



laetus in praesens

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The Coalition of the Willy

musings on the global challenge of penile servitude

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[Introduction](#)

[Elusive willy](#)

[Obtrusive penile preoccupations](#)

[Penile servitude](#)

[Terror and the Willies](#)

[Willy-nilly](#)

[Challenge of civilization: freeing willy?](#)

[Spirit of change: learning from Willy](#)

[References](#)

Introduction

Just as there is an unrecognized logic to America's "War against Terror" (see *War against Terra*, 2002), a similar problem of pronunciation signals a challenge to comprehension in relation to the "Coalition of the Willing" and its preoccupation with weapons of mass destruction. What follows is an exploration of the consequences of the distinction, if any, between slurred pronunciation of "Willing" and "Willy" in many English and American dialects -- and by world leaders. Both terms derive their meaning from "will" -- the latter through both the diminutive of the proper name "William" (from "will" (desire) and "helmut" (protection) and as a composite of "will-ye". The unconscious implications are also explored.

Prior to the UN Security Council debate relating to intervention in Iraq, the US administration had boasted of more than 40 countries in its "ä...Coalition of the Willing," but refused to identify these coalition members. Public understanding of the scope of Coalition of the Willing dates from a formal statement by U.S. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell on 18 March 2003, who released a list of 30 countries claimed to have agreed to be publicly identified as members of the alliance [more]. The [Institute for Policy Studies](#) (IPS) subsequently compiled an analysis of 34 nations cited in press reports as supporters of the U.S. position on Iraq (see *Coalition of the Willing or Coalition of the Coerced?*, 2003). The IPS study found that "most were recruited through coercion, bullying, and bribery."

The concern here is that the common slang use of the term "willy", to denote "penis", has to some degree become conceptually conflated with "willing" -- aided by slurred pronunciation. This confusion reinforces, and is reinforced by, the preoccupation with weapons of mass destruction -- as the most extreme form of phallic symbolism. The confusion is exacerbated by recognition of the phallic symbolism of the World Trade Center and the psychic impact of what was experienced by many as a form of castration of the American psyche through its destruction (see George Lakoff, *Metaphors of Terror*, 2001). According to Lakoff, "Towers are symbols of phallic power and their collapse reinforces the idea of loss of power.... The planes as penetrating the towers with a plume of heat. The Pentagon, a vaginal image from the air, penetrated by the plane as missile. These come from women who felt violated both by the attack and the images".

Elusive willy

Like the elusive weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, references to "willy" as a euphemism for "penis" are seemingly rare on the web -- notably in American online dictionaries. This may be the consequence of the operation of so-called "nanny programs" or a policy of self-censorship. "Penis" is of course typically a term that may figure in the black lists of "nanny programs". However references to "willy" do exist as the following indicate:

- The *Dictionary of Playground Slang* describes a form of playground hazing termed a "willy operation".
- "Willy" is appropriately identified on [SlangSite.com](#) -- a dictionary of slang, webspoken, made up words, and colloquialisms
- In the *Spoken English Dictionary, England to USA* (an English to English dictionary translating spoken English in England to the USA equivalent) which includes words and phrases collected from multiple web sites "willy" is recognized as the equivalent of "penis", suggesting that the term is not used in American English

- The online *Sex Dictionary* recognizes "willy" as a slang term for "penis".
- The online *Open Dictionary* recognizes willy as a synonym for "penis"
- The UK *Armed Forces Friends: Military slang* site lists a "willy watcher" as a member of the compulsory drugs testing team.
- The *Glossary of Sexual Slang* lists "willy" as a synonym for "penis"
- The *American-British British-American Dictionary for English Speaking People* lists "willy" as being mainly used by children

There are interesting cases where "willy", used in other contexts, may have acquired some of its widespread popularity through *double entendre*, notably amongst English-speaking members of the Coalition of the Willing. Examples are:

- The *Free Willy* movies were based on a killer whale named Keiko [[more](#)]
- The *British Quotes, Sayings and Slang* quotes Margaret Thatcher: "I don't know what I would do without Whitelaw. Everyone should have a Willy."
- A movie *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) was based on a children's story by Roald Dahl -- and gave rise to a sex scandal spoof tale [[more](#)]

