

FOURTH EDITION

The Aims of Argument

A TEXT AND READER

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Chapter 10

Casebook on 9/11/01 and After: Coping with Terrorism

PHOTO ESSAY 345

GETTING ORIENTED 349

SECTION 1: RECALLING THE ATTACK 351

Timothy Townsend, At Ground Zero: The First Hours 352

Ken Kesey, The Real War 355

Reshma Memon Yaqub, "You People Did This" 358

SECTION 2: GETTING INFORMED 361

General Information 362

Stephen Zunes, Ten Things to Know about the Middle East 363

Paul Wilkinson, Types of Terrorism 371

Impact on the United States 374

Matthew Cooper et al., A Clear and Present Danger 375

Steven Levy, Technology: A High-Tech Home Front 382

Understanding Terrorism 386

Jim Landers, The Roots of Conflict 387

Israel Through the Years 392

Jim Landers, Bin Laden Allies Want Islamic Unity 393

Havens for Terrorists 398

Gregg Jones, Cradle of a Holy War 400

Jerrold M. Post, Terrorist Psycho-Logic: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Psychological Forces 408

Conclusion: The Future of Terrorism 415

Paul Wilkinson, Analysis of Terrorist Weapons and the Liberal State Response 415

**SECTION 3: ASSESSING AND RESPONDING TO
INTERPRETATIONS AND ARGUMENTS 422**

Initial Readings of 9/11 423

From "Talk of the Town," *The New Yorker* 424

Hendrik Hertzberg 424

John Updike 426

Aharon Appelfeld 427

Susan Sontag 428

John D. French, *Beyond Words, without Words, and Finding Words:
Responding to the Catastrophe* 429

Arguments: Right and Left 433

John O'Sullivan, *Their Amerika: The Song of the "Counter-Tribalists"* 434

William Bennett, *America Was Attacked Because It Is Good* 438

Stanley Fish, *Condemnation without Absolutes* 440

Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback* 442

A Conflict of Cultures? 448

Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?* 449

Edward W. Said, *The Clash of Ignorance* 453

Conclusion: Two Philosophical Interpretations 459

Charles Krauthammer, *The Enemy Is Not Islam: It Is Nihilism* 460

James Atlas, *Among the Lost: Illusions of Immortality* 462

FOR FURTHER READING AND RESEARCH 465

4. Should the United States resort *regularly, as a standard policy* to “pre-emptive strikes” such as commando raids on terrorist cells suspected of plotting terrorist attacks? Israel, whose vulnerability is far greater than ours, has used such strikes often. Should we?
5. According to Wilkinson, what are the dangers in using the military for counterterrorism? Are any of the dangers evident in the deployment of our forces in Afghanistan?

For Further Research and Collaborative Writing

Divide the class into three groups corresponding to the sources of possible nonconventional attack: nuclear, biological, chemical. Have each group research the threat posed by each kind more deeply. The results should be presented orally or in writing to the class. Then, working together in whatever way seems best, put together a report about the nonconventional threat, recommending whatever course of action seems most promising to counter it within the limitations imposed by our open, democratic system. Consider posting your report to an appropriate Web site.

SECTION 3: ASSESSING AND RESPONDING TO INTERPRETATIONS AND ARGUMENTS

We have arranged the thirteen selections comprising this third and last part of our terrorism source book into four groupings:

Initial Readings of 9/11

Arguments: Right and Left

A Conflict of Cultures?

Conclusion: Two Philosophical Interpretations

A few comments about this section and its divisions should help orient you for reading.

In general, the selections range in time from those written soon after the event to those written a month or more later. The events of 9/11 were so shattering to most Americans that the initial struggle was simply to grasp it somehow, to work through the emotions of the moment toward a measure of intellectual control. That is, amid the shock and grief, we tried to *interpret* 9/11—to decide what it meant to us individually and to our country. For the most part, these first interpretations were only asserted, not argued, partly because the views were deeply personal, not intended primarily to convince or persuade, and partly because the spontaneous feeling of solidarity following the attack temporarily made argument seem inappropriate. The Initial Readings section offers five such interpretations, all from within two weeks after 9/11. Although much in these pieces is asserted without argument, almost everything asserted is arguable, as we shall see.

