the weekly
Standard
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CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

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Kicking the Vietnam Syndrome

H. R. McMaster is a national security affairs fellow at the Hoover Institution and author of *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Lies That Led to Vietnam.*

For a brief period, it seemed that the 1991 gulf war had put an end to the Vietnam syndrome—a belief that the United States should avoid military intervention abroad. The painful memory of America's long, costly, and divisive war in Vietnam, however, retained its influence on the American psyche. Recent protests over impending military action against the Iraqi regime again invoke the tragedy and the analogies of Vietnam. Those simplistic analogies suited the purposes of their purveyors because America's collective memory of the war has become more symbolic than historical. To judge better the value of the inevitable Vietnam analogy, we might ask what, if anything, we can learn from our painful experience in Southeast Asia.

Most historians, sensitive to the complex causality of historical events, would answer cautiously. What good is history, however, if we cannot learn from experience? If we neglect previous mistakes are we not, as philosopher George Santayana suggested, doomed to repeat them? Indeed, the desire to learn from Vietnam remains one of the war's enduring legacies.

The first step in learning the *right* lessons is to become familiar with the historical record. It may be the uniqueness of how America went to war in Vietnam that is most instructive. There was no clear decision for war. Instead of exercising leadership, President Lyndon B. Johnson sought to avoid a decision and preserve a fragile consensus built on lies and deceptions. The administration's dishonesty allowed the president to circumvent the Constitution and deny the American people a say in the most important question a nation must face. As a result, Americans were at war before they even recognized that fact. LBJ's behavior was not only undemocratic but also removed correctives to what was an unwise policy. Not surprisingly, the way in which the United States went to war had a profound impact on the conduct of the war, its outcome, and its legacy.

President George W. Bush's approach to the current Iraqi problem stands in stark contrast to LBJ's approach to Vietnam. The Bush administration made its case for military action, and, after considerable debate, the American people, through their representatives in Congress, gave approval. The administration also made its case to the United Nations, highlighting the damage that inaction would inflict on prospects for peace in the long term.

Although the dangers of careless military activism are easy to imagine, the cost of passivity is more difficult to discern. In the 1990s, the Vietnam syndrome helped delay and limit U.S. military intervention in the Balkans. Those delays and limits extended murderous Serbian repression and actually accelerated ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. Failure to intervene militarily often permits humanitarian crises to continue and leads to more dangerous conflicts.

Rather than helping us avoid folly, the symbolic memory of Vietnam poses a danger. Recognizing most Vietnam analogies for what they are—attempts to evoke emotion rather than invoke historical reasoning—can help minimize that danger. It seems as if the George W. Bush administration has kicked the Vietnam syndrome. Maybe it is time for the rest of us to do the same.

— H. R. McMaster

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voicesforchoices

[1]January 2, 2003, Business Week
[2]January 7, 2003, UBS Warburg

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

Sultans of Spin, cont.

As previously detailed in our editorial about a series of hideous international child abduction cases ("Sultan of Spin," December 16), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will happily slander them, but otherwise does not much bestir itself over the plight of women residing in the United States whose Saudi-born husbands turn out to be criminal monsters.

Unless, of course, the Saudi-born husband in question happens to be "an associate of al Qaeda" now under a multiple-felony-count federal indictment in connection with the September 11 hijackings. Then, according to two eye-opening reports last week by Susan Schmidt of the *Washington Post*, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's tender concern for The Wife becomes practically boundless. And Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz, the Kingdom's American ambassador, spares no expense to whisk The Wife home to Riyadh, for "humanitarian, medical, and legal reasons"—and in defiance of a grand jury subpoena seeking her testimony.

There's this fellow named Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri, you see. He's a native of Saudi Arabia (though he lately carries Qatari citizenship) and from 1983 to 1991 he attended Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. During the summer of 2000, al-Marri briefly returned to the Peoria area—to room 209 of the Time Out Motel in Macomb, actually—where, operating as "Abdullakareem A. Almuslam," he established something called "AAA Carpets," a fictitious business financed exclusively with the proceeds of computerized credit card theft. Then, on September 10, 2001, al-Marri returned to the States again, this time with his wife and five young children, ostensibly to pursue a master's degree at good ol' Bradley U.

The very next day, you'll recall, more than 3,000 people were slaughtered in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania. And in the weeks that followed that slaughter, FBI investigators would subsequently learn, someone using a cell phone and pre-paid long-distance cards registered in Ali Al-Marri's name made multiple calls to the same number in the United Arab Emirates that Mohamed Atta had used to contact Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi, thought to have been the conspiracy's principal moneyman.

Armed with this curious piece of information, agents from the Bureau's Chicago field office twice visited al-Marri's Peoria home in the fall of 2001, secured his permission to search the contents of a laptop computer he owned, and found on its hard drive more than 1,750 stolen credit card numbers, audio files of lectures by Osama bin Laden, directions for obtaining terrorism training in Afghan camps, and links to websites about internet hacking, counterfeit identification documents, and poisonous chemicals. The FBI also found that al-Marri had systematically bookmarked those pages of an annual almanac that concerned dams, reservoirs, and railroad tunnels in the United States—and determined that he had lied to them throughout their interviews. At which point al-Marri was arrested, and his family's passports were confiscated.

A grand jury subpoena for al-Marri's wife, Maha, was issued in December 2001. But lawyers retained for Maha al-Marri by the Saudi embassy in Washington, citing "spousal and other relevant privileges," repeatedly refused to present her for questioning. "Indeed," the embassy advised in an official communique to the State Department last August, "the judicial and societal concerns underlying the spousal privileges are particularly relevant to the case of a Saudi Arabian woman, like Mrs. al-Marri, given that in Saudi Arabia, it would be improper for a wife to speak about her husband in the manner suggested by [the U.S. Attorney]."

For almost a year, the Justice Department pursued fruitless negotiations over a possible informal interview with Mrs. al-Marri. And then, three months ago, without warning, Prince Bandar's office notified the State Department that she and her children "were returned to Saudi Arabia yesterday."

If a private citizen were to behave like this—secreting out of the country a woman under subpoena in a terrorism investigation—he would be arrested, swiftly convicted, and sent to prison for obstruction of justice. But the Saudi embassy, in response to Sue Schmidt's *Post* disclosures last week, declares itself positively *proud* of the deed. It was a feminist mission-of-mercy sort of thing, the embassy explains in a press release. "Mrs. al-Marri had no money or means of economic support. She was suffering from Grave's disease and was in need of medical attention. Her children could not attend schools. To prevent Mrs. al-Marri from rejoining her family for such a long period of time [was] unreasonable and unjust."

Fact: Maha al-Marri was *not* without money or other practical support. For 11 full months before it snuck her out of North America, the Saudi government paid all the rent on her Falls Church, Virginia, apartment and provided her with a chauffeured limousine, $3,000 a month in living expenses, and legal representation. Altogether, this amounted to $179,974 in expenses.

Fact: Maha al-Marri's children "could not attend schools" only in the sense that they spoke no English—as the imam of Peoria's local Islamic center has explained to reporters. This problem seems not to have bothered the family all that much until after the FBI came knocking.

Fact: For $179,974, there are any number of doctors in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area who could quite effectively have taken care of Mrs. al-Marri's Grave's disease, thank you very much.

Fact: In this latest embarrassment, as always, the Saudi embassy in Washington is being fronted by Qorvis Communications, the Northern Virginia public relations firm that pockets millions of dollars a year distributing ridiculous propaganda on behalf of—however talented the spin—what looks more and more like a hostile foreign government. ♦

There Oughta Be Une Loi

For 12 years, the international community has struggled to make Saddam Hussein get rid of his weapons of mass destruction. Defeat in Desert Storm, voluntary disarmament, U.N. weapons inspectors, 17 Security Council resolutions, surgical strikes—nothing has worked. The United States, with much of the world lining up in support, is now poised to eliminate the threat by using overwhelming military force.

Enter Dominique de Villepin, the French foreign minister. De Villepin responded to Colin Powell's case against Iraq last week with an exciting new proposal: Pass a law! The Iraqis, he said, could demonstrate their intent to cooperate by "adopting legislation prohibiting the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction."

The Scrapbook is confident that the Iraqi parliament could pass such a law. And Saddam Hussein, who said again last week that his country is "clear of weapons of mass destruction," would surely sign it. We're sure the French have already thought of this, being such innovative thinkers on the Iraq issue, but imagine the electoral possibilities for President Hussein when voters next go to the polls. Even if he was reelected last October rather decisively—"by an 11 million-to-0 margin," according to the Associated Press—signing legislation that bans weapons of mass destruction would no doubt only increase that support.

This innovative approach—a legislative dictatorship, you might call it—has the potential to improve the lives of all Iraqis. In a new spirit of cross-Atlantic cooperation, The Scrapbook humbly offers the following legislative proposals. We doubt the Iraqis will listen to us—with all of our recent bellicosity, you know—but perhaps M. de Villepin will pass these suggestions along:

The Iraqis could adopt legislation prohibiting the removal of the tongues of citizens who criticize the government. Maybe a law prohibiting the use of electric shocks on the genitals of prisoners? Perhaps a measure banning the dismemberment of Iraqis whose family members outside of the country make the mistake of criticizing Saddam Hussein? And while we're in a legislative mood, how about a permanent prohibition on French fatuity. ♦

Casual

Back on the Bus

WFMT is the name of a religious cult in Chicago that disguises itself as a radio station. The religion is that of musical culture, classical music and opera chiefly. I happen to belong to this cult. Its announcers are careful never to mispronounce foreign names or words; the station eschews all canned commercials; a tone of seriousness pervades the proceedings, every day all day (and night) long. The station is a good reason to live in Chicago.

One morning this past summer, a WFMT announcer said that a ten-day musical tour of three great cities of Mitteleuropa—Budapest, Vienna, and Prague—was being organized over the Christmas holidays. On the tour one would hear three operas, see a ballet, and go to two concerts, the most notable of them a rehearsal performance of the famous New Year's Day concert of the Vienna Philharmonic. The cost was roughly $5,000 per person. I signed up.

I have been on only one other travel tour in my life, a 17-day Swann's cruise of the Greek Islands, Turkey, and the Dalmatian coast. Swann's was then an English-run company, which specialized in sending Oxford dons along to lecture its clients. Maurice Bowra used to do Swann's cruises; on the one I attended, John Chadwick, who was in on the discovery of the Linear B script, was a lecturer. Our fellow travelers—"detested fellow pilgrims," as Henry James once described travelers with cultural intent—were mainly English and Australian, and, in the main, very winning. On this cruise, the left-wing journalist I.F. Stone was on board—the first time, you might say, that I had an actual fellow-traveler for a fellow-traveler—and each night, wearing his Magooish spectacles and a dinner jacket, he boogalooed (Magooalooed?) with his wife to the music of a small Greek band. Charming.

The trade-off (to use the cant word) between traveling on a tour and traveling independently is that on a tour one sheds all worries: about luggage, reservations, meals, tickets, and the rest. For this relief from anxiety, one loses a certain sense of serendipitous adventure. On a tour, too, one abandons the luxury of waking, eating, and going about just as one damn well pleases. Alone, of course, one doesn't have to contend with one's detested fellow pilgrims, or, as I came to think of them, one's DFPs.

As for those DFPs—and there were thirty-five of us in all on this tour—my social antennae alerted me to steer clear of a number of them. Steering clear chiefly meant avoiding them at meals, and this I was for the most part able to do. Only now do I wonder if perhaps the social antennae of others advised them to steer clear of me.

We were blessed in being led by a sweet character in his late sixties, a Viennese of wide culture and great kindness and good humor, named Paul Koutny. Herr Koutny arranged superior tickets, ordered splendid meals, made things as little regimented as possible. Still, the Ken Keseyian question, "Are you on the bus?" had to be asked, often and insistently.

This tour also taught me about the very real limits of my cultural stamina. I had long before known that my museum stamina was fairly low—that is, two hours in a museum, any museum, and you can, as they say about major-league pitchers who are done for, put a fork in me. This tour, with six musical performances in eight days, showed me that my performing arts stamina is also fairly low.

The musical highlight of the tour was a New Year's Eve performance of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* played by the Vienna Symphony in the acoustically fine Wiener Konzerthaus. There we heard the greatest symphony of the greatest symphonist played under perfect conditions—musically, a 720 slam dunk. But I knew I was beginning to tire when, the following night, sitting in a plush loge seat watching *Die Fledermaus*, I thought to myself that there is perhaps nothing heavier than German light opera. And I knew I was in serious trouble in Prague when, in the same opera house in which it was first performed and the orchestra conducted by Mozart, late in the second act of *Don Giovanni*, I invoked Mozart please to hurry and kill off his miserable eponymous libertine so that I could return to my hotel to get some sleep.

Tourism of course remains tourism. No greater deception is possible than that of believing three days in Budapest, three in Vienna, and two in Prague (perhaps the most interesting city of the trio) will give one any more than a glancing sense of these cities and what is distinctive about their cultures. Tourism is, I fear, to deep knowledge what channel surfing is to Greek tragedy. In each of these three historically great cities, I felt the desire to live there for a year or more, had I the time and money to do so. I didn't, don't, and, regret to report, probably never will. So, with a smile at my DFPs, instead I got back on the bus.

Joseph Epstein

Correspondence

The Flying Dutchman

For your information, I would like to clear up some misunderstandings concerning Gretta Duisenberg's recent trip to the Middle East ("Mrs. Euro's Mideast Adventure," Feb. 3).

First and foremost: The fact that Mrs. Duisenberg used a diplomatic passport in no way implies that she was representing the opinion of the Dutch government or in any way representing the Dutch government. Rest assured that the Israeli government is quite aware of this.

Secondly, Mrs. Duisenberg can only use her diplomatic passport when accompanying her husband on his official business travel. If and whenever Mrs. Duisenberg travels abroad for any other purpose, she should use her own civilian passport. The Dutch minister of foreign affairs has unequivocally stated that since this was clearly a private visit, she broke the rules by traveling on a diplomatic passport. The prime minister added that, should she break the rules again, her diplomatic passport will be revoked.

Furthermore, the minister of foreign affairs has stated in public that Mrs. Duisenberg's comment and actions during her trip are very biased and therefore lack any credibility.

I hope this reassures your concerns about this incident and the response to it on behalf of the Dutch government.

Harry A.M. de Wit
Royal Netherlands Embassy
Washington, DC

Frogs in Action

The French government has lost all credibility whatsoever on questions related to the containment of Islamic inspired terrorism. Robert Kagan and William Kristol provide merely the latest example of France's shameless cynicism in their rejection of the enforcement mandate of a U.N. resolution that they voted for themselves ("Merci, M. de Villepin," Feb. 3). Previous issues of The Weekly Standard have highlighted France's growing anti-Semitism as they pander to the post-colonial flotsam that grows in numbers and strength on French soil.

But what is the root cause for this self-defeating and duplicitous stance? It is their own fear of the enemy within, the fruit of French racism and past imperialism.

Nearly 20 percent of France's present population are Arab Muslims from former colonies such as Algeria, Morocco, Lebanon, and Egypt. The racist French treat Arabs as second-class citizens and they live in suburban ghettos, exporting violence, crime, and militant Islamic fundamentalism. Think of the American South in 1960. The French fear an uprising of this large, mostly male, restless Arab minority in the streets of France, so they are doing all they can to appease them at home at the expense of the world's war on terrorism.

How ironic that the oppressive imperialism and racism of 19th and 20th-century France still dictates a flawed and dangerous foreign policy in the 21st century. The leaders of France are being kept on a short leash by domestic jihadists. French colonialism has borne its fruit, and a poisonous one it is, that now has consequences for every country at France's mercy on the U.N. Security Council and beyond.

William L. Asbell
Dover, NH

The French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin's declaration that France will veto any U.N. Security Council resolution explicitly authorizing war with Iraq is rooted not in principle but in the fact that France holds billions in IOUs from Iraq and is worried that a post-Saddam Iraq will not forgive the French for aiding and abetting Saddam's crimes.

The pusillanimous response of Europe and the Russians to the prospect of renewed military action against Iraq is actually easy to understand. The Russian oil giant Lukoil has contracts with Iraq's current government, and Russia's government has $8 billion in Iraqi debt it wants repaid.

The French communications company Alcatel and automakers Renault and Peugeot have also done good business in Iraq in recent years. And the French oil company TotalFinaElf has exclusive rights to develop the Bin Umar and

Manjoon oil fields. These companies fear that a post-Saddam Iraq government might not look kindly on those who supported its former oppressors. The French hold $4 billion in Iraqi debts.

German firms have specialized in providing poison gas and missile technology to Iraq. W. Seth Carus, a senior research professor at the National Defense University, noted a decade ago, "Everything that showed up in Iraq—chemical, biological, nuclear—had a German element in it." And Saddam's "Supergun," the long-range, nuclear-capable cannon that was almost operational during the Gulf War, was produced by companies from seven different European countries.

France built the Osirak nuclear reactor outside Baghdad, which Israel helped the world by destroying in 1981, and which would otherwise have given Saddam a nuclear weapon by the time he invaded Kuwait, making the world a very different place. And by 1989 an estimated half of French arms production went to Iraq. It was an Iraqi French-built Mirage fighter that fired a French-made Exocet missile that hit the USS *Stark* in the Persian Gulf on May 17, 1987, killing 37 American sailors.

Those who favor appeasement at all costs may be acting less on principle and more on economic self-interest.

DANIEL JOHN SOBIESKI
Chicago, IL

JFK Is No GWB

PERHAPS AFTER the president's incredibly successful State of the Union address, it is unfair to point out how wrong David Gelernter's advice to Bush was ("GWB & JFK," Feb. 3). Using all of his God-given rather than public-relations-created abilities, Bush swung the public behind his Iraq policy and stood strong behind his economic plans. He did not have to fluff up his hair or rush out phony pictures of himself "thinking" about these things. Rather he simply talked to us as Americans.