The question is whether there is some interplay between the elusiveness of "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq and the repression of discourse about "penis" in western (and especially American) media -- and notably of its representation. This elusiveness contrasts with what is permissible exposure with respect to women, whether as "sex objects" or otherwise. Photographer Wolfgang Tillmans ([Page 3 stummas!](#), *Guardian*, 19 April 2004) argues:

For a man to experience the same level of exposure and commitment to the image as a woman posing topless, he must appear bottomless....It's ridiculous that supposedly rational people can be so blind to this inequality. And it's not just an inequality between men and women. It is still considered more obscene to show two men kissing... on TV than it is to show two men kill each other. How can something as atrocious as the destruction of two men be acceptable, and the sight of men kissing scandalous? This isn't just upsetting. It's obscene. Essentially, ideas of obscenity are defined by powerful political interests.

How might such mindsets work in relation to "weapons of mass destruction" -- especially given some perceptions (and uses) of a penis as a weapon, sheathed or otherwise? Is it possible that the prudishness with respect to "penis" -- necessitating its articulation through possibly childish euphemisms such as "willy" [[more](#)] -- evokes a form of prudishness in relation to "weapons of mass destruction"?

Just as the eyes may be averted from full frontal public displays of male nudity, is it possible that the unconscious association to phallic symbols like "weapons of mass destruction" may effectively lead the eyes to be "averted", thus frustrating any search. "Weapons of mass destruction", like any penis, must necessarily be concealed in modern society -- both are only to be used in secret as a form of "stealth technology". This may in no way constrain the continuing curiosity with regard to "weapons of mass destruction", just as curiosity continues with respect to penile displays. The elusive quality of the search for weapons of mass destruction is also neatly suggested by folk legends concerning the wraith-like "Will-o-the-Wisp" that leads the unwary dangerously astray.

Does this not suggest that the "Coalition of the Willing" might well be understood by many, if only unconsciously, as the "Coalition of the Willy"? Given Bush's pronunciation, perhaps this understanding was even a factor in Tony Blair's historical endorsement of the Coalition.

The possibility seems to have been recognized in Australia in March 2003, where a pop group (Panda Flan Attack) produced an anti-war song *Coalition Of The Willy* exploring the psycho-physical challenges of the American leadership in "attacking Saddam's palace" [[more](#)]. It was also noted by Robin Harrison (*Byron Shire Echo* April 2003), again in Australia -- a country whose parliament is renowned for its use of unparliamentary language. However, in the USA, the Coalition of the Willing has only been referred to as the "Coalition of the Willies" (see Eric Umansky, *Coalition of the Willies*, March 2004).

Obtrusive penile preoccupations

Most recipients of e-mail tend to be confronted on a daily basis with a proportion of incoming communications focusing on the supposed preoccupation of men with their penis size and erectile effectiveness. These are accompanied in equal numbers by communications regarding Viagra or its equivalents. Many of these stress the need to remedy impotence.

What does this preoccupation suggest about the American culture -- from which so many of these communications originate? Will history wonder why the "strongest country of the world" -- the "only superpower" on the planet -- should be so psychically traumatized by its unconscious weaknesses? It might be assumed that as the creator of the "Coalition of the Willy", George W Bush, might be unique in having this preoccupation. And yet his rival for the presidency, Senator John Kerry, has as a major campaigning theme to "make America strong again" [[more](#) | [more](#)]. Robert Kagan, in a discussion of the psychology of European weakness in relation to American power, unwittingly makes a point of fundamental relevance to the capacity to identify any American weakness: "The incapacity to respond to threats leads not only to tolerance but sometimes to denial" (*Power and Weakness*, *Policy Review*, June 2002). The issue is the nature of the threats about which others recognize that America is in long and deep denial. Some would argue that these include the condition of large segments of humanity that so incites the righteousness of terrorists. Others would focus on the unrestrained consumption of non-renewable resources.