It was not long, of course, before interpretation of the event and its consequences became the familiar struggle between the politics of left and right, liberal and conservative. We can see politics in the initial, groping readings of the event, but the second phase was more consciously political and more inclined toward argument as divisions over how to interpret the attack began to crystallize. The selections in the second section, "Arguments, Right and Left," are four representative examples.

Implicit and explicit in these arguments is the question of how to understand the clash of cultures that seems to define current antagonisms, friends and foes. No one doubts that there are profound differences between what we call "the West" and what we call "the Muslim world." The question is whether these differences explain the current conflict. We have one essay that says they do, another that says they don't.

We conclude with two essays that are more philosophical than political, that some might see as "longer" or "deeper" views. Whether they really are is disputable, but as we return to "politics as usual" we surely need challenges to the comfortable ways of thinking we categorize as liberal and conservative, West and East. In quite different ways, these essays try to do that. If they lead us to think in ways that aren't so automatic and familiar, they will have served a useful purpose.

Initial Readings of 9/11

On September 24, 2001, two weeks after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, a now-famous issue of *The New Yorker* appeared, its cover a funereal black. Four of the five commentaries that follow come from this edition, two by social and political critics (Hertzberg and Sontag), two by creative writers (Updike and Appelfeld). To these we have added one more, by a professor of Latin American history at Duke University, John D. French. His contribution is the text of a paper delivered at a Duke University forum entitled "The New War on Terrorism: Initial Assessment." None of these responses can be said to represent "the American response," if we can speak at all of a general public outlook; all certainly cut deeper than the "facile punditry" French singles out for criticism. As you'll discover in reading the other selections, Sontag's is the best known and has drawn the most fire, for reasons you'll have no trouble supplying when you read it.

Taken together, the readings raise many fundamental issues, among them perhaps the most important of all: What metaphors are we using to talk about 9/11? There's no neutral, objective way to discuss it; we have to use analogies of some kind. Implicit in these analogies are whole points of view, including the actions we should take in response to the attack. In other words, it's not too much to say that the future is in the language we use, so we had better ponder our metaphors carefully.

From "The Talk of The Town"

The New Yorker

Hendrik Hertzberg*

The catastrophe that turned the foot of Manhattan into the mouth of Hell on the morning of September 11, 2001, unfolded in four paroxysms. At a little before nine, a smoldering scar on the face of the north tower of the World Trade Center (an awful accident, like the collision of a B-25 bomber with the Empire State Building on July 28, 1945?); eighteen minutes later, the orange and gray blossoming of the second explosion, in the south tower; finally, at a minute before ten and then at not quite ten-thirty, the sickening slide of the two towers, collapsing one after the other. For those in the immediate vicinity, the horror was of course immediate and unmistakable; it occurred in what we have learned to call real time, and in real space. For those farther away—whether a few dozen blocks or halfway around the world—who were made witnesses by the long lens of television, the events were seen as through a glass, brightly. Their reality was visible but not palpable. It took hours to begin to comprehend their magnitude; it is taking days for the defensive numbness they induced to wear off; it will take months—or years—to measure their impact and meaning.

New York is a city where, however much strangers meet and mix on the streets and in the subways, circles of friends are usually demarcated by work and family. The missing and presumed dead—their number is in the thousands—come primarily from the finance, international trade, and government service workers in the doomed buildings, and from the ranks of firefighters and police officers drawn there by duty and courage. The umbra of personal grief already encompasses scores or even hundreds of thousands of people; a week or two from now, when the word has spread from friend to colleague to relative to acquaintance, the penumbra will cover millions. The city has never suffered a more shocking calamity from any act of God or man.

The calamity, of course, goes well beyond the damage to our city and to its similarly bereaved rival and brother Washington. It is national; it is international; it is civilizational. In the decade since the end of the Cold War, the human race has become, with increasing rapidity, a single organism. Every kind of barrier to the free and rapid movement of goods, information, and people has been lowered. The organism relies increasingly on a kind of trust—the unsentimental expectation that people, individually and collectively, will behave more or less in their rational self-interest. (Even the anti-globalizers of the West mostly embrace the underlying premises of the new

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dispensation; their demand is for global democratic institutions to mitigate the cruelties of the global market.) The terrorists made use of that trust. They rode the flow of the world's aerial circulatory system like lethal viruses.