Nothing is more pretentious than acting like you are above the spin cycle except, perhaps, thinking you know best how to churn it. Gelernter's suggestion of fake strategy session photos and ghost-written books on courage makes him the perfect adviser for Hillary Clinton in 2008.

The press would have a field day mocking such manufactured images. And the media needs precious little reason to criticize the man already.

To suggest Bush has not found his way to address the public is to ignore his connection with the public. When he sees evil attack our shores, he stands up and proclaims that we are going to "kick their ass." When he describes why tax-cutting now rather than later makes sense, he colloquially calls it a "no-brainer." He doesn't take advantage of

any "medium" because he wasn't created by political bosses like Kennedy or Roosevelt. And he connects much like Reagan in that he speaks over the politicians and directly to citizens.

JFK had Hollywood charm. Bush has something far less fictional.

DAVID HULL
Oklahoma City, OK

Goin' to the Chapel

DAVID BLANKENHORN rightly praises President Bush for his bold plan to move the country away from the libertarian/feminist preference for taxing Americans as unrelated individuals and toward the social conservative principle of elevating marriage as a tax unit (or institution) that is greater than the sum of its parts ("For Richer, For Poorer," Feb. 3).

While not a full recovery of the "income splitting" that reigned supreme during the 1950s baby boom, this shift—coupled with the move up of the child tax credit to $1,000 this calendar year—represents overdue recognition of the critical economic contribution of marriage and the two-parent family.

Blankenhorn, however, should have called for the application of his marriage principle to the treatment of the vast array of tax-neutral savings-account instruments, which the administration rightly seeks to simplify. Currently, all individual retirement accounts (Roth and traditional) are strictly individual. A married couple cannot open a joint IRA as they can with traditional checking, savings, and brokerage accounts. A simplification of such savings plans, therefore, ought also to permit joint ownership (with at least double the contribution levels), allowing such instruments to reflect the reality of the marriage partnership.

Joint ownership, of course, would be trickier with employer-sponsored plans, but in all the other tax-neutral savings instruments it would allow a married couple—who today might have four individual retirement accounts between husband and wife—to consolidate them into one simple joint account.

ROBERT W. PATTERSON
Domestic Policy Department Consultant
The Heritage Foundation
Washington, DC

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Champagne Not From Champagne?

No way!

Oh, sure, some sparkling wines may look and even taste the part, but if it's not from Champagne, it's simply not true Champagne. That's because Champagne isn't merely a type of wine. It's a specific region 90 miles east of Paris with a long history of winemaking expertise.

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And, if it's not from Champagne, it's simply not true Champagne.

Champagne
is from Champagne

the weekly Standard

The Endgame

President Bush has a keen sense of timing. When support slackens for the war on terrorism and regime change in Iraq, Bush strikes. After the liberation of Afghanistan, he used his 2002 State of the Union address to broaden the goals of the war and target Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as "the axis of evil." Especially Iraq. When criticism of going after Iraq mounted last summer—former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft's attack was the most damaging—the president answered with a scorching speech at the United Nations.

Now, against the threat of never-ending U.N. inspections in Iraq and delaying tactics by France and China and Russia, Bush has struck again. His State of the Union last month made the case for removing Saddam Hussein from power. It was reinforced by Secretary of State Colin Powell's irrefutable indictment of Iraq at the U.N. Security Council last week for stockpiling forbidden weapons of mass destruction and forging links with al Qaeda terrorists. "Enough, enough," Powell concluded. Bush backed that up the next day by declaring, "The game is over."

Indeed it is, and the Bush administration is right to act accordingly by accelerating war preparations. War is the next step. The time for inspections is over. The time for waiting to see if Saddam's Arab neighbors will convince him to go into exile is over. The time for wooing those predisposed to distrust the president and America is over. And the time for waging a full-scale campaign for a new U.N. resolution against Iraq is over, too.

The unpersuaded are beside the point now. The president has met every one of their demands. Yet few have endorsed deposing Saddam—columnist Mary McGrory of the *Washington Post* is the exception—and many more have come up with new demands. Their first requirement for Bush was to seek a congressional resolution approving war with Iraq. He got one. (Senator Edward Kennedy wants a new congressional resolution, but that's a nonstarter.) Next was repudiating unilateral military action. Of course the United States was never going to act alone, if only because Prime Minister Tony Blair ensured Great Britain would stick with us on Iraq. But consider the alliance of countries that now supports Bush in one form or another. It's global: Albania, Angola, Australia, Bahrain, Britain, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Guinea, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Yemen. That's 34 countries, and no doubt more are to come.

What else? Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle repeatedly insisted that the American people "need to know more," and that the president must present the evidence about Iraq to the public before going to war. Bush and Powell have complied, with Powell offering copious and highly specific details. But even before they did, Saddam's acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and his ties to terrorists weren't exactly secret. Jeffrey Goldberg of the *New Yorker*, for one, has reported voluminously on the al Qaeda connection.

Finally there's the demand that Bush take his case to the U.N. He did that, too, gaining a tough new resolution on inspections in Iraq last fall. Those inspections have failed, according to Bush and Powell and also Hans Blix, the U.N. inspections chief. To this, the response of the nay-sayers is that before moving against Iraq Bush should seek a second resolution from the U.N. This is supposedly needed to develop still more international backing for war with Iraq. Surprisingly, Bush has said he would welcome such a resolution and may actively seek one.

It's hard to see the point of devoting much time or effort to securing a second resolution. One providing U.N. approval for war with Iraq is unlikely. And a resolution that says Iraq is further in material breach of the earlier resolution would be superfluous. The demand for another resolution is simply another in a seemingly endless series of traps designed to delay the day of reckoning.

Bush has eluded all such traps except the question of the second resolution. Here, the administration should be careful. The French, the Chinese, and perhaps the Russians are bent on constraining Bush by quibbling over the resolution for as long as possible. Meanwhile, Saddam is already making concessions to U.N. inspectors, who will probably report they're finally making progress and urge that inspections be continued for months more. Bush should ignore their pleas. Fussing over inspections, the U.N., and what might entice the French to join the anti-Saddam alliance leads to inaction. The president has cleared a better path—for action that removes Saddam and liberates Iraq.

—Fred Barnes, for the Editors

Redeeming Columbia

It's time for a mission commensurate with the risks. BY CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

THE REMEMBRANCES of the Columbia astronauts were deeply moving, dignified in their restraint. The president's eulogy at the Johnson Space Center recalled each of them individually, gave the simple reassurance that "America's space program will go on," and modestly offered the "respect and gratitude of the people of the United States."

The mood of grief felt so keenly upon hearing the news passed far more quickly than one would have expected—and far more quickly than it did after the Challenger accident. Of course, Challenger was the first fatal inflight accident in the history of the American space program—the kind of thing you might imagine but are never quite prepared for. Challenger was accompanied by feelings of unreality. Columbia was accompanied by feelings of sad déjà vu, rather crudely captured by the *Newsweek* headline "Not Again."

There was, however, a deeper, subtler reason that the sorrow was somewhat muted, even mitigated. The Columbia astronauts died on their way back, not on their way there. The unstated theme of the president's memorial address was that these people had fulfilled their dream, and died doing it. Not died trying to do it, on the way to doing it, failing to do it. Columbia died coming home. Death here had an Odyssean quality, and thus a hint of redemption. President Reagan's eulogy for the Challenger astronauts spoke of having "slipped the surly bonds of Earth." Challenger had the additional tragedy of never having done so.

In the longer run, however, a nagging realization will temper the redemptive sense of a mission nearly accomplished. The Columbia astronauts, as President Bush pointed out, were only minutes away from home. But what did the rest of the trip amount to? That, it seems to me, is the deepest part of this tragedy: the waste. For, whatever the joy felt by the astronauts during their 16 days aloft, one has to ask what they were doing up there in the first place, or more precisely, what *we* were doing sending them up in such a fragile vehicle on such a hazardous journey?

It turns out that their 16-day mission was spent conducting scientific experiments, most of which are relatively trivial, and many of which could have been done either on the space station or by unmanned spacecraft. That's all Columbia did, or could do (with the notable exception of repairing Hubble). That, and running cargo to and from the space station, is all *any* of the shuttles do. And, as we now realize, at astonishing peril. Challenger at first, and now Columbia, are stirring us to finally face the central truth about our current manned space program: the enormous imbalance between risk and reward.

The most difficult part of space travel is the first 150 miles escaping gravity and navigating the atmosphere. Beyond that, space travel gets relatively easy. And it is also beyond that that space travel gets glorious—and interesting. Once you escape the atmosphere, you no longer have to fight the heat and friction and gravitational stresses that can tear spacecraft to pieces. You no longer need absolute precision to balance all the forces necessary to keep catastrophe at bay. An astronaut who had flown on three shuttle missions averred in a post-Columbia interview that on every flight he was terrified on takeoff, apprehensive on landing, but calm and relaxed in space. And yet, since Apollo, we have inexplicably reduced the entire manned space program to endlessly traversing the most terror-inducing, and yet most scientifically and spiritually mundane, part of space.

Within hours of Columbia's crash, the first recourse of critics was to pin the tragedy on inadequate funding. This is probably right, but how could the funding ever be adequate for such a program? It is hugely expensive—in large part to cover minimal safety requirements—and yet has no appeal to the popular imagination. And popular imagination determines how much of the country's resources go to projects that are at root romantic rather than utilitarian.

No one had ever heard of Columbia or its crew before the disaster. That is not a failure of the popular imagination. That is a failure of those—politicians and scientists—who have reduced the manned space program to spinning around in zero gravity in a space station, and sending a space truck (a beautiful and complicated one to be sure, but a truck, nonetheless) back and forth to service it.

This is an enormous risk for very little payoff. As I wrote in these pages three years ago ("On to Mars," Jan. 31, 2000), the entire shuttle/station idea was a wrong turn. The space station, for all of its beauty, is a failure. It does not serve as a waystation and landing base on the way to the Moon and Mars—as it was originally envisioned a generation ago. No one even pretends that it is doing serious science. Under the Clinton administration it metamorphosed into yet another project in "interdependence," yet another institution to fos-

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ter cooperative activity with the Russians and the Europeans.

Well, there's nothing wrong with cooperative activity with the Russians and the Europeans (in moderation), but not at the absurd cost of the space station and the absurd risk of the space shuttle.

What to do? Should we shut them down completely? No. There's too much already invested. And we do have contractual obligations to the other countries that signed up in good faith for the station. But not a penny more for its expansion. We should do just enough to sustain it with its three-astronaut crew, the minimum required to keep it going. We should forget about expanding it to house the seven astronauts and the larger living space that were originally intended. Keep it alive for the next few years. And send the shuttle up just for changes of crew, which would require no more than two or three trips a year. We can use unmanned Russian vehicles for cargo. Why risk seven human lives to lug *stuff*?

Right now, the shuttle is our only vehicle for getting humans into space, and the space station is their only destination. For now, keep them on life support. We dare not let them die completely lest we lose for decades the will to do anything at all in space. But a radically toned down shuttle and space station program should be a holding action as we prepare for a return to our true destiny: leaving Earth, not spinning around it. When we take the risk of sending people through that first 150 miles of terror, of killing atmosphere and gravity, it should be worth it. It should be for going farther and deeper into the glory regions. It should be for the great journeys: returning to the Moon, establishing a permanent lunar presence, and sending a human expedition to Mars.

What most people don't realize is that today these things are doable. It makes a lot more sense than low Earth orbit, which is the limit of the horizon for both the shuttle and the space station. Low Earth orbit, after all, is a desert. There's nothing there. It's literally a vacuum. You have to support everything by hauling it up and bringing it back. On the Moon and on Mars you can live off the land. There's limited gravity to anchor you. There's soil. And most blessedly, there's water, which is the stuff of both life and power: oxygen for life support, hydrogen for propellant. All the necessities can be pre-positioned by machines sent ahead so that the humans can travel light. And when you get there, you can build things, mine things, find things, perhaps even grow things—at first a base, then a habitat, and then ultimately a civilization.

Columbia

Zuma Press

February 2003 is not the time for a president to propose such a vast new enterprise. We have just watched our current space technology fall to Earth. Moreover, we are in economic hard times. We are in the midst of war. We have terrestrial dangers that call upon us right now. But this moment will pass. And when it does, it will be time for real leadership to point us, as John Kennedy did, upward and outward.

To glory. That, in the end, was Kennedy's purpose. That, in the end, is the only purpose that will sustain popular support for space. Yes, then as now, there will be the usual chorus pointing out that we have problems on Earth that demand our attention and resources before we go adventuring. But this complaint is disingenuous: These problems, being perennial, are a perennial excuse for going nowhere, for dreaming nothing.

The real objection comes from those who simply can't understand why we need to venture into the void in the first place. The cheap, disgraceful answer to such an objection is to dangle Tang and Teflon and tout the great spinoffs. That misses the point and, by the way, misrepresents the facts. There's not a crystal we will ever grow in space—no matter how perfect—that will ever justify the billions of dollars and the dozens of lives it will have cost. At this point in human history it is no more practical to go into space than it was for the Wright brothers to zip around Kitty Hawk. The plain fact is that we are not doing this for the utility but for the romance.

And that is reason enough. You and I are the improbable winners of the most miraculous intergenerational lottery: After uncounted generations of human beings, we have the unique privilege of living in a time when man has the capacity to travel to other worlds. Anyone who can remain unhumbled by the majesty of the enterprise, dead to the transcendent promise of his own time, should have his citizenship in the twenty-first century revoked. The rest of us need to get to work—on a new space program, revised, revived, and back on course. ♦

Total Information Unawareness

What we don't know can hurt us.

BY HEATHER MAC DONALD

SCORE A BIG ONE for the Luddites, and maybe for al Qaeda. On January 23, the Senate voted unanimously to ban the use of revolutionary anti-terror software before it is even developed. (Research on the software can continue provisionally for 60 days.) A hysterical media and advocacy-group campaign against the software project produced this rare senatorial unanimity. The Bush administration, so far missing in action, must finally defend this vital project.

The now-banned technology—being developed by the Pentagon's prestigious Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and dubbed Total Information Awareness (TIA)—would allow government entities involved in counterterrorism like the CIA and FBI to link their databases and analyze intelligence more effectively. No longer would such crucial facts as the presence of al Qaeda operatives on U.S. soil go unnoticed. (At the time of 9/11, two of the hijackers were on U.S. government terror watch lists.) TIA software would be capable of searching currently unconnected crime and intelligence repositories for suspicious activities, which findings would then be presented to human analysts for further investigation. TIA might flag from the Los Angeles Police Department's crime reports, for example, that a terror suspect was fencing credit cards in Los Angeles, and alert FBI agents in Washington. Further investigation might trace the proceeds to scuba lessons for cell members planning to bomb, say, a Navy destroyer off the California coast.

TIA developers are also testing whether the inclusion of non-governmental databases in the computer searches would increase the chances of averting a terror attack. They are building dummy collections of made-up private information, such as mock Yellow Pages or phone records. Analysts playing the role of terrorists will then plan and try to stage a virtual terror attack. TIA researchers will test how much predictive value, if any, is gained from seeking the terrorists' cyber-trail in the dummy commercial data in addition to the government intelligence. Should the private databases prove valuable, TIA developers—assuming Congress hasn't summarily halted their work—will present their findings to legislators, who will decide whether to grant intelligence analysts greater access to commercial information.

Herewith is what the TIA research is not, contrary to the ravings of privacy fanatics like *New York Times* columnist William Safire, who triggered the anti-TIA stampede:

⋆ It is not an effort to create a central information depository. TIA will search databases where they are.

⋆ It is not a collection of personal dossiers on "every American," in Safire's words. TIA researchers have no access to personal data; their research uses dummy information. And if the program were eventually deployed, it would not create 300 million personal dossiers. Such dossiers would not have the slightest intelligence value.

⋆ Data-mining is not an "untested and controversial intelligence procedure," pace Senator Russell Feingold, who has introduced a bill to ban it. The Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network has long used data-mining to search for evidence of money-laundering, and is now charged with searching for terrorist financing networks. The technique also aids the early detection of infectious disease epidemics through searches of hospital databases.

⋆ It does not represent project director Admiral John Poindexter's diabolical desire to spy on Americans. Poindexter, who was convicted of lying to Congress during the Iran-contra scandal, will have nothing to do with TIA once it is in operation; it will be used exclusively by intelligence and law enforcement analysts. Moreover, TIA researchers are building numerous privacy protections into the system, such as concealing the names of people engaged in suspicious transactions until a threshold of probable cause is met, and creating strong audit trails to record misuse of the system.

Not to be bothered with finding out the truth about TIA, one hundred senatorial lemmings voted to forbid its use unless Congress specifically authorizes and appropriates funds for its deployment—tantamount, in practical terms, to a permanent ban.

The breadth of the Senate's overreaction is stunning. Until now, the government has been allowed to search its own databases and even—heaven forbid!—try to improve the efficiency of those searches. No more. The Senate bill, sponsored by Oregon's Ron Wyden, freezes government intelligence analysis in its current abysmal state. Under Wyden's ban, only anti-terror investigations conducted wholly overseas or wholly against foreigners may use TIA's ground-breaking technologies to search government intelligence more productively. This means that

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while the CIA or National Security Agency may adopt cutting-edge software to wade through the intelligence glut more effectively, the FBI and Department of Homeland Security will be stuck with the same grossly inadequate tools that led to 9/11. But remember that terror attacks on American soil are almost by definition rehearsed and executed, if not also planned, domestically. It is domestic law enforcement that will be the front line of defense against the next attack.