Robert Jay Lifton (*The Super Power Syndrome: America's Apocalyptic Confrontation with the World*, 2003) argues with respect to the USA that: "beneath its belligerence, I believe the country is enmeshed in a landscape of fear." The war undertaken against terrorism is a manifestation of what he is convinced is a "superpower syndrome," a medical metaphor meant to suggest "aberrant behavior that is not just random but part of a more general psychological and political constellation." [[more](#)] Lifton specifically discusses [superpower vulnerability](#). Elsewhere (*American Apocalypse*, 2003) he makes the point:

With both Al Qaeda and the Nazis, humiliation could, through manipulation but also powerful self-conviction, be transformed into exaggerated expressions of violence. That psychological transformation of weakness and shame into a collective sense of pride and life-power, as well as power over others, can release enormous amounts of aggressive energy. Such dangerous potential has been present from the beginning in the American "war" on terrorism

In what way could a superpower perceive itself to be "weak" according to its own criteria? What degree of unconscious conceptual association is to be found between a collective notion of "making strong again" and the challenges of a man -- or his companion -- faced with erectile dysfunction? Thom Hartmann points, for example, to evidence that conservatives in the USA are distracting workers from their job anxiety by suggesting that they are effectively being "castrated" by women (*Conservatives Target Testicles*, 2003).

Is it the terrorists that emerged so stealthily to castrate the American psyche that justify that perspective? And yet, before George W Bush, the presidency of Bill Clinton ended with a worldwide media focus on his use of his penis in the Oval Office -- and the lies he told about it that justified his nickname "Slick Willy" [[more](#) | [more](#)]. Is it that the USA is unable to respond to the real problems that challenge the planet (water shortage, overpopulation, AIDS, global warming, etc) and is only effective in erecting taller skyscrapers and launching phallic vehicles to ovoid distant planets? (Eric S. Rabkin. *The Romance of Space Travel: On the Sexual Iconography of Spacecraft*, 2002)

As noted elsewhere (see *Psychology of Sustainability Embodying cyclic environmental processes*, 2002):

There is an historical irony to the fact that the recent period, which has seen emergence of interest in sustainability as a policy issue for states, has also seen the emergence into public debate of the challenges of male impotence and erectile dysfunction -- namely the unsustainability of erections. It is also ironic that a dangerous consequence of pollution and environmental stress has been the proliferation of oestrogen surrogates, falling sperm counts, scrambling of the male hormone, all leading to the "feminization of nature" [[more](#)]. But in the search for balance from a softer perspective, the question is who is acknowledging the dysfunctions that are liable to become obvious as a consequence of feminine initiatives -- in an immediate future in which, ironically, the fertility of the planet may prove inadequate to sustain the human population.

In such a context, where rockets, smokestacks and skyscrapers become prime penile substitutes in the psychology of a nation, it is clear that any failure of such substitutes (as with Challenger-type disasters) has effects on the collective psyche similar to the trauma of failure to "get it up" and the anxieties relating to "keeping it up" and being assured of good "performance". The whole "shock and awe" operating in Iraq may be an example of a primitive, unconscious, collective effort, on the part of the "Coalition of the Willy", to demonstrate its manhood to the world. The degree of overwhelming force required to sustain such an operation is suggestive of the anxieties associated with possible failure to "get it up". From such a perspective it is no wonder that "emissions" from industries and vehicles are unconsciously associated with virility -- reinforcing more obvious arguments for their curtailment, if a nation is to continue to be perceived as powerful.

Penile servitude

America is increasingly renowned for the proportion of its population that is incarcerated at any one time -- and the proportion of the population that have been incarcerated at some time. Penal institutions are a major preoccupation of the US government.

Unfortunately -- as with the confusion associated with "willy" -- "penal" (as in "penal institutions") is an adjective readily confused with "penile" (as in "penile enlargement"). A very common, if not deliberate, misspelling in web documents is that of "penal enlargement" -- not intended to signify the enlargement of prisons. As noted by Stephen Gowans (*Inhumane Civilization*, 3 September 2001) :

Invariably, "punishment" is trotted out to explain why convicted criminals must be treated barbarously. "They must be punished. They did wrong," goes the refrain, uttered from tens of thousands of lips in the sure knowledge that if the argument is completely untenable at least everyone else agrees with it. One wonders whether there are deep-seated psychological roots behind calls for penal enlargement....at least on the part of men.

Utah Philipps makes the point that "Conservatives think that the solution to every problem is punishment: 'bigger prisons, more prisons.' Well, I can understand why the conservative mind would be drawn to penal enlargement ..." [[more](#)] Clearly the functions of officers in penal institutions risk being misunderstood in the absence of careful pronunciation..

Feminists have notably acknowledged the challenge of lifelong penile servitude -- particularly in order to communicate their concerns to men only familiar with penal servitude.