With growing ferocity, officials from the President on down have described the bloody deeds as acts of war. But, unless a foreign government turns out to have directed the operation (or, at least, to have known and approved its scope in detail and in advance), that is a category mistake. The metaphor of war—and it is more metaphor than description—ascribes to the perpetrators a dignity they do not merit, a status they cannot claim, and a strength they do not possess. Worse, it points toward a set of responses that could prove futile or counterproductive. Though the death and destruction these acts caused were on the scale of war, the acts themselves were acts of terrorism, albeit on a wholly unprecedented level. From 1983 until last week, according to the *Times*, ten outrages had each claimed the lives of more than a hundred people. The worst—the destruction of an Air-India 747 in 1985—killed three hundred and twenty-nine people; the Oklahoma City bombing, which killed a hundred and sixty-eight, was the seventh worst. Last week's carnage surpassed that of any of these by an order of magnitude. It was also the largest violent taking of life on American soil on any day since the Civil War, including December 7, 1941. And in New York and Washington, unlike at Pearl Harbor, the killed and maimed were overwhelmingly civilians.

The tactics of the terrorists were as brilliant as they were depraved. The nature of those tactics and their success—and there is no use denying that what they did was, on its own terms, successful—points up the weakness of the war metaphor. Authorities estimated last week that “as many as” fifty people may have been involved. The terrorists brought with them nothing but knives and the ability to fly a jumbo jet already in the air. How do you take “massive military action” against the infrastructure of a stateless, compartmentalized “army” of fifty, or ten times fifty, whose weapons are rental cars, credit cards, and airline tickets?

The scale of the damage notwithstanding, a more useful metaphor than war is crime. The terrorists of September 11th are outlaws within a global polity. They may enjoy the corrupt protection of a state (and corruption, like crime, can be ideological or spiritual as well as pecuniary in motive). But they do not constitute or control a state and do not even appear to aspire to control one. Their status and numbers are such that the task of dealing with them should be viewed as a police matter, of the most urgent kind. As with all criminal fugitives, the essential job is to find out who and where they are. The goal of foreign and military policy must be to induce recalcitrant governments to cooperate, a goal whose attainment may or may not entail the use of force but cannot usefully entail making general war on the peoples such governments rule and in some cases (that of Afghanistan, for example) oppress. Just four months ago, at a time when the whole world was aware both of the general intentions of the terrorist Osama bin Laden and of the fact that the Afghan government was harboring him, the United

States gave the Taliban a forty-three-million-dollar grant for banning poppy cultivation. The United States understands that on September 11th the line between the permissible and the impermissible shifted. The Taliban must be made to understand that, too.

As for America's friends, they have rallied around us with alacrity. On Wednesday, the NATO allies, for the first time ever, invoked the mutual-defense clause of the alliance's founding treaty, formally declaring that "an armed attack" against one—and what happened on September 11th, whether you call it terrorism or war, was certainly an armed attack—constitutes an attack against all. This gesture of solidarity puts to shame the contempt the Bush Administration has consistently shown for international treaties and instruments, including those in areas relevant to the fight against terrorism, such as small-arms control, criminal justice, and nuclear proliferation. By now, it ought to be clear to even the most committed ideologues of the Bush Administration that the unilateralist approach it was pursuing as of last Tuesday is in urgent need of reevaluation. The world will be policed collectively or it will not be policed at all.

John Updike

Suddenly summoned to witness something great and horrendous, we keep fighting not to reduce it to our own smallness. From the viewpoint of a tenth-floor apartment in Brooklyn Heights, where I happened to be visiting some kin, the destruction of the World Trade Center twin towers had the false intimacy of television, on a day of perfect reception. A four-year-old girl and her babysitter called from the library, and pointed out through the window the smoking top of the north tower, not a mile away. It seemed, at that first glance, more curious than horrendous: smoke speckled with bits of paper curled into the cloudless sky, and strange inky rivulets ran down the giant structure's vertically corrugated surface. The W.T.C. had formed a pale background to our Brooklyn view of lower Manhattan, not beloved, like the stony, spired midtown thirties skyscrapers it had displaced as the city's tallest, but, with its pre-postmodern combination of unignorable immensity and architectural reticence, in some lights beautiful. As we watched the second tower burst into ballooning flame (an intervening building had hidden the approach of the second airplane), there persisted the notion that, as on television, this was not quite real; it could be fixed; the technocracy the towers symbolized would find a way to put out the fire and reverse the damage.