The hypocrisy of the Senate's leading Democrats is no less stunning. Many—including Hillary Clinton and presidential hopefuls John Kerry, Joe Lieberman, and John Edwards—have lambasted the Bush administration for not doing enough to protect the country against future al Qaeda assaults. Yet when it comes to applying America's greatest military advantage—the information technology expertise that could preempt terrorists' evil plans—the administration's critics would keep the country's defenses in a primitive state.

The Wyden bill is currently in a House-Senate conference committee. Committee members should delete the ban on deployment of TIA, and replace it with a requirement for continuing oversight and reporting. The burden should be on Congress to justify shelving a technology to link government (and possibly commercial) databases, not on the program's developers to justify deploying it.

Equally critical, the Bush administration must explain to the public why TIA is both important to the national defense and consistent with civil liberties. Even if the Wyden bill is corrected in committee, the breathtaking Feingold ban on all defense data-mining, soon to be matched in the House by Rep. Jerry Nadler, remains pending. The administration should challenge the Luddites, who want to keep U.S. anti-terror operations mired in inefficiency and error, to explain how they propose to defeat al Qaeda. ♦

Like Father, Like Son

Edward Kennedy restores the family reputation—for appeasement. **BY NOEMIE EMERY**

POLITICAL NATURES do not always descend in straight lines, or according to party. As a politician and president, George W. Bush is being compared less to his father than to Ronald Reagan and John F. Kennedy. Since September 11, Bush has been governing along the lines of the Kennedy inaugural address and not (who can now recall what was in it?) his own. And while Bush is increasingly considered "Kennedyesque," the genetic Kennedy is becoming the head of the anti-war party in the United States Senate.

"The wrong war at the wrong time" is the mantra of Edward M. Kennedy. Did the U.N. inspectors find chemical warheads in Iraq? Well, he says, that's "not a sign that we need to go to war. Far from it. It's an indication that inspections work. And it's a reason to give the inspectors more time." Are al Qaeda operatives in Baghdad, as Colin Powell told the U.N. Security Council last week? Kennedy is underwhelmed: "There are al Qaeda in the United States of America," he says.

After a 60-year detour, Ted Kennedy has brought the famous family name back around to where his father disastrously left it: a name that stands for retreat and bad judgment. Joseph P. Kennedy was a financial success as a businessman; a political success as an FDR backer (and as first head of the Securities and Exchange Commission); but a disaster as ambassador to Great Britain at the perilous end of the 1930s. He made friends with the Cliveden Set, a claque of appeasers. He backed Neville Chamberlain, who believed he could bargain with Hitler. He supported the Munich agreement that dismembered Czechoslovakia and merely postponed the great day of reckoning (and made it much worse when it came). He thought and said that Hitler was rational, that Britain was doomed, and that the Axis posed no real threat to American interests. When war finally came, he had made himself loathed by the British, by many Americans, and by President Roosevelt. His reputation had become so toxic that it was a burden his son John had to overcome when he ran for president two decades later. In fact, argues Edward J. Renahan Jr., author of *The Kennedys at War*, a fascinating account of an era and family, had it not been for the wartime heroics of John (and of his brother Joe Jr., who died in a suicide mission), the family name might never again have been politically viable.

It was JFK who rescued the name and rebuilt it on higher ground. As a young man, he had started to break with his father, showing a much firmer grip on power realities. Unlike his father, he knew the cost to his country if England should fall to the Nazis. He admired his father's *bête noire*, Winston Churchill, and his book *Why England Slept* rebuked Great Britain for being complacent in the face of the rising fascist alliance. Running for president, he campaigned to the right of Richard Nixon, accusing the Republicans of being too unimaginative in combating aggression, and undercommitted to the country's defense. His inaugural address, clearly inspired by Churchillian fire, is a prime interven-

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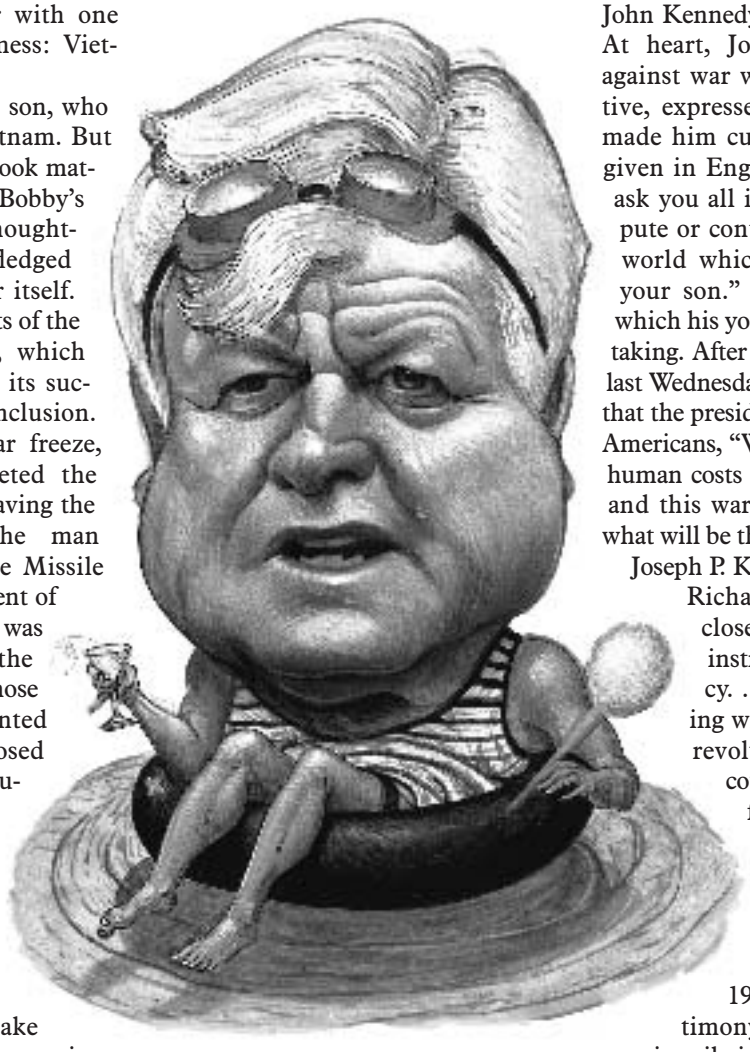
tionist document, a celebration of national power, and of America's obligation to use it in the interests of freedom. In October 1962, he had his September 11, when he turned back a Russian attempt to put missiles in Cuba, ending the first phase of the peril-fraught Cold War, which from then on would be fought on the fringes of Asia. He died one year later, a bloodied Cold Warrior with one piece of unfinished business: Vietnam.

It was Bobby, the third son, who turned on the war in Vietnam. But Ted, who succeeded him, took matters further, transforming Bobby's critique of that one ill-thought-out venture into a full-fledged assault on power and war itself. He opposed all the elements of the Reagan defense buildup, which brought the Cold War to its successful and bloodless conclusion. He supported the nuclear freeze, which would have depleted the American arsenal while leaving the Russians' unaltered. The man whose brother ran on the Missile Gap opposed the deployment of missiles in Europe, which was key to bringing down the Soviet Union. The man whose brothers all but invented counter-insurgency opposed all efforts to check Communist infiltration in Latin America. And in the Gulf War in 1991, the man whose brother had criticized their father for being passive in the face of aggression in Europe made his father's mistake once again. He gave a cowering speech filled with predictions of bodybags.

"When the bullets start flying, 90 percent of the casualties will be American," he said on the floor of the Senate on January 10, 1991. "Most military experts tell us that a war with Iraq will not be quick and decisive, as President Bush suggests. It'll be brutal and costly. It'll take weeks, even months, and quickly turn from an air war into a ground war, with thousands, perhaps even tens of thousands of American casualties. The administration refuses to release casualty estimates, but the 45,000 body bags the Pentagon has sent to the region are all the evidence we need of the high price in lives and blood that we will have to spare. . . . We're talking about the likelihood of at least 3,000 American casualties a week, with 700 dead for as long as the war goes on." His forecasts, of course, were completely off the mark. And he learned nothing from his mistake.



Indeed, Ted Kennedy is sounding more and more like his father. Joseph P. Kennedy, let it be said, didn't want Hitler to win, England to fail, and the Nazis to overrun Europe. But he had a shortfall of imagination when it came to the nature and presence of evil; he believed madmen could be bargained with, and right up through December 6, 1941, he believed the Axis posed no direct threat to American interests. He saw only the dangers of acting, which he called provocation, and not the far greater dangers of allowing chaos and evil to gain a foothold. ("The most dangerous course of all would be to do nothing," John Kennedy said in October 1962.) At heart, Joseph Kennedy's brief against war was familial and primitive, expressed best in a line FDR made him cut out of a 1938 speech given in England: "I should like to ask you all if you know of any dispute or controversy existing in the world which is worth the life of your son." This is the same line which his youngest son appears to be taking. After the Powell presentation last Wednesday, Kennedy complained that the president had failed to inform Americans, "What are going to be the human costs in terms of this conflict and this war, and in human terms, what will be the creation of refugees?"

Joseph P. Kennedy, said biographer Richard J. Whelan, "came close to rejecting war as an instrument of national policy. . . . An uncomprehending witness to the rise of new revolutionary forces, he could conceive of no conflict abroad that would affect vital American interests; no issue worth risking the lives of his or anyone else's sons." In January 1941 in congressional testimony, Kennedy said, "I am primarily interested in the proposition that I do not want this country to go to war under any conditions whatever unless we are attacked. And I would like to see the Congress of the United States still have a hand, so that they can represent the feeling of the people." Sound familiar?

"An assault against Iraq," Ted Kennedy warned on January 21, "will not advance the defeat of al Qaeda, but undermine it. It will antagonize critical allies and crack the global

Illustration by Earl Keleny

coalition that came together after September 11. It will feed a rising tide of anti-Americanism overseas, and swell the ranks of al Qaeda recruits and sympathizers. It will strain our diplomatic, military, and intelligence resources and reduce our ability to root out terrorists. . . . It could quickly spin out of control."

After Powell's star turn, Kennedy remained stubborn and truculent, insisting that the risks of war were not justified. Filled to the brim with fears and forebodings, he made no mention at all of the risks of inaction. Appeasement, it seems, is a recessive gene that afflicts only some among family members. Ted Kennedy is not his brother's brother, but he is his father's son. ♦

Republicans Who Love Taxes

Coming soon to a statehouse near you.

BY STEPHEN MOORE

NOT SINCE RECONSTRUCTION had a Republican won a governor's race in Georgia—until last November, when Sonny Perdue pulled off a stunning come-from-behind victory over incumbent Democrat Roy Barnes. But after 120 years of Republican exile from the governor's mansion, it took Gov. Perdue only about 120 minutes to endorse Georgia's largest tax increase in memory: $600 million. Tax collections in Atlanta have nearly doubled in the last 12 years, making preposterous Perdue's claim that either "taxes must be raised or vital services cut." Perdue has now retreated from the tax-hike blunder, but only after anti-tax Republicans in the state legislature persuaded him that the votes couldn't be found for his tax grab.

Perdue isn't the only GOP governor flirting with higher taxes. An analysis by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) notes that with nearly $100 billion in state deficit spending gaps to close this year (New York and California make up about half that shortfall), governors may end up raising taxes by half that amount, making 2003 the biggest tax-hike year ever for the states. And yes, many of the calls for the biggest tax increases are coming from Republicans. In Idaho, Gov. Dirk Kempthorne is seeking a 1.5 cent per dollar hike in the sales tax. In Arkansas, Mike Huckabee is lobbying for a sales tax hike and assorted other fee increases, as are Kenny Guinn of Nevada and Bob Taft of Ohio.

One of the most cockeyed tax schemes has been advanced by John Rowland of Connecticut, who has called for a Clintonesque "millionaire income tax surcharge." Eight years ago, Rowland first ran for governor as a Reaganite, vowing to eliminate his predecessor Lowell Weicker's first-ever state income tax. Rowland not only swerved clear of that promise; now he wants to move from a flat 4.5 percent tax rate to a steeper, graduated rate structure. This is precisely what anti-income-tax groups in Connecticut feared all along: Once Weicker's income tax was cemented in place, politicians would jack up rates during the first signs of financial

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trouble. So now, a state that flourished for 200 years without an income tax has a Republican governor who can't conceive of any way to balance the budget without raising it.

But here's the really strange twist of fate in state-level politics: Suddenly many Democratic governors are shunning new taxes and trimming agency fat after a decade-long state spending feast. Admittedly it's early, but so far there are signs that the 2002 elections ushered in a new breed of ambitious, politically non-suicidal Democratic governors, including Jennifer Granholm of Michigan, Ed Rendell of Pennsylvania, and Bill Richardson of New Mexico. They all seem keenly aware that the political graveyard is filled with the tombstones of Mario Cuomo, Michael Dukakis, and Jim Florio—class-warfare Democrats who raised taxes, wrecked their states' economies, and were subsequently chased from office by unforgiving voters.

For now at least, these new-new Democrats are begging off broad-based tax hikes to plug budget holes and are actually cutting spending. Tennessee's new governor, Phil Bredesen, has dismissed Republican predecessor Don Sundquist's wildly unpopular call for a state income tax, and instead is seeking a 5 percent across-the-board spending cut to balance the budget. In Georgia, Democratic lieutenant governor Mark Taylor is pledging to fight any attempt by Sonny Perdue to raise taxes. "I am totally stunned that [Perdue] would take the easy way out and ask for tax increases," he says. "We are not like Washington, D.C., Democrats. We will oppose the tax increases."

Contrast that common-sense approach with the strange goings-on in Idaho. Kempthorne stunned even his most enthusiastic supporters in January by endorsing what would be the biggest tax increase in Idaho history. "I will not preside over the dismantling of state government or jeopardize our bond rating," Kempthorne announced sanctimoniously. Actually, states that raise taxes are more likely to have a subsequent bond rating deterioration than states that cut their budgets and cut tax rates.

Kempthorne's claim that there is no fat left to trim from bare-knuckled budgets is worth refuting, because this is the standard assurance of tax-hike advocates across the country. In many states, governors are threatening to open the prisons and shut down the schools if they don't get a new infusion of tax revenues. Kempthorne says he'd have to lay off nearly half the state troopers without new taxes. In Virginia, Democratic governor Mark Warner closed 12 Department of Motor Vehicles offices for several days a week. (They are now being reopened.) In Oregon, the governor put an income-tax-hike initiative on the ballot, which contained blackmail language warning voters that a no vote would cause schools to close a month early and force convicted felons to be immediately released from maximum security prisons. Still, more than 55 percent of the voters said no thanks to new taxes.

Now for a reality check: State lawmakers have been on the biggest spending binge in history over the past decade. Idaho's budget has grown 109 percent since 1990, and tax receipts grew even faster. How could a state budget that's doubled in size in just 12 years not have room for modest spending cuts? One wonders how Idaho residents ever survived for so long without all the new programs encrusted into the budget over the past decade of super-sized spending.

And so it goes in almost all the states pleading fiscal poverty today. A new Cato Institute study finds that if over the last decade state budgets had grown only at the rate of populations plus inflation, the states would have enough money not only to balance their budgets, but also to send every family in America a $600 refund check. The study also shows that states that spent the most have the worst budget deficits today. The states that instead prudently cut taxes during the high-tech boom years of the 1990s generally have the most manageable budget woes. For eight years the nation's biggest skinflint governor was Gary Johnson of New Mexico, who vetoed over 1,000 spending items and cut taxes 14 times. Today, New Mexico is only one of 4 states without a budget deficit.

But Gary Johnson left office last month. In fact, when looking at the talent pool in the statehouses these days, one has to wonder: Whatever happened to all the crusading anti-tax Republican governors who dominated American politics in the mid-1990s? A decade ago, star-quality governors like William Weld of Massachusetts, Christie Whitman of New Jersey, George Pataki of New York, John Engler of Michigan, and later George W. Bush of Texas helped redefine the image of the GOP—stamping it with a supply-side agenda of lower taxes, leaner budgets, and less government meddling.

"Tax increases only destroy wealth and unbalance state budgets," Engler declared as he took office in the midst of the last national recession. Today's governors could learn a lot from Engler. When he became governor, Michigan had a decomposing industrial base, a $1.5 billion budget deficit, and one of the poorest bond ratings in the nation. Engler's prescription was heady but controversial: He squashed all talk of tax hikes, cut job-destroying income and business taxes by $2 billion, fired several thousand redundant government workers, ended welfare assistance for employable adults, streamlined dozens of agencies, and earned the enduring enmity of the left-wing establishment in Michigan for his ideological heavy-handedness. The result? Michigan emerged from the recession and laid the fiscal foundation for what became known during the rest of the decade as the Michigan Miracle, as the state led the nation in declining unemployment.

Michigan isn't an isolated example of how tax policies impact state economies. In fact, one of the most enduring fiscal lessons of the 1990s is that raising taxes during a recession only prolongs a state's economic hardship and budget gaps. A new ALEC study by Ohio University

economist Richard Vedder finds that the 10 states that raised taxes the most in the 1990s had one-half the population growth, one-half the number of new jobs created, and saw personal incomes grow 10 percent more slowly than the states that cut their income taxes. Consider New Jersey, where tax receipts grew twice as fast in the two years after Christie Whitman cut the income tax as they did in the two years after Jim Florio raised them. So what does current governor Jim McGreevey want to do this year? Raise taxes. When Pete Wilson raised income tax rates in California, the state actually lost income tax revenue the next year. So Gray Davis now wants to raise taxes by $11 billion and prop up income tax rates to 11 percent, which would be the highest in the country. If Davis has his way, this would be a very good time to short the real estate market in California.

In addition to seeking higher taxes, many governors are now begging Congress for bailout funds. Nothing could be more ill-advised. Congress can help states in two ways: First, pass President Bush's tax cut, so that the economy prospers and $670 billion of state taxpayer dollars stay out of Washington and in local economies. And second, devolve control over Medicaid to the states, just as we did so successfully with welfare in the 1990s, so that 50 laboratories of democracy can discover strategies for containing the raging inflation of health care costs that is now ravaging state budgets.