The USA, as the standard bearer of the values of civilization, is unfortunate in having had a significant number of presidents with documented extramarital phallic preoccupations: Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Buchanan, Cleveland, Wilson, Harding, Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Bush, and Clinton [[more](#)]. Various studies have explored whether this proclivity had significant impact on policy-making. Psychohistory may yet establish a relationship between Kennedy's womanizing and the Cuban missile crisis. Psychologists have commented on Clinton's much-publicized special use of a cigar in relation to compensation for fear of impotency and erectile dysfunction (Paul Lowinger, *Bill Clinton Meets The Shrink: A psychological study of President William Jefferson Clinton*, 1998; Paul Fick, *The Dysfunctional President: Understanding the Compulsions of Bill Clinton*, 1998; Sue Erison Bloland, *Bill Clinton and John F. Kennedy: The Dark Side of Charisma*, 2000) .

For the most powerful man in the world, do such personal challenges extend in some cases to mindsets similar to sado-masochism -- with confusing public policy associations concerning domination, "penile servitude" and "penile restraint"? In the case of both Clinton and Bush, various commentators focus on their Oedipal complexes. How might psychohistory then recognize the significance for penal policies, penal enlargement -- and even the abusive treatment of detainees in places like Abu Ghraib -- and their association with sexual perversion? (see Justin Frank. *Bush on the Couch: Inside the Mind of the President*, 2004; Richard Broderick, *Oedipus Wrecks: Bring me the head of Saddam Hussein!* 2003) [more]. There is a curious parallel between the focus on the public deception associated with Clinton's cigars and that associated with Bush's equally phallic WMD.

Does the "cultural climate" induced by such mindsets, notably in the intelligence community, evoke the imagery of such abuse as a perverted form of stimulus necessary to sustain a sense of potency -- as leader of the "Coalition of the Willy"? Those stimulated by visual pornography would surely agree with Donald Rumsfeld's formal statement as US Secretary of Defence (7 May 2004): "It is the photographs that gives one the vivid realization of what actually took place...Words don't do it." [more]. Joanna Bourke discusses the sexual aspect of the torture associated with such pictures (*Torture as pornography*, 2004)

Terror and the Willies

Feminist author, Robin Morgan (*The Demon Lover: The Roots of Terrorism*, 1989) focuses on the psychological and political roots of terrorism, making a clear association to phallic drives. This was subsequently challenged by a commentator in the light of the feminisation of the current wave of terrorism and the increasing numbers of women suicide bombers -- which "make Morgan's focus on willies as the root of terrorism now seem quaint" [more | more]. Rather than focus on women as the "other", Harry Davidson (*The Psychology of Sadistic Terrorism*, 2004) focuses on the mistreatment of any people who are different: "Race and religion are among the more prominent ways of grouping people. History indicates a systemic American need to brutalize others".

Curiously the whole missile industry in the USA, following World War II, was initiated by the development and testing of several types, notably including power-driven bombs called "Weary Willies" -- planes loaded with explosives and directed by remote control [more | more].

The term "Willy Peter" is used in the military to describe weaponized white phosphorus, commonly employed as an incendiary device in bombs, rockets and grenades -- and extensively used against the Japanese in World War II, in Vietnam, as well as in Iraq. Such use of white hot fire against the enemies of Christendom is a curious historical revenge on the crusaders' first experience of its use against them by the Saracens in 1095. The **Greek Fire** of the Saracens was a gelatinous flammable liquid composed mostly of naphtha, sulfur and quicklime. Like Willy Peter it penetrated though the strongest armor, bringing excruciating pain and agonizing death.

In this context, there is a different association to "willy" that is of particular relevance to the preoccupations of the "Coalition of the Willy" and its framing of the "clash of civilizations". This is due to the plural form of "willy" -- unrelated to "penis", or seemingly so -- as in "it gives me the willies" [more]. It then signifies: "a state of nervous restlessness or agitation", or a "feeling of uneasiness".

Ironically, by extension, "willies" may also be associated with some degree of terror -- as charmingly recounted in a children's story by Aaron Shepard (*The Boy Who Wanted the Willies*). In seeking a standard transport vehicle for the British SAS crack force during World War II, the "Willies Jeep" proved to be a case of "love at first sight" according to military history [more]. The 9/11 attack was even framed in terms of the "willies" by Ed McManus (*Killing Innocents: Does Anyone Out There Care?* February 2002):

The September attack has given us a severe case of the willies. Most of us are so scared that we have bought into this bomb-them-back-to-the-Stone-Age mentality, even if it means killing off hundreds or thousands of innocent people.