And then, within an hour, as my wife and I watched from the Brooklyn building's roof, the south tower dropped from the screen of our viewing; it fell straight down like an elevator, with a tinkling shiver and a groan of concussion distinct across the mile of air. We knew we had just witnessed thousands of deaths; we clung to each other as if we ourselves were falling. Amid the glittering impassivity of the many buildings across the East River, an empty spot had appeared, as if by electronic command, beneath the sky that, but for the sulfurous cloud streaming south toward the ocean, was

pure blue, rendered uncannily pristine by the absence of jet trails. A swiftly expanding burst of smoke and dust hid the rest of lower Manhattan; we saw the collapse of the second tower only on television, where the footage of hell-bent airplane, exploding jet fuel, and imploding tower was played and replayed, much rehearsed moments from a nightmare ballet.

The nightmare is still on. The bodies are beneath the rubble, the last-minute cell-phone calls — remarkably calm and loving, many of them — are still being reported, the sound of an airplane overhead still bears an unfamiliar menace, the thought of boarding an airplane with our old blasé blitheness keeps receding into the past. Determined men who have transposed their own lives to a martyr's afterlife can still inflict an amount of destruction that defies belief. War is conducted with a fury that requires abstraction — that turns a plane full of peaceful passengers, children included, into a missile the faceless enemy deserves. The other side has the abstractions; we have only the mundane duties of survivors — to pick up the pieces, to bury the dead, to take more precautions, to go on living.

American freedom of motion, one of our prides, has taken a hit. Can we afford the openness that lets future kamikaze pilots, say, enroll in Florida flying schools? A Florida neighbor of one of the suspects remembers him saying he didn't like the United States: "He said it was too lax. He said, 'I can go anywhere I want to, and they can't stop me.'" It is a weird complaint, a begging perhaps to be stopped. Weird, too, the silence of the heavens these days, as flying has ceased across America. But fly again we must; risk is a price of freedom, and walking around Brooklyn Heights that afternoon, as ash drifted in the air and cars were few and open-air lunches continued as usual on Montague Street, renewed the impression that, with all its failings, this is a country worth fighting for. Freedom, reflected in the street's diversity and daily ease, felt palpable. It is mankind's elixir, even if a few turn it to poison.

The next morning, I went back to the open vantage from which we had watched the tower so dreadfully slip from sight. The fresh sun shone on the eastward façades, a few boats tentatively moved in the river, the ruins were still sending out smoke, but New York looked glorious.

Aharon Appelfeld*

(Translated from the Hebrew by Dina Fein.)

For almost a year now, Jerusalem has been under siege. Not a day goes by without something terrible happening: a man stabbed in a quiet street, a bomb exploding from a watermelon, a booby-trapped car. Just weeks ago, a suicide bomber blew himself up in the center of town, injuring dozens of innocent people. Shrewd enemies, hidden from sight, are fighting in this city of stone.

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Every day, I go to Ticho, my coffee shop, which is in a garden in an old house in the heart of the city. Despite the threat of danger, everyone seems to go out. Often, it seems as if life is able to continue because of the shared illusion that "this won't happen to me." At Ticho, I read a newspaper or a book, or work on a manuscript. In the past, people who recognized me didn't interfere with my privacy. But recently they have stopped to inquire after my health and to ask my opinion of the stressful situation.

I am a writer, not a prophet or a political analyst. Like everyone else, I am groping in this darkness. From a writer, people expect a wise word or a joke. But what can one say when what is happening blunts the few thoughts that one has? I try to overcome the uncertainty by working every day. I am in the middle of a novel, progressing sluggishly, writing and erasing. It seems that the daily disturbances are stronger than internal motivation. It is hard to be with oneself when everything around is burning.

I used to feel that those of us who had suffered in the Holocaust were immune to fear. I was wrong. We are more sensitive to danger. We can smell it. A few days ago, a Holocaust survivor came over to my table and enumerated the dangers ahead of us. During the war, he had been in three death camps. He was a master of dangers. There wasn't a danger that he didn't know in the most minute detail.