I have left the good news for last. Not all Republican governors have bought into the dimwitted notion that they can tax their states back to prosperity. In Minnesota, the newly elected Republican governor Tim Pawlenty has crafted a budget that essentially freezes state spending in the first year and dares the legislature to try to raise taxes. Another fresh face, Mark Sanford of South Carolina, is installing the first down payment on his plan to phase out the state income tax, despite inheriting a gargantuan deficit.

Meanwhile, the nation's two most fiscally conservative governors (and the GOP's fastest-rising political stars in recent years), Jeb Bush of Florida and Bill Owens of Colorado, remain as immovable as ever in their opposition to new taxes. "How can tax hikes solve the fiscal crisis in the states," Owens asked me in an interview, "when the budget problems are a result of chronic overspending?" Meanwhile, in Tallahassee Jeb Bush is pushing forward with the final phase of his $5.7 billion tax cut and notes that despite those tax cuts, Florida's bond rating has improved from AA to AAA. "As I look around the country," Bush observes, "I can't help but notice that the states that have enacted big, broad-based tax hikes are in the worst fiscal shape of all."

If Jeb's Republican colleagues don't start to digest that lesson soon, they might not be governors for long. ♦

Michael Ramirez

Fetus Envy

Look who's pregnant now.

BY DAVID SKINNER

THE professional opinion givers say manliness is back. And they may be right. The new economy has been replaced by the wartime economy. High tech's revenge of the nerd fizzled out, while September 11 left us fêting firemen, cops, and soldiers. Manliness has even taken the White House. The '90s player-president Bill Clinton has been eclipsed by the wholesome monogamist George W. Bush. Why, even that quintessential symbol of masculinity, chest hair, is said to be making its victorious return to manpecs all over America.

One area where manliness has yet to storm the beaches, however, is the literature of fatherhood, or, more precisely, the how-to guides for expectant fathers. That such a genre should exist in the first place—it didn't until a few years ago—suggests that today's father is believed to play quite a big role in the life of his new, even prenatal, child. The expectant-fatherhood books can offer quite useful practical tips, but their ideal father is so fully a part of the pregnancy one suspects he's suffering from womb envy.

Indeed, the new dad prescribed and celebrated in the half dozen or so new or newish books I surveyed does not occupy his own, separate sphere of influence in the making and rearing of children. He is in fact in competition with the mother, for respect as a parent and for time with his child. He is a persistent agitator for public recognition of his thoughts, his feelings, and his role as a parent.

But the first thing one notices about the new fatherhood books is that they could all be subtitled "How to Be a Good Father While Being Nothing Like Your Father." To see how radically they depart from the old school, it's helpful to take a backward glance at a precursor—say, the charmingly outdated 1958 work *How To Be A Father*, which turned up in the 25-cent bin at my local public library. The author is longtime newspaper columnist Frank B. Gilbreth Jr., better known as a co-author of the family-life classic *Cheaper by the Dozen*.

Writing around the time many of today's fatherhood experts were born, Gilbreth speaks in the old clichés about men and women. Here's his advice on how to receive the news that one's wife is pregnant: "No matter how casually or how flippantly the news is broken, the husband is supposed to respond with awe and tendernesss. He must remember about not trying to match his wife's assumed nonchalance. To be avoided at all costs are such jests as, 'Okay, toots, who's the father?' and 'Don't tell *me* your troubles.'" Gilbreth says it's better to try something along the lines of, "All my fondest dreams have come true at last." And for icing on the cake, he suggests the following lines: "I'm going to start taking care of you from now on. Why don't you tiptoe up to bed and let me fix supper? No, wait a minute—let me carry you up those stairs. That's the girl. Up you go. Honestly, honey, for a young mother, you don't weigh a *thing*."

Today, that guy—Gilbreth's expectant dad, the playful, protective, prefeminist male with all the joie de vivre—is the bad guy. Most outmoded of all is his sense that, as Gilbreth puts it, "In the dead-serious, true-life drama of creation, he plays no more than a bit part—the comic relief." The new, reformed tracts never pass up a chance to complain about how distant and cold fathers used to be. Above all, they are determined to move the father right into the center of the action.

In the recent bestseller *The Expectant Father* by Armin A. Brott and Jennifer Ash (the first in a series of successful books by Brott), the male is far more than a bit player. He has a lead part, a title role even. The father is, in fact, *pregnant*. Yes, pregnant. When he tells his friends the good news, saying "We're pregnant," he means it literally. Now you might think that being pregnant is a condition inalienable from women, never to be enjoyed by men other than the occasional medical spectacle searching for his fifteen seconds of tabloid fame. Not according to Brott, the "superdad's superdad," as *Time* magazine calls him, and probably the most influential contemporary writer on what it means to be a daddy.

In Brott's telling, the father is every bit as pregnant as the mother. Naturally, Brott finds it remarkable that "just about every study that's ever been done on the subject has shown that women generally 'connect' with their pregnancies sooner than men do." It is quite a feat to write a book about expectant fatherhood while downplaying the differences between men and women, yet this is exactly what Brott seems to be aiming for. It leads him into stunners like: "Even though you and your partner are both pregnant at the same time, you're not experiencing the pregnancy in exactly the same way or at the same pace."

Beyond this, *The Expectant Father* tends to treat its subject as a new class of victim, condoning self-pity and self-involvement at every turn. Around the end of the first trimester, Brott notes, the mother may get caught up in her own thoughts. "The danger, however, is that while your partner is turning inward or bonding with her own mother, you may end up feeling left out."

And if it's not your wife who's shutting you out, it's her doctor. Brott points to a small, obviously cockeyed, study showing "most men felt that their presence at the prenatal visits was perceived as 'cute' or 'novel' and that their partners were considered

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Fred Harper

the only patients." Of all the things for a man to complain about—that he's not receiving enough medical attention from his wife's OBGYN!

Of course, it can be hard for a young man (or even a not-so-young man) to grow up on short notice and face the formidable responsibilities of parenthood. But Brott certainly doesn't help matters any by justifying the expectant father's self-centeredness. When the fifth month rolls around, Brott says, "Don't be surprised if you begin to become preoccupied with your own thoughts—sometimes to the exclusion of just about everyone else, even your partner." This message is repeated often, as the book progresses through the nine months of pregnancy. Only when his wife is actually in labor and the baby is being delivered is the expectant father told, "This is one time when your partner's needs—and they aren't all physical—come first."

Happily, there are better books than Brott's, though none quite so widely read or recommended. Quinton Skinner (no relation) offers a Gen-X antidote to Brott's boomer narcissism. With little throat clearing, on page 10 of *Do I Look Like a Daddy to You?*, he nails down the most important message for expectant fathers: "This is not the time to focus on your trepidation. . . . This is not the time for a prolonged examination of *your* feelings." (The italics are in the original.) And in one other way, the book marks a welcome return to the 1950s Gilbreth point of view. The author has no difficulty in stating the obvious about expectant fathers: "Biology has placed you on the sidelines for now."

Despite getting these basics right, Skinner's book remains a sensitive-guy's guide to fatherhood and a little cloying in its political correctness. It usually refers to the newborn as "she" and "your daughter," as if the expectant father needs to be beaten over the head with the possibility that he may have a girl. Skinner—like almost all of the writers whose books I looked at—is also of the "partner" school of thought, avoiding language that might be construed as exclusive or judgmental—even though it's generally in the best interests of the mother and the child that the expectant father be more than a boyfriend or a partner, and in fact a husband.

It is notable that my research turned up no fatherhood books that said, "Want to be a good father? Well, if you aren't already married to your baby's mother, start there." Another problem with these books is that they belabor the obvious—typical is a list of 15 "ways to show fatherly love": a kiss, a hug, a knowing wink, a high-five, and so on—while paying too little attention to the distinctive contribution the male parent really can make.

For example, because the expectant father isn't pregnant, he is free to help out with additional housework. And although he has his own adjustment to contend with, his hormones aren't raging the way his wife's are. This should allow him to serve up humor and optimism to help his wife weather her pregnancy with aplomb. Gilbreth's old-fashioned father, though maligned by his descendants, had no difficulty cheering up his wife when she was suddenly terror-stricken that she was going to be an awful mother, or playing the calm-and-collected mate when his wife mistook her gas pains for a fetal crisis. And he considered it his God-given duty to provide what financial support he could muster, without burdening his wife with endless complaints about how hard and scary *his* life was all of a sudden.

Clearly, these just-for-fathers books do not so much fill an existing need as suggest a need in order to create a market for themselves. Call it the greeting-card strategy: Invent an occasion for which your product is necessary.

Which would be pretty harmless if their authors confined themselves to practical tips instead of whining about the burdens of new daddies, as when *The Joy of Fatherhood* complains that the very first drawback of breastfeeding is that the father ends up "feeling left out."

Hilarious? Yes. Manly? Well, let's just say that manliness won't be making any comeback as long as men go around wishing they had mammary glands. Seriously, the sooner we abandon the creepy idea that expectant fathers should act like wimps and persecution-mongers the better. Everyone knows that real men don't complain—any more than they need books to tell them that the work of carrying their children to term falls to their wives. ♦

Iran's Fantasy Island

What I saw at the mullahs' first air show.

BY REUBEN F. JOHNSON

Kish Island, Iran

LATE LAST YEAR, despite embargoes and the country's self-imposed isolation since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran decided to host its first air show. Although no U.S. firms participated and only a handful of European firms were in attendance, the event was a direct attempt to reconnect Iran to the Western aerospace community. Of particular interest was the choice of venue. Although such expos are usually held in capital cities, the Iranians decided that attracting visitors to the crowded and chaotic megacity of Tehran was not practical. A more accessible location was then selected—the Kish Island Free Trade Zone.

Kish Island is a small enclave in the Persian Gulf about 11 miles from the Iranian coast. In the mid-1970s, the shah launched a plan to turn the island into the Monte Carlo of the Persian Gulf—a place where Arab and Iranian playboys could go to unwind, gamble, and so on. The plan worked until 1979, when Iran was taken over by the ayatollah. Religious laws imposed by the clerics shut down the hotel bars, casinos, and night clubs. Kish Island became a ghost town and remained so for about ten years.

Life on the island has improved, but of course drinking is still forbidden—as is gambling—so what were once hotel bars and discos are closed off and used only for special events like the main press conference given on the last day of the air show. The once lively casino next to the Hotel Shayan is now a video arcade. About the only vestige remaining from the island's heyday is in the Shayan's coffee lounge, a piano that belonged to the late shah's wife.

Despite their separation from the mainland and distance from Tehran, island businesses fear and avoid attention from the central government. For example, the swimming pool at the Shayan is "closed for repairs." As one local official explained: "If the pool opens, then you would have men and women meeting one another, which is not allowed, and then someone from Tehran would show up one day to fine or otherwise punish those responsible. So, it is easier to just say the pool is closed."

Kish Island started to make a comeback in 1989, when it was designated as one of only three government-mandated free trade zones created to attract more tourists and Western investment. To the credit of the Kish Free Trade Zone administration, the experiment has been a slow but steady success. From an original native settlement of 2,500, the island's population has swelled to over 15,000, some of whom have found work with European oil companies and other foreign business ventures that have set up offices here. New shopping malls boast a number of well-stocked stores and are as nicely appointed as any similar spot in the United Arab Emirates. Brands commonly seen in U.S. and European shopping centers, such as Timberland, Gap, Gucci, Ray-Ban, and the women's clothing firm Zara are doing a brisk business.

Kish Island, however, is also attracting the kind of reform-minded individuals the mullahs view as a threat to clerical authorities. A number of them are young Iranians trying to escape the more oppressive restrictions of the mainland. Others are returning expatriates who want to invest in their homeland, but also wish to change the prohibition against alcohol and other laws that are symbols of the mullahs' control over society.

One of the more famous of these is the hotelier Hossein Sabet, who has poured immense sums into creating the island's Darius Grand Hotel. The hotel's architecture and exotic landscaping were copied from the famous ancient city Persepolis in the Iranian province of Shiraz. The historic capital of Persia's Achaemenian kings, Persepolis was looted by Alexander the Great around 200 years after its construction in 518 B.C., and it is considered now a symbol of Iran's noble past as one of the world's earliest civilizations.

Sabet and other representatives of Kish's tourist industry have been lobbying for exceptions to the country's strict Islamic regulations, but they have been thwarted. In what is described as his own personal protest, Sabet has been holding off on the grand opening of his hotel. Meanwhile, a unit of the infamous Pasdaran, the Revolutionary Guard Corps that enforces Islamic law, has been dispatched to watch over the island and make sure it does not stray from the righteous path.

This conflict between reformers and conservative Islamic clerics boiled over the day after the air show ended when a death sentence was handed down to Hashem Aghajari, a professor of political science. The sentence was in response to a speech Aghajari gave last year in which he observed that Muslims are not "monkeys" and should not "blindly" follow every ruling of the unelected clerics. It had almost nothing to do with what Aghajari actually said and everything to do with his timing. Around the time of his speech reformers in the parliament were introducing two bills that would give President Khatami

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"FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, WHY?"

"The families, the families, Sir. For heaven's sake, why, Sir?" I asked Him.

"Look up. Always look up," He answered me. "Everyone's questions are filed away in Paradise. There are secrets the revelations of which are reserved to heaven. But look up. Always look up."

"How do you mean, Sir?"

"The Columbia tragedy," He continued, "is not all it seems to be. America is my last best hope for planet earth. I do not let happen what has happened to expose the Nation's weakness. If it has to happen, it's to display its strength. There was Bunker Hill, Appomattox, Pearl Harbor, the space shuttle Challenger, 9-11 and now Columbia. A mighty chain of steel are those trials and never-to-be-forgotten tribulations, testing the heart's capacity for valor and the nerve's balance, standing athwart the jagged edge. The links that bound them together are still as sturdy as the holding force of a bull elephant's massive trunk."

"Even if that is so, Sir, as for all the rest, I repeat, for heaven's sake why the anguish and the pain?"

He answered, "I'll tell you this. As we talk, America and the world grow smaller. Terror is the new bridge of evil. It spans a narrow stream connecting Baghdad to Baltimore. The lesson taught you by the sacrifice of seven courageous innocents is that you must learn to see the forest for the trees."

"How do you mean, Sir?"

"Think that seven more immortals brought America that much closer to Paradise. That vast and virgin space remains unravaged by the curse of terrorism, terrorists and tyrants."

"Then, Sir?"

"Commit to memory the very words of your National Anthem. That once there were the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air. In ancient days those angry rockets assaulted an infant Nation, the United States. They were bent on its destruction. But now, two space shuttles, Challenger and Columbia, soar high above flame and fury. Their magnificent trajectories are welcome harbingers of happiness and peace. And so, the song's the same with new words added, to always be sung with closed lips in reverent silence."

"Sir, now I understand," I said and so I did.

"Long ago," next He said, "wagons called prairie schooners carried pioneers. They left behind deep tracks in America's good earth. These were the beginning stitches that sewed together two widely separated coasts. Thus, they combined to become the United States."

"And, Sir?"

"Presently, valiant pioneers in Challenger and Columbia do almost the same. They leave behind their never ending jetstreams, connecting, like a jeweled brooch of great length, new places from here to eternity."

"The brave astronauts in Challenger and Columbia, do they still live, Sir," I asked, my heart full of hope.

"To be sure, they do," He promised me. "Even so, you wonder still, do you not?" He asked. "For heaven's sake, why? You asked a while ago." He paused a moment, then said, "For a little while it's all for Me to know. There'll come a time, I hope for you not too soon, to find the answers for yourself."

He smiled just as once my father used to do. I knew who He was, of course. I felt the better for it. Slowly, He turned away, was gone and not forgotten.

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veto power over decisions of the clerical-controlled judiciary. What has ensued is a government crisis with multiple resignations and continuing calls for the death sentence to be commuted. The mullahs want an exchange—a reversal of Aghajari's death sentence in return for Khatami's withdrawing these two bills from the legislative agenda.

If Iran is to avoid another violent revolution and actually reenter the community of modern, industrialized nations, it has to moderate the role of the clerics. Their power is a major obstacle for any Iranian entity looking to engage the outside world and acts as a distinct brake on institutional and technological progress. However, one is encouraged by how unpopular the clerics are among the general population, where one also finds genuine admiration for Americans.

Nowhere was this more obvious than at the Iranian Air Show. Visitors received a rare inside view of what had been a closed and secret network of enterprises engaged in a struggle to maintain the country's aging fleets of American equipment. When the shah's government fell, Iran was left with an arsenal of mostly U.S.-made fighter aircraft, including Northrop F-5s, McDonnell-Douglas F-4 Phantoms, and the famous Grumman F-14 Tomcat that was featured in *Top Gun*.

Because of the U.S. embargo, Iran's aerospace industry has had to reverse-engineer parts for its American-built equipment while begging, borrowing, or otherwise procuring what they cannot cobble together. Despite a much-reported brain drain following the ayatollah's revolution, the expo presented an impressive cadre of Iranian designers, engineers, and other specialists. Some of what has been achieved by Iranian technicians—sometimes working with partial documentation and no access to the U.S. engineers who designed and built these aircraft—is nothing short of ingenious.

Iran's shadowy network of procurement agents have scoured the world in search of parts to keep these U.S. fighters in the air. In the 1980s, Iran purchased a number of F-5s and all the spare parts that were available from Vietnam. These U.S.-built aircraft had been captured when North Vietnam overran the Washington-backed South Vietnamese state. They were not being used by the current Vietnamese Air Force, which purchases most of its equipment from Russia. On the tarmac at Kish airport, Iranian engineers demonstrated how they put these spare parts to use on a number of F-5As. They re-manufactured the standard model of the aircraft to add a rear seat, creating modified F-5B two-seat fighter/trainers.

