ ^{still} is keeping up with seventy-five of the eighty-five ^{details,} (Lo and behold,

disasters occur. You make terrible mistakes. I was an amateur when I ran

Thank you, Deanne,

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for mayor but I made a few really large errors, let me tell you. So I felt a certain sympathy for Dean. He'd been under this huge pressure for months and so were his people. Maybe even more so. The exhaustion of a political campaign can be analogous to trench warfare.

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Why Don't We Just Get Out of Iraq?

NM: Well, to begin with, you can't. The close argument comes down to

can you
how fast you ~~can~~ pull out. Three months? Six months? *A year?* ~~Nine months?~~

There is no schedule right now for a
What would happen, and this is why there is no pullout, and nobody in
pullout because there is nobody in power
to make such a choice
power can give an answer, is that there's too striking a possibility that Iraq

would break down completely into civil war. You also have the *real* ~~highly~~

forces
~~consecutive~~ possibility that Iran would then move into Iraq to join the *aid* Shi'ites.
Syria might help the Sunni's
even
~~Shi'ites~~ We might ~~then~~ have to go back again! *And if* Iraq could also end up as

And if Iraq divided into three new countries, you would then have hordes of Shi'ites and Sunnis
to deal with the

who have lived in Kurdistan for centuries *they may* but now want to get out. Not all,

is coming from
but a good many. You'd certainly have Shi'ites moving out of a Sunni area,

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they saw themselves, their
had been
they did it were obliged to make compromises with the state. Just as you or

I would have to do ^{the same} if we were living in a totalitarian environment. What ^{may} ~~is~~

be most
scary about totalitarianism is that it compromises all the people who live

under it. ~~And so~~, it doesn't make for nicer people, ^{but} it makes for uglier ones.

Russia, after the Soviet Union broke down, is one example of that.

corruption and greed came roaring to the fore. You don't just "inject"

democracy. You can't. But ~~we~~ ^{the administration} decided ^{or pretended to decide} we could. Now, we're paying a

the we are sprawling! No surprise if we
 huge price. We're in the quagmire. And you can lose your boots getting out
 don't know how to rescue our boots,
 of one. So we don't extricate ourselves.

Of course) However, (there is also the possibility that pulling out of Iraq would

not be a disaster. The void ~~that the Iraqis might feel on~~ our withdrawal

might see the same of the insurgents and even many an Iraqi into Iraqis, could expedite the beginning of a real sense of the need for national unity.

~~the impulse to have, at the least, a federated republic with three separate~~

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~~areas~~. There could even be ^{an economic} window for growth. ^{More than one} ~~A number of European~~

~~Countries~~ ^{The Iraqis} countries, at present closed out, might be gung-ho to invest. Of course, their ~~might~~ ^{might} resent their profits less than ~~any~~ ^{any} we could extract, ~~and~~ ^{and} needless to profits which the Iraqis would resent less than our occupation of them. ~~add, our putative economic interests~~ ^{would be directly embarrassed. Obviously,} would, of course, embarrass our economic interests. So, to leave now would

take considerable moral courage on Bush's part. Which is the first of the

~~many~~ ^{few} virtues he is lacking.

~~The greatest~~ ^{There is one} example of giving up on a bad war is ~~the peace General~~ ^{that was} DeGaulle made with Algeria. ~~It took someone~~ ^{But it did take a leader} of his stature. He had, after

~~all, been the leading figure of free France during the Second World War. So~~ ^{proponent} ~~German occupation.~~

~~In contrast,~~ ^{In contrast,} ~~he was able to make peace.~~ But what does Bush represent? ~~The~~ ^{the} ability to

obtain leisure service in the National Guard and not be called to the front.

~~Now he has to try to personify the wounded spine~~ ^{So he has to maintain the iron chin of a tough soldier when his own chin is} ~~real~~

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The one thing he can never say is "I fucked up."
~~plastic He can't afford to say, "This has been a mistake."~~ That is why we

are not going to pull out tomorrow.

Journalism

JBM: What is your assessment of the state of journalism today?

NM: The writing is getting better, ~~and that's~~ ^{it's} a good sign. The editors are getting better. The owners are probably even a little better. Fifty years ago,

they were hideous. A newspaperman had to ^{to follow his copy} write to satisfy them. The

editors were equally bad because they were working for the owners. That

forced the average reporter into a species of private life. They'd ^{like would} write their

his story—phony as hell and they knew it—then they'd go out and get drunk ^{he's} ~~out~~ with other reporters in the same kind and ~~and tell the real story to each other.~~ ^{they would each tell the real story they had had to by pass that day}

JBM: You don't think ^{liter} that's happening now?

NM: Less. Sometimes the real story even gets told, or, at least, its first

approximation. After all, journalism can be no more than the first

approximation of ^{an event} history, but at least ^{the} ~~these~~ first passes ^{today} are better today than

they were fifty years ago.

JBM: I guess it is analogous to why a mid-level CIA agent who has

evidence that there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq might not

push that forward.

NM: Analogous is the word, but let me add: Journalism ^{still} has built-in vices.

~~that are very hard to ignore~~ When people read a newspaper, they don't

want to be left with a question at the end of the story. They want answers.

They want to believe they ^{have been} given facts. So, in ^{journalists still} journalism, ~~as was~~

~~learned decades ago, centuries ago, you~~ ^{their} do your best to come out with an

^{episode} ~~story~~ that's hard and firm and full of fact and ^a conclusions, ² and because it

^{must} ~~almost always cannot~~ be accurate ^{since it had to be} because it was done in a hurry without

taking to everyone involved, the people who felt injured by the story come

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in next day to tell their end of the tale. If it's a big enough event, you soon

get a great many more facts. Precisely because there are no final facts. In

that sense, journalism, willy-nilly, has its rough and ready corncob mode of

penetrating to the truth. It goes: *Show in who knows*
~~Get something out there, and better stuff.~~

what will come out,
will come in

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