The daily disasters evoke images of the Holocaust. Fifty-six years have passed, and the images don't go away. Last night, a man approached me and said that he reads all my books with great diligence. Like me, he was an orphaned child during the war, roaming the forests and taking refuge with farmers. He, too, arrived in Israel. He is an engineer, and he is worried about Jewish destiny. Why do the Jews arouse such hatred? he asked. We had naively thought that all the anger and hatred toward us would disappear once we had our own state. I didn't know what to say. I have never dealt in abstract questions—I try to see the world in pictures. And so I kept quiet while he, dismayed, also kept quiet.

After the attack on America, I stayed up all night watching television. It had been a long time since I'd felt such identification with events that were happening so far away. The next day, when I arrived at Ticho, it occurred to me that all of us here were feeling this blow in our flesh. In modern Jewish mythology, America is the father figure who saved many Jews from the cruel Bolsheviks and Nazis by granting us a home. Now the loving father is united with his sons in a Jerusalem coffee shop, in grief over the evil that refuses to disappear from the world.

Susan Sontag

The disconnect between last Tuesday's monstrous dose of reality and the self-righteous drivel and outright deceptions being peddled by public figures and TV commentators is startling, depressing. The voices licensed to follow the event seem to have joined together in a campaign to infantilize

the public. Where is the acknowledgment that this was not a "cowardly" attack on "civilization" or "liberty" or "humanity" or "the free world" but an attack on the world's self-proclaimed superpower, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions? How many citizens are aware of the ongoing American bombing of Iraq? And if the word "cowardly" is to be used, it might be more aptly applied to those who kill from beyond the range of retaliation, high in the sky, than to those willing to die themselves in order to kill others. In the matter of courage (a morally neutral virtue): whatever may be said of the perpetrators of Tuesday's slaughter, they were not cowards.

Our leaders are bent on convincing us that everything is O.K. America is not afraid. Our spirit is unbroken, although this was a day that will live in infamy and America is now at war. But everything is not O.K. And this was not Pearl Harbor. We have a robotic President who assures us that America still stands tall. A wide spectrum of public figures, in and out of office, who are strongly opposed to the policies being pursued abroad by this Administration apparently feel free to say nothing more than that they stand united behind President Bush. A lot of thinking needs to be done, and perhaps is being done in Washington and elsewhere, about the ineptitude of American intelligence and counter-intelligence, about options available to American foreign policy, particularly in the Middle East, and about what constitutes a smart program of military defense. But the public is not being asked to bear much of the burden of reality. The unanimously applauded, self-congratulatory bromides of a Soviet Party Congress seemed contemptible. The unanimity of the sanctimonious, reality-concealing rhetoric spouted by American officials and media commentators in recent days seems, well, unworthy of a mature democracy.

Those in public office have let us know that they consider their task to be a manipulative one: confidence-building and grief management. Politics, the politics of a democracy—which entails disagreement, which promotes candor—has been replaced by psychotherapy. Let's by all means grieve together. But let's not be stupid together. A few shreds of historical awareness might help us understand what has just happened, and what may continue to happen. "Our country is strong," we are told again and again. I for one don't find this entirely consoling. Who doubts that America is strong? But that's not all America has to be.

Beyond Words, without Words, and Finding Words: Responding to the Catastrophe

John D. French

The catastrophe of September 11th has left us without the words to adequately capture our feelings of shock, anger, and frustration. Yet with each passing day, we are more and more tempted to fill this void through a cheap

and easy resort to empty fist shaking and ill-considered words. The current rhetoric of war, vengeance, and retribution, I would suggest, is entirely inadequate to the task of finding ways to express the loss, mourning, and grief in which we find ourselves. Words such as "attack," "war," or the ubiquitous invocation of "Pearl Harbor," now fading, do not plumb the depths of a catastrophe so sudden, unexpected, and ruinous that it can only be experienced as a calamitous fate.

Yet how *are* we to come to terms with what has happened? Daily we are subject to a barrage of images and rhetoric from a media that has done far too little to prepare us for the world in which we live. The proliferation of facile punditry and self-interested posturing has worked to reinforce our collective ignorance rather than help us understand and thus more effectively combat the passions that have so grievously wounded us. We are, after all, only a small part of a world of six billion people that is profoundly divided by power, wealth, culture, and ideology. And we have been betrayed in the last decade by self-satisfied cheerleaders who have suggested that the world is becoming ever more like us—the myth of globalization—or that each and everyone of "them" envies us because they are not like "us." As has often been said, the citizens of the United States are a generous people who will do anything for the rest of the world, except learn about them.