Reuben F. Johnson

An Iranian F-5 that has been modified into a two-seat variant

The Iranian air forces briefly flirted with switching suppliers in the early 1990s and purchased a number of Mikoyan MiG-29 fighters from Russia, but there were no significant follow-on orders. One reason appears to be a strong attachment by both Iranian pilots and aerospace officials to their U.S. equipment. Despite the age of these aircraft and the increasing problems associated with maintaining them, no one wants to make a change to another pedigree or design—Russian, French, or otherwise. Asked which aircraft he would choose for his fleet if he could have any in the world, one Iranian aerospace official smiled and said "the Boeing F-15."

But this commitment to U.S. products does not extend to the commercial aviation sector. Iran is currently engaged in an active program with Ukraine for the licensed production at Isfahan of over 100 of the Antonov An-140, a 50-passenger twin-propeller engine commuter airliner. Iranian money and orders for this aircraft have been a shot in the arm for the Ukrainian aerospace industry, which has almost no domestic orders for this aircraft. The program suffered a severe blow on December 23, however, when a prototype aircraft flew into the side of a mountain on its way to a ceremony in Iran to commemorate the production of the first Iranian-produced model, killing all those on board. Most of the program's senior engineers and specialists as well as the number two man at the Kiev-based Antonov design bureau died in the crash, leaving it unclear if the program will continue.

The same forces that determine the fate of Iran as a nation will determine the ultimate fate of its defense and aerospace industry. And of all factors, perhaps the most important is actuarial. About half of Iran's population is under 21. How will the new generation of young adults react a few years from now when it is not merely their lifestyle, but their ability to earn a living, that is restricted by Iran's hated regime? This is a growing and major source of discontent. Add to the mix the fact that the *Aghazadeh*, as the sons of the mullahs are called, are about the only young people getting wealthy in today's Iran. Their power and privilege help fuel resentment of the clerics. Another factor that will help determine whether Iran experiences rapprochement or violent revolution is the United States and its coming war in Iraq. Of course, a day of reckoning may come sooner for Iran's defense and aerospace industry, because it is only a matter of time before these U.S.-built aircraft—some of which are more than 25 years old—are no longer useable, however ingenious Iranian engineers may be. ♦

Good Reasons to Dodge the Draft

It's not the magic solution to our defense problems. **BY WOODY WEST**

CRANK UP CONSCRIPTION? Of course. On second thought, of course not.

As American troops continue in combat in Afghanistan and a war in Iraq is between probable and possible, the draft has been resurrected in debate. But the debate, such as it is, essentially is demagogic.

The most recent call to arms came from two black Democrats, Reps. Charles B. Rangel of New York and John Conyers Jr. of Michigan. Their thesis, intended as a partisan shot across President Bush's bow, is that minorities and the less affluent are disproportionately likely to become casualties. "For those who say the poor fight better, I say give the rich a chance," emoted Rangel.

The Defense Department speedily released a report showing that "the enlisted force is quite representative of the civilian population." Blacks, for instance, who make up 12.7 percent of the U.S. population, comprise 21 percent of total enlisted personnel, but only 15 percent of those serving in the combat arms—infantry, armored, and artillery.

A reasonable argument can be made for reinstituting selective service. The traditional justification that all those eligible should share the burdens of defense through conscription is not without force. The cross-pollinization of individuals from different backgrounds can be an agent of civic cohesion. Any revival of course would have to minimize the inequitable pattern of exemptions that so discredited the draft in Vietnam.

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Enlistments haven't risen geometrically since September 11, and the administration is relying on calling reservists and National Guard troops to meet U.S. commitments. Note, too, that the Marine Corps has ordered that most of its troopers due for discharge or retirement must remain on active duty for 12 more months.

The dilemma of the all-volunteer military is that, good as these soldiers, sailors, and Marines are said to be, there may not be enough of them to tote the bales of a global war against terror and the other challenges of the decades ahead.

Against the traditionalist view, though, is a weightier argument. The lower-end strength of the U.S. armed forces in this era (with the phenomenal growth in advanced military technology) may have to increase as the challenges of a new century grow. But even that would mean that only a fraction of those registered would ever be called—which even with a lottery could heighten the sense of inequity.

Think, then, of the Herculean chore of gearing up the Selective Service System with the longer, and possibly perilous, lead time required to transform draftees into soldiers. There is unlikely to be the grace period, so to speak, by which in World War II the nation could get itself together.

There is another deficiency to a new draft, and that is political. In a nation crazed by the politics of feminism and the taxonomy of sex, can anyone conceive that a renewed draft would exclude women? When President Carter reinstituted registration of U.S. males in 1980 after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, there was fuss and foment that females should be included (Congress balked and the Supreme Court upheld the male-only criterion). Now, with women making up a sizable portion of the U.S. military, the pressure to make conscription "inclusive" would be irresistible. That could complicate the bureaucratic slicing and dicing immeasurably.

There is also influential advocacy for a national service system in which the military would be one option among many. Report to the induction center, my lad (and lass), and see what items on the menu attract you—AmeriCorps, the Peace Corps, or conscientious objection on religious or philosophical grounds? And, oh yes, how about Army green? Is there much question of where the middle- and upper-middle-class draftees would opt to serve? That segment of the population is conspicuously absent from the barracks today: There would likely have to be a second lottery by which needed numbers of military draftees were decided upon.

Does that massive and intricate drill suggest the dimensions of the bureaucratic chore? And there would need to be an appellate level for the draftees called who would shout, "Hell no, we won't go."

So forget a revived draft unless the world changes beyond the substantial threatening dimensions already evident. An organic link that has been ruptured is not easily reestablished—and the draft was an organic component of American life from 1940 to 1973. But that's history.

Where does that leave us? Right where we are now, evidently and not very impressively. If the international mud gets drastically deeper, however, Americans doubtless will respond with the spirit and tenacity they have shown throughout our history—though that might be a more fractious exercise in a society where deference to institutions is in the basement, or halfway down the stairs. ♦

Muslim P.C. in Cincinnati

How to kill a play before it ever reaches the stage.

By Christopher Caldwell

Cincinnati

Sometime in the second week of January, Ed Stern, artistic director at Cincinnati's Playhouse in the Park, called Glyn O'Malley with an apology. "I don't think I've ever f—d a playwright over," Stern said, "the way I've f—d you." Five months earlier, the Playhouse, flagship of Cincinnati's arts establishment, had announced O'Malley as the winner of its Lazarus New Play Prize for Young Audiences. For several years the Playhouse had staged a traveling drama for high school students. This was the most prestigious corner of its school theater program, which reached 30,000 kids a year. The theater used the traveling series not just to introduce the young to the power of drama, but also—so it thought—to challenge them to think about nettlesome social issues. Thus, for instance, in the summer of 2001, with Cincinnati still reeling from serious race riots weeks before, the Playhouse selected Anna Deavere Smith's *Fires in the Mirror*, which strung together anecdotage from anti-Semitic race riots in Crown Heights a decade earlier.

By the standards of the pre-September 11, 2001, world, that was hot stuff. But we no longer live in that world. For the Playhouse's 2003 spring season, Bert Goldstein, the director of educational programming, sought a drama that would bring home the stakes of terrorism and the "effects of war on children." He suggested O'Malley work from one of the most widely read *Newsweek* cover stories in recent years. It told the story of the March 2002 suicide bombing carried out by 18-year-old Ayat al-Akhras, a young woman living in the Dehaishe refugee camp, near Bethlehem, that killed (among others) 17-year-old Israeli Rachel Levy, out shopping for sabbath dinner. It was a grisly incident, but as Goldstein would later say of the play's intended high school audience, "the kids are not babies." The work was to be called *Paradise*.

Stern, a New Yorker, has always courted "controversy." The Playhouse has staged shows by Tim Miller, whom Stern calls "the nation's leading gay performance artist"; it is showing this season Stephen Sondheim's *Pacific Overtures*, which, Stern says, "raises questions of American imperialism at a time when they are again becoming relevant." This is a city whose arts community looks at the politics of free expression as a struggle between light and darkness: between the cosmopolitan activists who defended Robert Mapplethorpe's posthumous exhibit at Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center, which included a photo of the artist with a bullwhip jammed in his anus; and the embarrassing galoots in the sheriff's office who were unsophisticated enough to have it raided. The Playhouse was comfortably on the side of the cosmopolitans.

Of course, one man's bold experimentation is another's political correctness—and a cynic might suggest that the Playhouse would be a most inhospitable venue for a play that, say, *lauded* American imperialism, or *made fun of* "the nation's leading gay performance artist." Such cynics are likely to be more numerous after what happened with *Paradise*. Because when a dozen hard-line Cincinnati Muslims decided to protest O'Malley's play before he had even finished writing it, the theater's leadership quailed, its donor base panicked, the city's anti-racism bureaucracy began to meddle, its school system scampered for cover from threatened lawsuits, and *Paradise* collapsed like a house of cards. That's when Ed Stern called Glyn O'Malley.

O'Malley, 51, is an Edward Albee protégé who has built a solid career directing works by Albee and A.R. Gurney, as well as his own plays. He has his fans and his detractors. Verdicts on his work range from "shapeless" to "sweetly affecting." He knows his way around political controversy and genuine artistic danger. In the mid-1980s, with Albee, he visited Vaclav Havel in

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Czechoslovakia, at a time when Havel, briefly released from prison, was dividing up his manuscripts and hiding parts of each in separate villages so that Communist authorities could never seize an entire play. O'Malley has since been active in PEN's Freedom to Write project.

But even for a playwright as seasoned in political drama as O'Malley, it was a tricky assignment to write a work of art that is also "balanced" enough to provoke serious discussion of current events. It was, in fact, a fool's errand. O'Malley had been given a journalistic and an artistic imperative, and the two were at war. Considering the characters he was meant to describe, he had two choices. He could hug the shore of journalistic reality—to tell the story of a killer and her random victim—which risked offering very little in the way of artistic complexity. Or he could tease out "the other side of the story," by perversely presenting the case for suicide bombing in a way that would "make people think"—which, while a perfectly defensible *artistic* course, risked taking the story far enough from reality that it would be too slanted to serve as a basis for discussing current events.

The second course is the one he took in early drafts. "Fatima," the bomber, is an attractive character. The first thing we learn about her is that she earned a creative writing prize. Like Milton's Satan, she has the best lines, turning her invective against the Israeli army, and arguing that Jewish victims have turned perpetrators:

"Terrified of the sounds of engines in the night as they bulldoze home after home crushing grandmothers and babies into the rubble. . . . How can you do this? You! You, who know camps and humiliation and hate and death. You know IT! You have suffered it! How can you do this to a whole people? . . . My only answer is that IT has . . . become . . . you."

The victim, "Sarah," by contrast, appears as a dippy California JAP, disconnected from her surroundings ("And *here* is so . . . so . . . different! It's like, *old* . . ."). She doesn't seem to *belong* in the Holy Land, and is interested only in snapping pictures of hunky guys.

And O'Malley made choices that he clearly hoped would defuse any political controversy. For one, he *took religion out of it*, to show characters "driven by psychological, physical, emotional factors, not by religion." When the suicide-bomber recruiter tells Fatima, "Allah in His Mystery locks our brief lives to His service when we submit," the girl replies: "This is not about Allah!" For American teenagers, O'Malley de-exoticizes the Palestinian cause, transforming a struggle that contains a large component of religious warfare into a more accessible—and possibly more sympathetic—political and socioeconomic one. What's more, he moves the scene of Rachel/Sarah's murder from Kiryat Hayovel (a working-class Jerusalem neighborhood near Mount Herzl and Yad Vashem, well within the armistice lines of 1949) to a fortified West Bank settlement protected by security goons. As O'Malley put it: "I've worked to show the hard-line point of view from both sides of the conflict."

This didn't please everyone. Says one Jewish leader who's read the play: "I'm annoyed at O'Malley. Without an understanding of jihad and martyrdom, it just seeks to solve everyone's uncomfortable political problems by removing the content from history." It must be stressed, though, that these are *artistic* moves on O'Malley's part. He is not anti-Israel—either viscerally or ideologically—and as the scandal over his play erupted, he lashed back at those of his opponents who denied Israel's right to exist. Still, any reader without a *parti pris* would see the play that emerged after O'Malley's fifth draft as one *slanted to the Palestinian side*.

Stern and Goldstein decided to get "input" from some people who knew about the Middle East. Just to make sure there were no egregious or insulting errors of fact or emphasis.

Stern and Goldstein decided to get "input" from some people who knew about the Middle East. Just to make sure there were no egregious or insulting errors of fact or emphasis. And it was at that point that trouble started.

The Playhouse sits in the middle of Eden Park at the top of a winding driveway in Mount Adams, an island of century-old townhouses and alleyways and coffee shops almost completely cut off from the rest of Cincinnati by highways. Towering over the city, it is like a chunk of Berkeley that somehow got stranded in the Midwest. Stern and Goldstein hoped to have three or four people come up to the Playhouse on the evening of December 16 to a read-through and discussion of the play.

Goldstein invited his rabbi, Robert Barr, of Congregation Beth Adam; and Elizabeth Frierson, a professor of Middle Eastern studies at the University of Cincinnati. The two were invited for expertise, rather than to represent any "side." Barr is one of the least sectarian rabbis in the United States. Beth Adam, in fact, is so liberal that in 1994 it became the first congregation to be refused admittance to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the national umbrella organization of Reform Judaism.

Frierson is a National Endowment for the Humanities grantee who specializes in Turkey but is also familiar with

the Holy Land, and knows Arabic and Hebrew. The Playhouse sent a letter to the Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati requesting a representative to attend for consulting purposes. The letter stipulated that the play was a work in progress.

A few tables had been pushed together in a rehearsal room in the Playhouse basement for an intimate discussion. Barr and Frierson were already there when the members of the "Muslim community" began arriving. Eventually they would number around a dozen. They were led by Majed Dabdoub, a Palestinian-American structural engineer employed by the city, who was until last November president of the Islamic Association of Greater Cincinnati. There was Dabdoub's son, two engineering professors from the university, and a few students, two of them girls wearing head coverings. There was Jad Humeidan, the executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) in Ohio, who grew up in the West Bank town of Ramallah, and drove down two hours from Columbus. (Humeidan, who according to news reports has spent much of January urging Muslims resident in the United States not to register with the INS without an attorney, was probably the most level-headed and approachable of the delegation, the non-Muslims agreed.) There was Sharmella Johnson, a Muslim who teaches at the University of Cincinnati's extension school, who worships with Dabdoub and had been invited to the meeting by Humeidan (although Dabdoub would represent her in a "fact sheet" later presented to the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission as having been invited by the Playhouse). "It was clear there was going to be a really harsh attack," recalls Stern.

Dabdoub says the Playhouse had been forewarned that a large delegation would be coming. Goldstein says the warning came just minutes before. "Why would you bring 12 people to a reading of a play in progress?" Goldstein asks. "Ask them why they had to do that. It intimidated us. It intimidated the playwright." Dabdoub thinks the Playhouse is being unreasonable after the fact. "If they didn't want us, they could have said look, get out." (In Cincinnati, where political correctness still blows at the same gale force it did elsewhere in the country around 1991, it is unlikely any delegation claiming to represent an ethnic group could be ejected from anywhere without rousing a five-alarm public protest.)

When the reading of the play was over, Stern asked that comment be delayed until after a 15-minute break. (During which O'Malley said to Stern, "I don't want to go back down there.") And when the attendees returned, all hell broke loose. Dabdoub talked for 10 or 15 minutes, followed by one of the professors. Of the contentious and often loud back-and-forth that followed, Elizabeth Frierson recalls, "It wasn't a discussion, it was a Palestinian speak-out, to judge whether the play was acceptable." (Frierson, according to several present, was interested primarily in soliciting the views of the college-age Muslims, saying to Dabdoub at one point, "I think we've heard from you.")

Almost all of the Muslims present agreed that the play (which, it bears repeating, slants the particulars of the suicide-bombing incident in a way that favors the Palestinian side) was "Zionist propaganda." Several present say Dabdoub complained that Fatima was portrayed as a "whore," in that she had a boyfriend. (As Dabdoub later put it, having a boyfriend "is not permitted in Islam.") One man (curiously, for a Palestinian living in the United States) objected to the portrayal of this boyfriend as wanting to immigrate to the United States, which made him a "traitor"; while others called him a "coward" for urging Fatima to avoid politics. O'Malley was called a racist. At times, the complainants seemed to fault him for not himself following Islamic law. Dabdoub was angry that O'Malley had named the impresario of the suicide bombing "Kafir." (From Dabdoub's subsequent memo: "A kafir is one who has rejected God, i.e. the opposite of a Muslim, and *no one* has the right to call anyone a kafir unless that person has openly declared rejection of God.") They found the name Fatima objectionable for three reasons: "It is a very common name, it is the name of one of the most loved and respected women in Muslim history, it is a name that is used in a pejorative sense by Israelis in regard to other Israelis who work with Palestinians for peace." Sharmella Johnson said the play was not appropriate for 7th and 8th graders.

"Another gentlemen scared the s— out of me," said O'Malley, referring to one of the Cincinnati professors. "He despised it. Very smart man, very decided positions. He concluded everything he said by implying that an adult male strapping bombs on a kid is like Patrick Henry saying: 'Give me liberty or give me death.'" One character's offhand description of Middle East violence as "insanity" infuriated another attendee. Some in the group were miffed that O'Malley did not make Fatima spend the day before her suicide bombing praying in a mosque, as they claimed al-Akhras had. More than one witness described the attitude toward Ayat al-Akhras prevailing in the room as "reverent," and O'Malley noticed that, too. "There was a desire for an idealized version of a suicide bomber," he said. "I'm not a Muslim. . . . I can't write that play. I can only suggest that Mr. Dabdoub write it himself."