Self-centered flights of fantasy—among which I would count the "new war on terrorism"—are all the more dangerous now because they feed off the anger, confusion, and helplessness that we have all experienced. There are simple truths that have remained unsaid: this is *not* Pearl Harbor, would that it were. And there are no winners to be had, only losers, if we buy into the simplistic imagery and rhetoric of war. I can understand, to a degree, why our political leaders like George W. Bush have been so quick to "reassure" us by emphasizing our supreme military might when wielded with decisiveness and unity.

The truth, however, is that *this* catastrophe speaks to the limits of our power, to the vulnerability we are exposed to *despite* our wealth, our awesome technology, and our status as the world's unchallenged superpower. The deaths of thousands of our fellow citizens and residents stem from the unthinkable. Illusions of invulnerability have collapsed from a deadly combination of the lowest of low-tech weapons wielded with perverse ingenuity by ruthlessly single-minded religious fanatics, a small group of men intoxicated with the desire to punish rather than to convince or convert.

The "terrorism" with a capital "T" that appears on our TV screens tells us much too little of what we need to know about the world, while threatening to morph into an all-encompassing conglomeration of our society's fears and weaknesses, its wounded vanity and pride. The anger that tempts us to embrace the false words we are offered is even more dangerous when it is linked to an older self-righteous colonialist rhetoric pitting "civilization" against "barbarism." Would that the moral lessons of history were so clear and unambiguous.

In truth, responsibility for the two greatest global catastrophes of the twentieth century lay neither with the world's "backward" peoples nor with Islam, but rather with the very countries that offered themselves up as "teachers" of civilization and Christianity. After all, it was the self-proclaimed center of western civilization that devastated itself in a paroxysm of violence and destruction twice in a little over a quarter century. The massive slaughter of World War I, which cost 20 million lives, was followed with the 50 million lives lost in World War II, one half of them civilians, and these massacres were made possible only by the very advances in scientific and technological knowledge and industrial organization that are still the source of our inordinate pride today. In view of this history, it should surprise no one that exaggerated claims for "modern civilization" rang and ring so falsely to the world's "backward" peoples and "barbaric" nations. Asked by an English reporter in 1930 his opinion about western civilization, Mahatma Gandhi paused for a moment's reflection, and replied, "That would be a good idea."

We have now lost our illusions that we are immune from the world's passions. Yet the loss of that feeling of untouchability should not be replaced with an even more dangerous illusion: that it is possible to remake the world in order to extinguish its passions. It would be especially tragic if we chose the path of teaching "civilization," once again through soldiers and bombs—a course of action unworthy of those who have died.

Personally, I believe that we should not embrace a rhetoric that gives grandeur to a group of criminals and their conspiracy; it makes him/them our equal and fails completely to understand that even if you killed all of those who made this possible, and all who knowingly financed them, and acted in their support (all 200–300 or so), the truth is that they would still have won on their own terms. These are knowingly and consciously "dead men" and the threat of death—whether in a bombing or a proposed assassination—would in no way constrain or restrain them. Nor would such actions—even if entirely "surgical" with limited "collateral damage" (our favored euphemisms)—eliminate the anxieties, anger and megalomania that create and inspire such groups of religious fanatics.

Theirs is not a political struggle, in a fundamental sense, and they are in this way quite different [from] others who are called "terrorists," which is also why they neither care to minimize civilian deaths nor make even a pretense that they do. They are acting, in their minds, under God's orders, at his command, and for his grandeur and majesty. Moreover, they are not a state and thus can act and calculate without attention to their citizens or subjects.

Although not an absolute pacifist, I strongly agree with my colleague Stanley Hauerwas when he recently suggested that the US should respond to the events of 11 September with a police action whose goal is to identify, arrest, and punish the perpetrators of these crimes. I also strongly believe that it is ill-advised for us to write a blank check to our government, the

432 Part 3 Two Casebooks for Argument

military, and its associated interests. Rather than embarking on an ill-defined and open-ended "war on terrorism," it would be best to treat the catastrophe as a law enforcement problem of striking international dimension and global reach. They are murderers, not terrorists, and should be treated as such.