"You could see the level of hate in the room," said Stern. The subject of Zionism kept coming up in pointed ways. According to one Muslim participant, the delegation that came to the Playhouse on December 16 was so large because a rumor had been spreading in the community

that the Lazarus Fund—named after the prominent local Jewish family that owns Federated Department Stores—was a "Zionist organization." At least one person present noted the Jewish surname in the name of the troupe (the Skilken/Brown Touring Company) reading the play. But the odder twist was the belief that Bert Goldstein was somehow the mastermind of every aspect of O'Malley's play. The kernel out of which this idea arises is the fact that Goldstein suggested the *topic* to O'Malley. As Rabbi Barr says, "I wish I had the kind of power they're assigning to Bert."

Was this anti-Semitism? The Playhouse didn't say it was, but they believed it was. And yet they gave in. On January 9, Stern wrote in a memo to his trustees:

"Originally, Bert Goldstein was scheduled to direct *Paradise*. While I am confident that Bert would have given the play an objective staging and presentation, following the reading it was my recommendation that Bert remove himself from the project to avoid any potential appearance of Hebrew bias."

By the next day, Goldstein thought this was a good idea, too, but both acknowledge that those they sought to placate were implacable. Sitting at his desk in an Irish-knit sweater the following month, Stern granted, too, that such actions could put one on a slippery slope—that this same type of pressure could be used to, for example, reduce the number of Jews at newspapers or networks. "They mentioned at the Playhouse that the leadership of the theater was Jewish," he recalls. "I talked to Bert the next day and said, if they're going to talk about you as a Jew . . . If leverage was going to be used this way, I thought, let's pull that prop out from under them. [He thought,] I can give Bert another project, have him do something else. I just wanted to make this as evenhanded as possible."

"You need to understand," said Majed Dabdoub over lunch in Cincinnati's Netherland Hotel, "that when we read the play I was offended as a human being, as a Muslim, as a Palestinian." This was towards the beginning of one of the odder interviews I have conducted in my journalistic career. Dabdoub had arrived with two unannounced guests—Cecil Thomas, a sympathetic member of the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission, and Zeinab Schwen, the Palestinian-American communications director of the Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati. When we sat down, he said, "I think it better if we tape-record this interview."

I apologized and told him I generally just took notes, and didn't carry a tape recorder. "We can use mine," he said, and plunked it on the table. Since I was making his acquaintance in the first place precisely because of his attempts to keep a piece of writing from seeing the light of day, and since, often in the course of the Playhouse incident, when two people have given an account of an event and one of them was Dabdoub, the accounts have differed, I quote him here only sparingly.

He was conciliatory. He took back the criticism of O'Malley as racist, preferring to think him "misinformed." He continued to believe that O'Malley was given the names of his characters by Bert Goldstein. He resented the talk of anti-Semitism that had arisen since the December reading, saying, "A play that will degrade the Jews, we will be against it, and we will be the first to defend them." He noted that last summer, he and other Palestinian families in Cincinnati (including Schwen) had sponsored visiting kids from Israel.

One thing had been bothering me about the entire Playhouse scandal. How is it that Dabdoub and his fellow protesters were livid about—and even sniffed a conspiracy behind—a play that more or less *took their side*? It will be clear to anyone who reads through his "fact sheet" on *Paradise* that Dabdoub—an accomplished and quite possibly brilliant engineer, who has lived in the West for decades now—*simply does not understand what literature is* in any Western sense. There is a scene just before Fatima decides to blow herself up in which O'Malley shows Israeli soldiers acting like totalitarian ignoramuses, roughing her up and asking her if her father had "bought" her a husband yet. Israelis will be (properly) appalled at this portrayal. One would think Dabdoub would be delighted, since it provides the closest thing to a "rationale" for Fatima's act. Not a bit of it. The Dabdoub fact sheet calls this scene "objectionable." Apparently, it demeans a Muslim woman to be placed in this position, even in a work of literature.

And especially by a non-Muslim writer. Dabdoub, Schwen, and Thomas have a lot in common. All three are dogmatic in their "ethnic essentialism," their belief that only a person of such-and-such a race or culture can understand matters pertaining to that race or culture. This came up again and again at lunch. Thomas, who is black, is of the opinion that non-blacks cannot really understand the black experience. Schwen says that she is "the only one who has a right" to say what her culture is. And Dabdoub seemed to believe that you have to live in occupied Palestine to have an opinion on it.

It's clear from this that the Dabdoub group has a very different understanding from the other participants of what happened at the December 16 read-through. Dabdoub's differences with O'Malley can't be fixed by any amount of editing of his text. The play is an inaccurate—an illegitimate—portrayal of Muslims by the very fact that a non-Muslim wrote it. And if Dabdoub feels bad about having an American literary work prescribe actions for a fictional Israeli infantryman, how must he feel about

having a Westerner portray the mind of a suicide bomber?

It was implied—and said—that much of this unpleasantness could have been avoided if O'Malley had simply consulted the Muslim community before deciding what story to tell. Dabdoub is insulted that the Playhouse worked on the script for four months before asking Muslims for input. Schwen suggested an alternative story: that of Asil Assli, an 18-year-old Israeli Arab who belonged to an interfaith friendship group called Seeds for Peace. (Jad Humeidan of CAIR also made this suggestion, although adding that he wouldn't mind if the Assli story were told alongside the suicide-bombing one.) Assli came to the United States and had a Jewish friend. According to Schwen's telling, Assli, back home on the West Bank, got caught by accident in a peace march, which Israeli forces were repressing. He ran into an olive grove. Israeli troops shot him in the head at point-blank range while he was still wearing his Seeds for Peace T-shirt. Now, that . . . *that's* a story that'll give you the reality of the Middle East!

Later on, I mentioned that perhaps a study guide along with the play could clarify one of the more contested points. But someone had said that the study guide was going to be written by Bert Goldstein. "Is Goldstein going to bring that up?" Dabdoub asked rhetorically, as Schwen and Thomas nodded an anticipatory *no*. "I don't think so," said Dabdoub.

Why not? The question answers itself.

What is noteworthy, though, is how neatly this racial obsession fits with the peace-love-and-understanding rhetoric of the American diversity movement. At one point in my notes, I see:

. . . find commonalities . . .
D. ". . . Since September 11, we've been working very hard . . . to show that we're not different. . . . We're the same. . . . Let's focus on what we have in common . . ."
Z. ". . . Let's work to build the community . . ."
D. ". . . We're doing this for the sake of the children . . ."

Ethnic essentialism sounds a lot like p.c. niceness. "When freedom of speech goes beyond the limit of insulting other people and attacking other religions based on their ethnicity," Dabdoub has said, "then we have to be very careful." You can see the end point of p.c. come into focus, and why people of this persuasion are so comfortable with it. If the target of a potential comment is the final arbiter of whether it's an "insult" or illegitimate, then we live henceforth in an indefinite state of emergency in which freedom of speech is, de facto, suspended.

But there is another, more constitutional-looking way to press the very same issue. As Jad Humeidan of CAIR points out, there is taxpayer money involved in the Playhouse school program. The school system provides a particularly weak link for those seeking to impose hidden agendas, since the students who make it up are minors. After having approached the Playhouse as an angry Muslim, Dabdoub approached the Sycamore school district as a concerned parent.

The Sycamore school district is prosperous, and among the metropolitan area's most multiethnic. Dabdoub's children attend it. (As do Schwen's.) And in early January, Sycamore High School principal Keith Kelly called the Playhouse to announce he was canceling *Paradise*. To an interviewer in the *Cincinnati Post*, Kelly said, "I had enough parents in my community here who felt [the play] was not appropriate and not sensitive to their culture. . . . I thought their arguments were valid."

But that was not the story either the complainants or the school district wanted to tell as time went on. When I called Kelly, I was rerouted to an extremely savvy school district spokesperson (and former journalist) named Christa Ramsey, who tried to recast the cancellation as a public-health matter. "There were issues in this play that,"—and here Ramsey rolled out her rhetorical H-bomb, "especially in this day and age of Columbine, we have to be aware of. . . . They were proposing that we end this on the note of a teen suicide and send kids back to math class." But, asked who had raised the complaint, Ramsey replied: "Community members . . . I don't know if I can identify them." Kelly's story is that he heard (from an assistant superintendent) about a complaint from *one* parent. He said the parent was not Dabdoub, but refused to give the name. (Dabdoub, however, says Kelly called him at home.) Kelly didn't succeed in contacting the Playhouse. He didn't air the decision in a public forum. And he didn't read the play. But he canceled it all the same.

Fear of teenage violence is a perfectly good reason to cancel a school play. But in this instance, it's a fallback reason and a post-facto rationalization. Sycamore was selling its cancellation of *Paradise* to the non-Muslim public on the grounds that teen suicide was a mental-health problem. But it was doing so at the behest of at least one parent who just days before had argued that suicide bombing in the Middle East was treated by the play with insufficient respect.

The radicals who showed up at the Playhouse to denounce *Paradise* on December 16 are to be blamed for their immoderation and for cultural boobery worthy of a Mencken essay. But it must be granted, too, that they could never have achieved so much without the wishy-washiness of the Cincinnati arts, educational, and political establishments. So little was the Dabdoub group challenged that they never even had to prove they

represented the Islamic community at all. There are 15,000 Muslims and seven mosques in Cincinnati, according to the Islamic Center, but few voices were heard either applauding or denouncing the attempt to suppress the play.

When Dabdoub took his fact sheet to the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission on January 9, denouncing the play as racist, Bert Goldstein and Playhouse executive director Buzz Ward went along to represent the Playhouse (no Jewish representatives were present, the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati having been given only a few hours' notice). But there was little brouhaha. Art Shriberg, the Massachusetts-born diversity trainer who is the commission's chairman, says: "The question of where the Islamic community is is one we were asked. I have not got calls from people who usually call. It's not like there was a massive complaint."

The Muslim community was like the dog that had caught the bus. It was only after its hardliners had succeeded in blocking a play about suicide bombings that Cincinnati's Muslims at large began to realize they were *scaring* people. And as a community that since September 11, 2001, has been quite scared itself, they began to see the political coup achieved in their name as a kind of crisis.

It was only after the hardliners had succeeded in blocking a play about suicide bombings that Cincinnati's Muslims at large began to realize they were scaring people.

"The irony," said one Cincinnati Christian leader, "is that many of the individuals in this community are Americanized. They've made it. Ten years ago, they were in some ways more American than they are now." A counter-Dabdoub tendency began to emerge at one mosque. Inayat Malik, president of the board of trustees of the Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati, gave an account of the runup to the December 16 meeting that did not jibe with Dabdoub's. The huge group that answered the Playhouse's invitation to the reading had presented themselves as Muslims. On January 28, Malik wrote a letter to Stern explaining that, when their invitation had arrived at the mosque, it was viewed as a political matter and directed to Palestinians. "As you are aware," Malik wrote, "we are a religious organization and not a political one." He made clear that he viewed the controversy as one between Palestinian-Americans and the Playhouse, not between Muslims and the Playhouse.

But by then the horse had long since left the barn. Parents were threatening to sue the Sycamore school district. Dabdoub, in his appearance at the human relations commission, had threatened to sue if any harm were done to his daughters (who wear head coverings) as a result of the incitement in the play. Stern, fearing for the future of the Playhouse's educational programs, canceled production of *Paradise*, scuttling temporarily what he calls "our attempts to do something more than *The Little Engine that Could*."

This left Stern in a nearly impossible position. He was getting calls from trustees who believed he had commissioned a racist play, and calls from other trustees who believed he had knuckled under to anti-Semites. He was unable to defend O'Malley as if he were a Mapplethorpe—given that the play was written as an educational tool, by definition subject to political control.

But at just this moment Dabdoub submitted to the commission his "fact sheet" accusing O'Malley of racism, and in so doing left the playwright decidedly disinclined to drop the matter. ("The fact that I was called anti-Islam is very dangerous," O'Malley said. "People get killed for that.") So O'Malley began to spread news of what had happened to him. "I have been fatwa'ed," he wrote in an open letter. He contacted the Drama Guild. He contacted his friends at PEN, who wrote a stinging letter asking Stern why he was backing down when a play announced as "controversial" had provoked controversy.

Stern has decided to hold a public reading of the play on February 18. He and O'Malley will address the audience in the Playhouse's main 626-seat space, but there will be no open mikes, only written questions. This is a good solution, and necessary for the Playhouse's self-respect, but it does leave all concerned in an awkward position. O'Malley is going to read a play that is still unfinished. It is a play that has no literary reputation yet, either good or bad, but an enormous political import for Cincinnati. So it risks turning into a piece of ideological performance art.

"We made one tactical decision," says Stern. "We're not going to have Muslims and Jews on the stage. We're not going to turn this into an interfaith dialogue. For me, the play got lost in the politics." Stern reminds us that this production started out billing itself as a tool to provide dialogue. *Dialogue.* This is another name for an amoral politics, a politics where two interests clash, and in the absence of right and wrong, the weaker party, or the party less willing to use intimidation, says, "Aw, gee, well, shucks, when you look at it *that* way, it doesn't seem to be so unreasonable after all."

"You know," says Ed Stern, sitting in his office on a snowy morning, "a friend of mine told me this situation itself would make an interesting play. And I said, 'I know. It already is. It's *The Crucible*.'" ♦

Worldwide Islamic Terrorism

Are the U.S., Israel and other nations fighting the same enemy?

The world is being victimized by an epidemic of terrorism—from the September 11 attacks, the USS Cole bombing in Yemen and suicide bombers in Israel, to murderous kidnappings in the Philippines, a nightclub bombing in Bali, the deadly guerrilla takeover of a Moscow opera house, and the fatal hotel bombing in Kenya. Is there a connection among these far-flung terrorist acts?

What are the facts?

Radical Islam is the common denominator. Four Al Qaeda conspirators were recently convicted of the deadly bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. Suspects linked to Osama bin Laden bombed the USS Cole in 2001. That same year, the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines kidnapped and beheaded Christian missionaries. A group called Jamaah Islamiah committed the Bali nightclub massacre in October, 2002, which killed more than 200 innocent victims. In late 2002, an Islamic Chechen guerrilla group seized a packed Moscow opera house, causing the deaths of more than 100 people.

But clearly, Israelis and Jews are primary targets of these terrorists. Last November, Muslims bombed an Israeli hotel in Kenya, killing 13. In Israel itself, the Islamic groups Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hizbollah have murdered more than 600 civilians and injured over 4,000 in the last two years—a devastation in that tiny country equal to having more than 35,000 U.S. citizens killed and 230,000 wounded.

> "Islamic terrorist groups share one common purpose: To rid the world of 'infidels' and to establish a worldwide Islamic order."

These worldwide terrorist acts have two glaring elements in common. First, all were committed by radical Islamists—groups that advocate overthrowing Western democratic governments and replacing them with fundamentalist Islamic regimes. Second, all these groups believe that killing innocent people in terrorist acts is a legitimate way to achieve their goals.

What does radical Islam really want? Despite the nationalistic focus of some of these terrorist groups, they all share dedication to a common purpose: carrying out a *jihad*, or holy war, to rid the world of "infidels," such as Christians, Jews and Hindus, and the establishment of a worldwide Islamic order.

For example, although the immediate goal of Hamas (the terrorist Islamic Resistance Movement of the Palestinians) is local—to eliminate all Jews from Israel and the disputed territories—Hamas claims affiliation with the international Muslim Brotherhood, whose purposes are "building the Muslim state" and "mastering the world with Islam" through *jihad*.

Likewise, while the Abu Sayyaf Group appears focused on ridding the Philippines of Christians—usually by beheading them—it has received funding from the Taliban in Afghanistan and other organizations affiliated with Osama bin Laden. It, too, is part of the international terrorist movement.

The same is true of Chechen rebels: While their demands focus on regional independence, their philosophy is radical Islam, and they have shadowy connections to Al Qaeda.

Of course Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden makes no secret of his murderous global design: To create worldwide Islamic rule by killing or subjugating non-Muslims, especially Jews and Christians.

Why does radical Islam use terrorism? To most of the world, the idea of purposefully killing innocent people—even for a noble cause—is unthinkable. Likewise, the notion of suicide bombers: Most of the world's religions consider human life to be God's most precious gift, not to be sacrificed, except to save others.

The *jihadis* believe otherwise. They justify heartless, cold-blooded killing of innocent women and children on behalf of Allah. They entice youngsters to commit suicide, to become "martyrs," with the promise of sensual pleasures in the hereafter.

What can be done? When our leaders tell us we are threatened by terrorism, they only tell half the story. Terrorism is clearly dangerous to our people and anathema to our social, religious and democratic values. Yet terrorism is *not* a goal in itself—it is a vicious tactic of warfare, used to achieve totalitarian ends.

Indeed, if we declare our enemy to be terrorism, *we fail to see our real enemy*. The enemy is militant Islam, which uses terrorism to destroy democratic institutions and deny our basic freedoms. It is a tool being used ruthlessly to supplant our civilization with religious fundamentalism—to impose upon us a world order based on orthodox Islam, with its harsh rules of behavior, intolerance of diversity, subjugation of women and totalitarian political rule.

It's time we speak out: Radical Islam—*not* just the tactic of terrorism—threatens our country, the state of Israel and other democratic nations. It's also time for moderate Muslims and their imams to raise their voices . . . and unequivocally condemn the violent aims of their brethren. The world waits for you to dissociate your faith from these bloody tactics and their authoritarian purposes. Finally, it's time to fight back: We cannot pretend that we don't know who is responsible for today's deadly terrorist attacks, and we cannot suffer them passively. Just as the U.S. is responding aggressively to the threat of terrorism, so must Israel respond, since its people are being killed and maimed by terror attacks on a daily basis. Above all and for everyone's good, militant Islam must be fought and defeated through a united effort by all civilized nations.

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The Poets vs. the First Lady

By J. Bottum

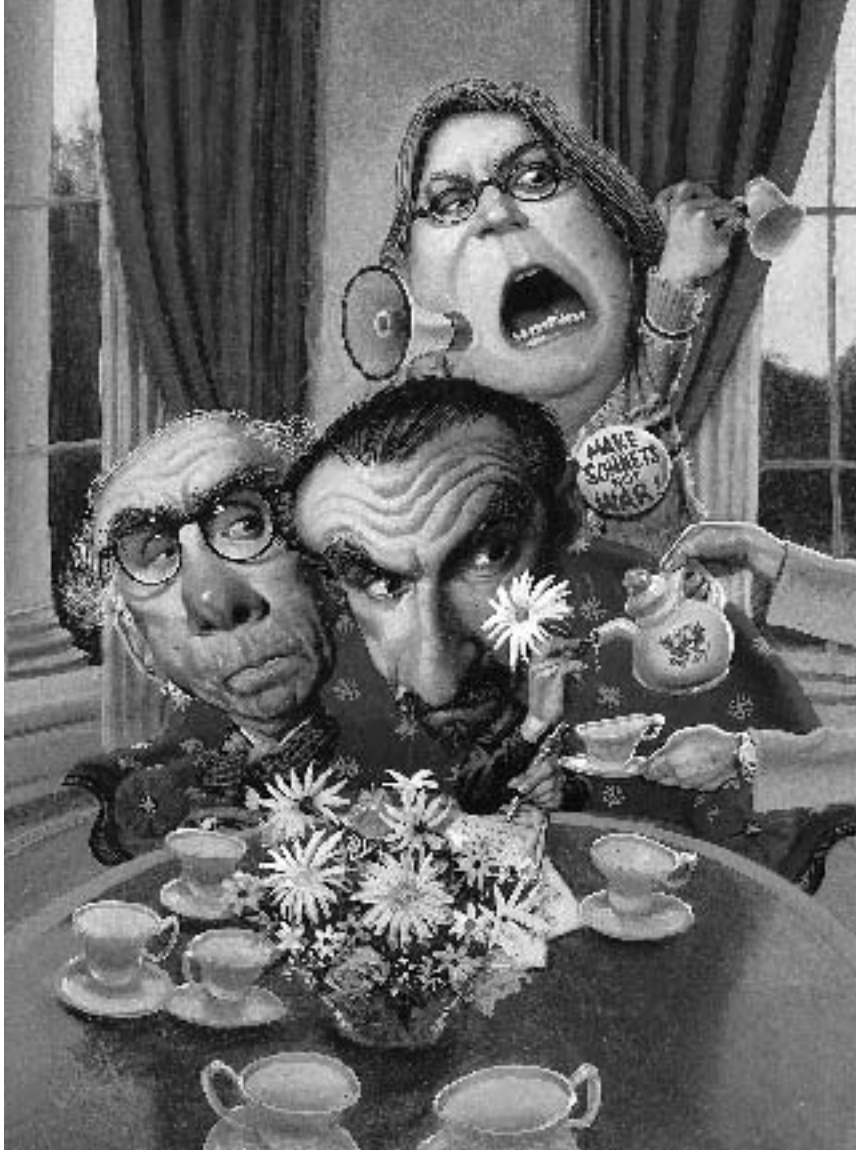
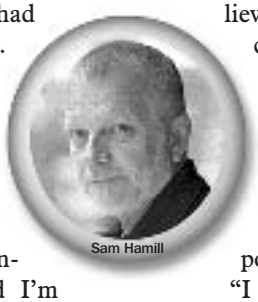


Illustration by Thomas Fluharty. Poets' photos from their book jackets.

I thought perhaps I was invited to the White House because Laura Bush likes my poetry. Maybe not—in fact, probably not, since there are much better poets around. Still, for one reason or another, a nicely printed invitation came, asking me to join Mrs. Bush on February 12 for a reception and symposium, called "Poetry and the American Voice," about Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes, and Walt Whitman.

Sam Hamill, a poet and publisher in Port Townsend, Washington, "felt no joy" when he received his own invitation. "Rather," he wrote in a widely circulated e-mail, he "was overcome by a kind of nausea." As he later told the *New York Times*, he never had any intention of accepting. But he took what newsworthiness there was in receiving the invitation, and he used it to gain an instant notoriety for his opposition to war with Iraq.


Sam Hamill

"I'm putting in eighteen-hour days. I'm sixty and I'm tired, but it's pretty wonderful," Hamill told the Associated Press, and in response to all his work, thirty-six hundred poets have sent him "poetic statements" against the war. His plans to have someone at the reception deliver this pile of paper to the first lady led quickly to the event's indefinite postponement—in effect, its cancellation.

"While Mrs. Bush respects and believes in the right of all Americans to express their opinions," her press secretary announced, "she, too, has opinions and believes that it would be inappropriate to turn what is intended to be a literary event into a political forum."

"I don't think this is the hour when people should be polite for the sake of politeness," a poet named Mary Oliver told the *Boston Globe*, explaining her support for Hamill's campaign. At least she recognizes there *are* bad manners involved. Mrs. Bush's invitation could have been quietly declined by those whose opposition to her husband's policies is too strong to allow them to enter her home. Instead, they chose the other route. "What idiot thought Sam Hamill would be a good candidate for Laura Bush's tea party?" Hamill laughed. "Someone's going to get fired over this."

The wonder is that something similar didn't blow up months ago. The White House book parties have been a tempest waiting to happen, and Mrs. Bush got away with her apolitical literary events for an astonishingly long time, given the art community's disdain for her husband. As private a first lady as we've had in decades, she seems nonetheless to have taken to her book promotions for their own sake and not merely as public relations for the administration. At a festival celebrat-

J. Bottum is Books & Arts editor of The Weekly Standard.

ing the Harlem Renaissance, she read and discussed a poem by Langston Hughes. At meetings of librarians, publishers, and booksellers, she has talked with interest and—well, with what looks surprisingly like joy.

She's always been a book-reader, and her invitations have been politically inclusive to a degree unknown during the Clinton years. After one event, a best-selling mystery writer (and lifelong anti-Republican) told me in wonder how charming and ingenuous Mrs. Bush had been: happy to chat about books, happy to have the chance to meet their authors. Sam Hamill got his invitation the same way dozens of people have received such invitations: The first lady's staff consulted the National Endowment for the Arts, the Library of Congress, and various experts to compile a list of figures thought important in a particular field, and Mrs. Bush invited them to come talk, without inquiring about their politics.


Marilyn Nelson

"I think it tells you a lot about White House intelligence, doesn't it?" Hamill sneered. And it does tell us something, although not in the way Hamill means. The substance of the campaign against war with Iraq is intelligible, although, I believe, badly mistaken. But the *tone* of the attack on the Bush administration, and now on Mrs. Bush, is so far beyond intelligibility, it has become an object in its own right—a social fact whose causes must be sought, not in the Iraqi war that is its occasion, but down somewhere in the maelstrom of political pathology, cultural confusion, and personal disarray.

The attempt to subvert Mrs. Bush's poetry event is not by any means the only antiwar outburst by poets. From a ritzy literary gathering in Key West this month came a manifesto signed by Richard Wilbur, John Ashbery, Robert Creeley, Charles Simic, James Tate, and others—all the old guard of the American poetry establishment. As such things go, the Key West statement was mild, merely denouncing "an aggressive first strike against Iraq" as "murder" and linking this in some unspecified way to the demand for "an independent Palestinian state, because only this will generate justice in the Middle East and stability in the world."

It's a little sad to see the former American poet laureate Richard Wilbur's name on this statement. Once upon a time, he took considerable abuse from his fellow Vietnam opponents for suggesting the National Guardsmen at Kent State were not necessarily monsters. In a 1990 interview, quoting Yeats's dictum, "We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry," he derided the endless stream of Vietnam-era protest poetry as unreadable and deservedly forgotten.

But there's something in the air at this moment—some scent of a long-vanished dawn among the old, some hunger for a heaven they never knew among the young—that lures from political retirement even Richard Wilbur. At a recent march in Colorado, Hunter S. Thompson drew ecstatic cheers with the line: "I've become almost homesick for the smell of tear gas." The fact that they are not actually being tear-gassed only makes the nostalgia easier.


Todd Swift

At least Wilbur was merely signing a manifesto and not issuing poetry. For that, one has to go to *100 Poets Against the War* and *100 Poets Against the War Redux*, Internet-published anthologies organized by Todd Swift, a Canadian living in Europe. It's almost unfair to quote any of these extempore effusions. "This kind of effort, regardless of how valuable each poem is on its own, as a collection represents a step forward for the kind of activism that poets need to be part of," a contributor named George Murray told the Toronto *Globe and Mail*—and that was in *defense* of the antiwar verse.

Individually, the poems show all the elements you might expect. Jay Parini, who accepted the White House invitation "because I thought I could have said something about the war directly to Mrs. Bush," told the *New York Times* that poets are important now "because our language is pure." That's not quite the impression one gets from the antiwar poems. There's the definition of Republicans as *famous for rewriting history in the style of evil dictators Stalin and Hitler*. There's the sloganeering: *How Many Lives per Gallon? / Go Solar Not Ballistic / Draft SUV Drivers Now*, argues one poet. *War is gud 4 bizniz*, adds another.

And then there's the return of 1960s feeling. *Here it is, the time I waited for, promising myself / that my peers and I would change the world*, one of the contributions exults. *Who are the Good Guys now?* demands Marilyn Nelson, Connecticut's poet laureate, comparing President Bush to Yosemite Sam in the mocking poem she gave *100 Poets Against the War*. Nelson was one of the poets invited to Mrs. Bush's party, and she promised to attend wearing a scarf, hand-painted with 1960s peace symbols, which she commissioned from a "fabric artist" for the occasion.

It is perhaps unnecessary to observe that this was not Nelson's normal wear while she was poet-in-residence at West Point a few years ago. Her essay about her visit to the military academy, "Aborigine in the Citadel," was written for the *Hudson Review* just before the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and it contains passages that are mildly embarrassing in a post-September 11 world. But the essay was, in some part, sensible about how teaching at West Point had finally brought her to understand America's need to maintain an army. It is this modified sensibility that Nelson was willing to trade for the nostalgic joy of wearing a "peace scarf" to discomfit her hostess.

San Francisco protester. Agence France Presse.

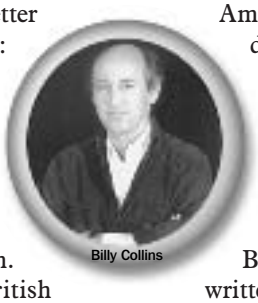
"We're trying to create something that is like the Vietnam-war protest," Swift explains about the poets he has gathered. And no difference between 1969 and 2003 will stand in their way—not even the difference in themselves.

Charles Simic

And yet, even pure Vietnam envy doesn't seem sufficient to explain the spirit with which the poets have taken to opposing war with Iraq. To read the entries published in *100 Poets Against the War*, or posted by Sam Hamill on his anti-Mrs. Bush website, is to see the same muddle of causes—personal, cultural, and political—that made so confusing this January's A.N.S.W.E.R. rally in Washington and other recent protest marches. It's all about oil, except when it's all about racism, or the Bush administration's failure to fund international abortions, or Republicans' hatred of the poor, or the Kyoto accords, or the male hierarchy's suppression of female voices. *Have you noticed / The plans are made for Iraq and the ice cap is melting?* asks Robert Bly.

Sometimes it's about the IMF, sometimes it's about SUVs. Often it's about the Religious Right. (The raw and suppurating hatred of Christianity revealed in many of these poems is breathtaking; the title of Maxine Kumin's entry, "Heaven as Anus," forms a relatively gentle example.) The Israeli oppression of Palestinians is a constant theme, as the protesters play on the edges of 1930s-style anti-Semitism. Bush is brainless, Cheney heartless, and Powell gutless—while the entire administration is really being run by imperialists and Nazis, with Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz a particular target.

Much of this translates into straightforward anti-Americanism—although that's probably better put the other way around: Anti-Americanism translates straightforwardly into these befuddled and mutually contradictory protest slogans. You have to go to the English press to find this in its purest form. "The Attack of the Bad British Poets," the critic Ron Rosenbaum called the barrage of verse issuing from London. First the *Guardian* published the royal poet laureate Andrew Motion's "Causa Belli," a widely parodied quatrain that blamed looming war on *elections, money, empire, oil and Dad*.



Billy Collins

Then, in the *London Review of Books*, came "On Being Dealt the Anti-Semitic Card" by Tom Paulin, the Northern Irish poet who was invited, disinvited, and then reinvited to read at Harvard when news surfaced he had told an Egyptian interviewer that Brooklyn-born Israelis in the occupied territories "should be shot dead. I think they are Nazis, racists, I feel nothing but hatred for them." ("The kids, too, Tom, or just the adults?" David Aaronovitch asked quietly in the *Independent*.)

Finally, again in the *Guardian*, Harold Pinter brought out "God Bless America." In trimeter, mostly dactylic, Pinter describes *the Yanks in their armoured parade*, who sing hymns of joy to God while they slaughter and *the gutters are clogged with the dead*. About all three of these British publications I have written at length for THE WEEKLY STANDARD's website—with rapidly diminishing humor. Andrew Motion seemed merely mockable. Tom Paulin

grew more vicious. And Harold Pinter appears disturbingly mad. It was "his ear for the latent madness in ordinary speech" that made his plays interesting back in the 1950s and 1960s, one critic suggested to me. Now that he has deteriorated, "his head is full of these scabrous echoes, but he doesn't know where they are coming from."


Dana Gioia

Unfortunately, where they are coming from is the English and Irish literary culture that surrounds him, rejoicing in its virulent anti-Americanism. Roddy Doyle, Will Self, Jeanette Winterson, Iain Sinclair, Lucy Irvine, Adrian Searle, Brian Friel, Adrian Mitchell: The names go on and on, all of them signed to petitions, letters, and manifestos that object to war essentially because it is "U.S. led." The lack of sufficiently pure motives for the descent upon Iraq proves that America is evil, just as (in the perfect circularity of all question-begging arguments) America's evil means that it can never have motives sufficiently pure for anything.

One can find worse examples of this sort of thing, of course: the Canadian television interviewer, for instance, who asked science-fiction writer Robert Sawyer on air to agree that American arrogance in the Middle East caused the space shuttle's disintegration over Texas. But there's something peculiar echoing in even the mildest of these anti-American tropes, as there is, for that matter, in the anti-religious, anti-business, and anti-imperialist rhetoric of the protesting American poets. Christianity, capitalism, and colonialism, with the United States their flagship: all the old whipping boys of the Soviet-era Communists—except that the Soviet Union is no more. Lenin and Stalin may be gone, but their stalking horses go galloping on.

In one way, the collapse of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe snatched even the pretense of coherence from much of the hard leftist complaint. There no longer exists the horizon—the eschaton of a socialist workers' paradise—at which to gesture as the positive alternative to the evils of the West. But in another way, the end of the Soviet Union set protest free to be, well, *protest*: not for anything, not pinned down by having to defend the indefensibility of the gulag, but a pure and absolute *againstness*.

It's adolescent and irresponsible, of course; indeed, the word "gleeful" comes constantly to mind while listening to Sam Hamill and Todd Swift. But it also springs from some genuine human desire simply to reject things as they are and to taunt every last one of the powers that be, even Mrs. Bush, merely for having power. There may be serious arguments against war with Iraq, but the antiwar poets have proved thus far unwilling to make them—for the very idea of seriousness means growing up: turning back and taking responsibility, as adults, for this world we never made.

How much easier for Hamill to gather up Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Galway Kinnell, Ursula K. Le Guin, Adrienne Rich, and W.S. Merwin to help him indulge the fantasy that the United States is about to submit Baghdad to "saturation bombing that would be like the firebombing of Dresden." How much easier to mock Laura Bush for daring to suggest a tea party.


Rita Dove

Faced with the poets' plans to take over the White House event, Mrs. Bush seemed restrained and dignified in response—particularly given that a second purpose of the occasion was, an administration official confirms, to have Vice President Cheney swear in the poet Dana Gioia as the new chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. "I wouldn't go pee in the first lady's punch bowl," Hamill told the writer Rachel Donadio in a well-reported piece for the *New York Sun*. But he certainly managed to dampen Gioia's moment in the limelight and the administration's attempt to promote the arts endowment and poetry.

A few of the invitees have given public support to the purely literary program originally planned, particularly the poets David Lehman, J.D. McClatchy, and Daniel Mark Epstein in interviews, and the critic Roger Kimball in a column he wrote for the *Wall Street Journal* (all of whom, it's worth noting, make a good part of their livings outside the solidly anti-war colleges and universities). A handful of others would express only privately their irritation with the protesters. But the overwhelming reaction of America's literary establishment has been to excoriate Mrs. Bush for canceling the event. "No Voice Given to Antiwar Poets," ran a typical headline in the *Los Angeles Times*.

"The abrupt cancellation of the symposium by the White House confirms my suspicion," pronounced former poet laureate Rita Dove, "that the Bush administration is not interested in poetry when it refuses to remain in the ivory tower." Another former laureate, Stanley Kunitz, added, "I think there was a general feeling that the current administration is not really a friend of the poetic community and that its program of attacking Iraq is contrary to the humanitarian position that is at the center of the poetic impulse."

Quite what Kunitz means is hard to say. The proposition that poetry equals humanitarianism is either a tautology—the proper study of man being man, and no poetry yet having been written by wolves—or, more probably, simply false. Doesn't *some* poetry celebrate war, or direct its attention to the Divine, or take a sour view of human nature? It seems a stretch to call Homer, St. John of the Cross, and Philip Larkin impartially humanitarian.