In the last few days, I have carefully studied our President's speech to the nation and have found some high points. Unfortunately, it is also characterized by far too much self-righteous bombast and dangerous ambiguities. As a student of many speeches by presidents, prime ministers, and statesmen, I found it especially worrisome that President Bush was so careless in his definition of the objectives that we are pursuing. This speech could be a declaration in favor of arresting someone or a blueprint for conquering the world; and I wish that the evidence did not point so strongly towards the more ambitious unilateralist possibility.

Some have said that history is bunk while others have insisted, like Santayana, that those who do not know history are condemned to repeat it. I worry that we are using the wrong words in embarking on a "crusade" in pursuit of "infinite justice." We need to ask the hard questions now, at the outset of this course of action, rather than tumbling forward into an ill-considered adventure. I may be wrong, and I hope that I am, but I do have confidence in the people of the United States who are characterized, above all else, by a pragmatic common sense in their weighing of alternatives. If we speak up, I believe that we can help to guide our leaders away from the dangers involved with the adventure they have proposed in our name. Rather than style my contribution as talking "truth to power," I would suggest that we all must talk "common sense to those with less."

For Discussion

1. "The human race has become . . . a single organism," Hertzberg claims, and the terrorists are like "lethal viruses" loose in that organism's blood stream. Assess his metaphor: Are we becoming "a single organism"? What does the comparison to viruses imply?
2. Both Hertzberg and French resist the rhetoric of war and distrust calling our government's actions "the war on terrorism." What reasons do they give for their resistance? Are you convinced by their arguments? Why or why not? If we call the terrorists "criminals," do we have a better metaphor than, say, "warriors"? Why or why not?
3. Hertzberg, Sontag, and French are all critical of our government's response to 9/11 and critical of the Bush administration's actions before and after it. What do they single out for criticism? What's your assessment of their critiques?
4. Pointing to "an amount of destruction that defies belief," Updike claims that "war is conducted with a fury that requires abstraction." What does he mean? Does war *always* require abstraction on both

- sides? Updike says we are left with the concrete, "the mundane duties of survivors," such as burying the dead. Is this true?
5. Understandably, given his own experience, Appelfeld compares 9/11 to the Holocaust. Is this comparison illuminating, more helpful, say, than the analogy to Pearl Harbor?
 6. Sontag attributes the attack to "specific American alliances and actions." Based on what you learned in the section "Getting Informed," is there anything to her claim?
 7. Sontag claims not to be comforted by assurances that America is strong. "That's not all America has to be," she says. What do you think she has in mind? What else do you think the U.S. should be to handle our present circumstances well?

For Collaborative Inquiry and Convincing

As a class project, collect as many responses to 9/11 as you can find—from scholars and critics, creative writers, newspaper columnists, politicians, and so on. Isolate their metaphors; that is, discuss the words they are using to characterize 9/11 and events after it. Assess these metaphors in class discussion; consider how they represent and misrepresent reality as your class understands it. Then write a paper defending the language you think best guides our thinking about the event and any actions that might be taken in response to it.

For Assessing Persuasive Tactics

To say the least, Sontag's statement is provocative. Write an essay assessing it *as persuasion*, using our chapter on "appealing to the whole person." Are there ways that she might have made her points that would have greater appeal? If you think there are, illustrate by rewriting a paragraph or two, making the same point or points but in language that is less deliberately designed to draw fire.

Arguments: Right and Left

The first two essays in this section are the work of prominent conservative voices; these are balanced against two equally prominent liberal ones. We have the *National Review*, perhaps the best-known organ of the right, pitted against *The Nation*, for a long time a standard-bearer of the left. If we gain nothing else, then, we should at least know what the dividing lines of intellectual conflict are.

What's at stake? Most important, what's at issue is how the United States understands itself. Were we attacked because, as Bennett claims, "we are good," because we "support . . . human rights and democracy" against an evil "militant Islam"? Or were we attacked because of "blowback," the unintended consequences of foreign policies that have nothing to do with our ideals and everything to do with naked self-interest and temporary expediency? Throughout American history we have tended to see ourselves as