In comments quoted by Donadio, the *New Republic*'s literary editor Leon Wieseltier went even further, directly accusing Mrs. Bush of cowardice: "Canceling the event was the cowardly thing to do. It's the role of the poets to suggest that war is a bad idea, the role of the president to say war is a bad idea but necessary. It's the role of the poets

Black Star Photos

to speak truth to power, and the role of power to welcome truth."

The notion that bad ideas can be both necessary and untrue leaves the reader a little at sea. So, too, the claim that a poet's job is merely to say that war is bad. And is it really the case that poetry always—in that phrase we will probably never be rid of—speaks truth to power? Has no kept poet, from Virgil to Tennyson, ever courteously tempered the wind to his master? (*I am His Highness' dog at Kew*, Alexander Pope wrote for the collar of a royal pet. *Pray tell me, Sir, whose dog are you?*)

Much of the poets' attack, of course, is merely political partisanship. "I was lucky when I was poet laureate," Robert Pinsky told the *Boston Globe*. "We had an event in which President and Mrs. Clinton joined . . . former poets laureate Rita Dove and Robert Hass, and we read poems by Langston Hughes and Emily Dickinson. But that was at a time when a lot of poets were happy to be supporting the president, because they thought he was being attacked unfairly."

The current laureate Billy Collins has similarly turned on President Bush. Protest at the first lady's event "should be as disruptive as it wants to be," he wrote in an e-mail to the Associated Press. New Jersey's poet laureate Amiri Baraka, working on a poem about impeaching the president, told the *New York Times*, "Of course I see it as part of my job." In a prose statement on Hamill's website, W.S. Merwin gives full expression to this view—indeed, the fullest expression of pure partisanship imaginable:

> It would not have been possible for me ever to trust someone who acquired office by the shameful means Mr. Bush and his abettors resorted to. . . . The perpetuation of [his] role of "wartime leader" is the primary reason—more important even than the greed for oil fields and the wish to blot out his father's failure—for the present determination to visit war upon Iraq. . . . To arrange a war in order to be re-elected outdoes even the means employed in the last presidential election. Mr. Bush and his plans are a greater danger to the United States than Saddam Hussein.

Though anti-Zionism, anti-globalism, and anti-Americanism were building through the 1990s, America's poets showed nothing approaching this level of protest when President Clinton spoke to the nation from the Pentagon in February 1998 and brought the United States to the edge of all-out war with Iraq.

Still, Wieseltier is right that poets are notoriously difficult to manage. For John F. Kennedy's inauguration, Robert Frost composed a poem called "Dedication," but the sun's glare off the January snow prevented the elderly poet from reading it. So he recited instead from memory the much-better, but only tangentially appropriate, poem "The Gift Outright": *The land was ours before we were the land's*. (*Such as we were we gave ourselves outright*, the poem later claims, adding, *The deed of gift was many deeds of war*.)

The story is also occasionally told of the bevy of poets who arrived at the Carter White House without any identification except their invitations and copies of their poetry collections—leaving the bewildered Secret Service to try either to get them to vouch for one another or to identify them from outdated and over-flattering photographs on their book jackets.

But the parallel most cited in news stories about Mrs. Bush's "Poetry and the American Voice" is the "White House Festival of the Arts" on June 14, 1965. President Johnson's staff had

originally planned the day-long fiasco—"the most extensive arts festival ever held in the White House," as the *New York Times* hailed it—to include readings from Saul Bellow and John Hersey, the poets Robert Lowell and Phyllis McGinley, and the popular biographer Catherine Drinker Bowen. But when, two weeks before the festival, Lowell announced his refusal to attend in order to mark his opposition to war in Vietnam, the literary world exploded.


Adrienne Rich

Philip Roth, William Styron, Alan Dugan, and Stanley Kunitz signed a letter supporting him. John Updike chastised Lowell's ill behavior in making a public spectacle of his refusal, although Updike reserved his deepest scorn for Dwight Macdonald, who *hadn't* refused an invitation. Instead Macdonald went to the White House deliberately dressed down in a plaid shirt and tennis shoes, spent the day trying to collect signatures for a petition denouncing the Johnson administration, and then wrote about the whole thing as a journalist for the *New York Review of Books*—the perfect trifecta of bad manners.

Poets probably matter less now than they did in Robert Lowell's time. Critics matter less, as far as that goes. But something like Dwight Macdonald's day at the White House is what Sam Hamill had planned for whichever invitee was going to deliver his three thousand statements against the war. Why is it cowardly of Mrs. Bush to refuse to be used this way by her guests? Why is it unhumanitarian or uninterested in poetry? Why exactly shouldn't she say to hell with it?

In 1967, two years after Vietnam protest had undone the White House Festival of the Arts, John Updike wrote to the *New York Times*, "Anyone not a rigorous pacifist must at least consider the argument that this war, evil as it is, is the lesser of available evils, intended to forestall worse wars. I am not sure that this is true, but I assume that this is the reasoning of those who prosecute it, rather than the maintenance of business prosperity or the president's crazed stubbornness."

Every such attempt at a nuanced position was routed in the literary battles over Vietnam. When Sam Hamill aims "to reconstitute a Poets Against the War movement like the one organized to speak out against the war in Vietnam," he imagines himself once again on the 1967 march to the Pentagon, a character reborn in Norman Mailer's *Armies of the Night* and Robert Lowell's *History*. But Updike's warnings about tone are still worth remembering: "I feel in the dove arguments as presented to me too much aesthetic distaste for the president, . . . too much reliance upon satirical descriptions . . . and the grotesqueries of cultural superimposition. The protest seems too reflexive, too pop."

In all the recent attacks on war with Iraq, the tone derives in equal parts from apocalyptic fantasy and adolescent mockery. Even among once-serious poets, one now seeks in vain for seriousness—and finds, instead, that the capacity for it has been leached away. The *Wall Street Journal*'s *Opinionjournal.com*, quoting a mockable stanza from Adrienne Rich's effort on Hamill's website, declared: "We've never heard of Adrienne Rich." Probably the web-compilers at the *Journal* were kidding, but there's something sad about the idea that Adrienne Rich's name might be unknown to them—for she was a real poet of real ability, once upon a time, and she stands today, like Bertolt Brecht, as a famous object lesson for poets. Her 1951 "Storm Warnings" was a genuine poem. Her 1955 "The Diamond Cutters" was a great one: *Love only what you do*, she wrote, *and not what you have done*.


Galway Kinnell

The fact that, in the long years since, she has taken a dull knife to herself—howling hackneyed slogans of race, class, and gender liberation while she deliberately scraped away most of her talent—is more a reason to weep than to chortle. Great political poetry is possible for some poets, but Adrienne Rich was never one of them, however much she wanted to be. Not since Coleridge, or perhaps Pound, has there been a poet who lost the Muse so decisively, and she did it to herself. Perhaps the cruelest analysis of the death of poetry in the Richian worldview came in 1998 from Harold Bloom, who concluded, "the mock poetry of Resentment looks easy and proves easy; unlike Whitman, it lacks mind."

What has happened to mind in poetry? Galway Kinnell had a poem on Hamill's website, an account of dozing off while holding his infant son Fergus and waking when a noise from the fireplace startles him into imagining that a bomb has exploded. It's not clear what this has to do with Iraq. One might perfectly well read it as a cry against what the attacks of September 11 and the Palestinian suicide bombers have done to the human imagination. But Kinnell's "The Olive Wood Fire"—though much of its tone and imagery parallels the stronger poem he wrote for his daughter, "Under the Maud Moon"—is not bad work; indeed, it is by far the best poem to show up on the antiwar poets' site.

Unfortunately, that may be because it was written some years ago. (It also subsequently disappeared from Hamill's website—possibly for copyright reasons, since Kinnell reaffirmed his support for the antiwar poets, telling the *New York Times*, "Poetry's duty is to speak out.") Offering a poem like "The Olive Wood Fire" to oppose war with Iraq is easy and thoughtless, which Kinnell used not always to be. Does he mean now that he wouldn't rise to defend infants like Maud and Fergus? Does the welfare of babies now require nothing from him except a distaste for our fallen world in which violence must be met, one way or another?

This is a man who once could face the hard things of life. In his 1960 "To Christ Our Lord," Kinnell told of a

boy who had hunted the bird his mother was preparing for Christmas dinner: *He had not wanted to shoot. The sound / Of wings beating into the hushed morning / Had stirred his love . . . / and he wondered, / Even famishing, could he fire? Then he fired*. The poem ends:

Now the grace praised his wicked act. At its end
The bird on the plate
Stared at his stricken appetite.
There had been nothing to do but surrender,
To kill and to eat; he ate as he had killed, with wonder.

At night on snowshoes on the drifting field
He wondered again, for whom had love stirred?
The stars glittered on the snow and nothing answered.
Then the Swan spread her wings, cross of the cold north,
The pattern and mirror of the acts of earth.

What "To Christ Our Lord" sees is that responsibility must be taken in this world for both the use of force and the refusal to use it. All violence is crucifixion: The *cross of the cold north* is *the pattern . . . of the acts of earth*. But how are we, by that fact, relieved of either the necessity to act or the commandment to love?

In a 1932 debate in *Christian Century* over the possibility of American intervention against the Japanese in Manchuria—a mostly forgotten historical parallel to the current question of Iraq—the theological ethicist H. Richard Niebuhr wrote of what he called "the grace of doing nothing." In the next issue, his brother Reinhold Niebuhr replied, "I realize quite well that my brother's position both in its ethical perfectionism and its apocalyptic note is closer to the gospel." But, he added, "I find it impossible to envisage a society of pure love as long as man remains man. . . . The hope of attaining an ethical goal . . . without coercion . . . is an illusion which was spread chiefly among the comfortable classes." It is this that Galway Kinnell

Agence France Presse

The nudist protest group "Baring Witness" spells out "No War" on a hillside in northern California, January 14, 2003.

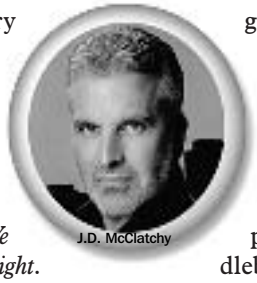
once understood: *He ate as he had killed, with wonder*.

Remember the Postern of Fate? Disaster's Cavern? The Fort of Fear? That was the gate that opens on the dangerous road that leads to Baghdad in the Edwardian poet James Elroy Flecker's "The Gates of Damascus." The poem contains resources for our antiwar poets, if they had the wit to recall Flecker—particularly when the watchman at the gate curses the caravan that will not listen to his warnings against taking the desert road: *Pass then, pass all! "Baghdad!" ye cry, and down the billows of blue sky / Ye beat the bell that beats to hell, and who shall thrust you back? Not I.*

But maybe our contemporaries are wise not to quote "The Gates of Damascus," for—in lines that have been running through my mind all week—the watchman had first tried to warn the travelers passing under the gateway: *Pass not beneath, O Caravan, or pass not singing. Have you heard / That silence where the birds are dead yet something pipeth like a bird?* Todd Swift's *100 Poets Against the War* and Sam Hamill's thousands of poetic statements are the place where the poetry is dead yet still something pipeth, on and on—and on and on.

David Lehman

About the controversy roiled up by Mrs. Bush's poetry event, several commentators have been moved to quote William Butler Yeats's "On Being Asked for a War Poem": *I think it better that in times like these / A poet keep his mouth shut, for in truth / We have no gift to set a statesman right*. Almost as common is pitting Shelley's declaration that poets are "the unacknowledged legislators of the world" against Auden's claim that *poetry makes nothing happen*.



J.D. McClatchy

And yet, in the months after the attacks of September 11, the entire poetic community of America turned to public expression. The Internet is full of it: over 35,000 poems, by the lowest count. Most of this is bad poetry, and even the better poems are almost entirely ephemeral. There was, however, a moment in it all of consensus, an instant in which both the oblivious general culture and the disdainful poetic culture were moved by shock and grief to join on the plane of high seriousness. After initially dismissing the idea of writing an official laureate's poem, even Billy Collins was drawn into the national mood and read to Congress on the attacks' anniversary a poem called "The Names."

That consensus cannot be allowed to stand, or people like Sam Hamill must fade away. If poetry becomes again middlebrow art, what identity remains for the leftist poets? They defined themselves as adversarial to everything in the culture, politics, and lives of the middlebrow. And literary cachet is all that they have left.

In our poets against the war, you can perceive Vietnam envy, gleeful adolescent ill-manners, and straightforward political partisanship. But none of that entirely explains the *desperation* to make themselves matter as poets—even if the cost is writing what they must know doesn't matter as poetry, even if most of the verses collected by Swift and Hamill are attempts to prevent the emergence of a world in which poetry matters. How could they allow a middlebrow Republican like Mrs. Bush to host a poetry event? Their deepest self-understanding requires that such things not be. ♦

Books in Brief

***I Can Fly: The R. Kelly Story* by Kim L. Dulaney (Unique Expressions, 32 pp., $13).** His poor mother. What else is there to say after learning that singer R. Kelly, arrested twice in the last two years on kiddie-porn charges, credits dear old mom with his success in life? So one learns from *I Can Fly*, the inspirational children's book based on the rags-to-riches tale of the self-described "R&B thug." Recently, Unique Expressions, the publisher of *I Can Fly*, confirmed that it would be republishing the book. This came just days after R. Kelly's arrest in Florida on twelve counts of child pornography for possessing images of himself "involved in sexual conduct with a minor." Between this bust and his arrest last June in Chicago, the thirty-six-year-old performer faces sixty years in prison.

It goes without saying that any man who's been arrested for child pornography (and now faces various civil suits alleging statutory rape) should no longer be considered a proper subject for a children's book. Not that Kelly was ever general-audience material. Prior to *I Can Fly*'s original release in 1998 (the title comes from Kelly's 1996 hit "I Believe I Can Fly," whose message of self-divinity is quite popular in elementary schools), the singer had already settled one civil action, accusing him of having sex with a fifteen-year-old whom he encouraged to participate in group sex. Nor is the book's existence justified by Kelly's music: Its mood and lyrics range from sappy to filthy, and they alone make him an unfit role model. Put it this way: No child should know anything about R. Kelly. But maybe that whole flying thing will come in handy when he's locked up.

—David Skinner

***Feminist Fantasies* by Phyllis Schlafly (Spence, 256 pp., $27.95).** *Feminist Fantasies* isn't really about feminism—it's about tax law and child care, pornography and pop culture, education and national defense. In 92 pieces written from 1972 to 2002, Phyllis Schlafly confronts the left-wing assaults on women and families with arguments built from logic, statistics, and wit. She occasionally repeats herself, but always makes her case as few opponents of the feminist lobby would dare.

On statutory rape and date rape laws, she writes: "The feminists' double standard is fascinating. They want a girl of twelve or thirteen years to be able to consent so her seducer can go scot-free. But they want a professional woman of thirty to be able to consent at midnight and then change her mind two days later and prosecute her erstwhile friends for criminal rape." And on women in the military: "America is fortunate that the warrior culture has survived thirty years of feminist fantasies and that some men are still macho enough to relish the opportunity to engage and kill the bad guys of the world."

But she hasn't hesitated to include along with her dissection of policy initiatives and day care data more lighthearted lobs at feminists: "A feminist will hiss and boo you if you use the terms 'girl' or 'lady'; a lady will not. In fact, a lady will probably never hiss or boo at all."

Choppy editing and a scarcity of footnotes indicating original contexts (congressional testimony, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*) are frustrating. And much of the material seems dated—America's flirtation with universal day care and an Equal Rights Amendment is essentially over.

In this sense, Phyllis Schlafly is a victim of her own success. Mainstream political discourse has more or less relegated radical feminist groups to taking on created controversies such as the all-male membership at Augusta National Golf Club. At one time, ERA was a mere three states away from ratification. In her 1986 post-mortem on that failed legislation, Schlafly presents six reasons for its ultimate failure, but skips the most significant: her own efforts to change the nation's mind.

"The claim that American women are downtrodden and unfairly treated is the fraud of the century," Schlafly wrote in her first salvo against ERA. "Why should we lower ourselves to 'equal rights' when we already have the status of special privilege?"

—Lila Arzua

édition internationale
Le Monde
SÉLECTION HEBDOMADAIRE – SAMEDI 8 FÉVRIER 2003

Saddam Surrenders to French! Terrified By Prospect of More Speeches

In a stunning turnaround, Saddam Hussein has relinquished his grip on the nation of Iraq and fled Baghdad. "Not regional offices!" the mass murderer was reported to have shrieked while fleeing from one of his presidential palaces. Earlier in the week French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin had suggested that if Saddam did not disarm, U.N. inspectors should contemplate opening regional offices around Iraq.

Historians note that never before in human history has a genocidal tyrant been so intimidated by a man named Dominique. Nonetheless, the Frenchman's manly and aggressive presentation before the Security Council surely turned the tide in the global showdown. Threatening to explore the "uncertainties" and "unresolved issues" relating to Iraq's compliance with U.N. resolutions, de Villepin raised the specter of further French action.

"We will not rule out anything," the French official menaced, suggesting that the U.N. should double or even triple the number of inspectors. This would have caused massive inconvenience for Iraqi officials, who would have been forced to find hotel rooms for the extra inspectors and deal with their demands for café au lait and pain au chocolat each morning.

In addition, France threatened to create a new bureaucracy within the UNMOVIC structure, which would almost certainly have pushed Iraq's ability to handle U.N. paperwork beyond the breaking point.

Intelligence officials had long believed that Saddam simply could not handle a French barrage of condescension and pretentiousness. Thus, deploying a form of psychological warfare too subtle for primitive Americans to grasp, the Chirac government loosed a steady barrage of abstractions and paradoxes at the Iraqi leader. He finally cracked under the assault.


AFP

Dominique de Villepin

par Jean de la Doucement