George Bush's policies are themselves described by some as "giving them the willies" -- as in the case of Charlotte Cooper (*Terror Time*):

But Bush's perspective on terrorism should be giving the willies to anyone who is a member of any social group that has ever stood on the margins of mainstream culture. Forgive me for paraphrasing that famous anti-fascist poem, but if we don't speak out for others, one day they'll be coming after us.

Others extend this perception to George Bush himself, as in the case of Michael Wolff (*Saint George Rallying Around a Wartime President is One Thing. But Why Does Dubya Remain Entirely Untouchable Even as We Question His Lieutenants -- and His Increasingly Disturbing Policies?* (*New York Magazine*, 10 December 2001)

To get the willies from George W. Bush, to distrust the man, to have your stomach roll a bit when you hear him speak, is to feel like the most churlish and sullen of adolescents. He's the unappealing uncle -- with his cold eye on you -- whose house you're stuck at this holiday season. While you're trying to shut out his existence, everybody else is sucking up to him.

Ironically, Senator John Edwards, the running mate of John Kerry for the American presidency, has been described as "the only one who gives Republican political strategists the willies" [more].

Such perceptions of American presidential policies are not new. As noted by Joseph R. Stromberg (*Remembering With Astonishment Woodrow Wilson's Reign of Terror in Defense of "Freedom"*, September 2001) in discussing how "The Anglophile Willies Find Us A War":

No, historians don't dwell on Woodrow's reign of terror. They imagine that "reactionary" subordinates and local bullies did it all,

while Woodrow was busy running the war effort and planning the better world to come. Such a kindly fellow was our Woodrow. Historians, in short, would rather devote whole chapters to "McCarthyism," which inconvenienced a few Stalinists for a time, than deal with a real saga of repression and embarrassingly stupid violence....

To read the story of American official and popular attitudes toward our allegedly highly valued freedoms during World War I is to conclude that the country was overrun with vicious morons. Some of the morons were judges, legislators, and bureaucrats. Others arose from the masses, so to speak, to demand that the people make political war on themselves, the better to fight those terrible Germans.

Some have argued that, through its particular focus on terrorism, the USA is deliberately enhancing a climate of fear in order to justify introduction of repressive legislation and other policies undermining civil rights, as notably indicated by Congressman Jim McDermott (*Fear Factory The Bush administration's dangerous manufacturing of post-9-11 dread*, 2003). Through the media (as "weapons of mass distraction"), such manipulation of the perception of threat is a classic means by which those in power can evoke the support of their populations. This approach to governance -- even to world governance -- might be understood as one of "giving people the willies" (see *Promoting a Singular Global Threat -- Terrorism: Strategy of choice for world governance*, 2002). This is reminiscent of parental governance of children by threats of the bogeyman.

Willy-nilly

Whilst there is little explicit recognition on the web of the "Coalition of the Willy", there are however a number of references to the "Coalition of the Willy-Nilly". "Willy-nilly" implies in a random, haphazard manner -- typical of the fire fighting exchanges, and the indiscriminate release of cluster bombs, that have led to the deaths of so many civilians in Iraq.

There is a curious symmetry to the attacks of terrorists -- apparently random, indiscriminate or "willy-nilly" -- and the increasingly arbitrary, "search and seizure" tactics adopted by the security services in response. The lack of the coherence to the "war against terrorism" may perhaps indeed be understood as a feature of a "Coalition of the Willy-Nilly".

But references to the "Coalition of the Willy-Nilly" predate the actual attack on Iraq and seem to refer to the haphazard attempts to develop a clear consensus within the UN Security Council -- as well as the membership of the coalition being itself perceived as haphazard. A more politically significant interpretation is evident in the etymology of "willy-nilly" as an alteration of "will ye (or he), nill ye (or he)", or "be you (or he) willing, be you (or he) unwilling". (*American Heritage Dictionary*) -- also described as a contraction of "will I, nill I", namely "with or without the will of the person concerned." (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). This is an unfortunately accurate assessment of how the coalition was assembled -- through coercion where necessary, as noted earlier.

However the probable etymological origins of "willy" -- as "will ye (or he)" -- again reinforce the association with anxieties concerning possible erectile dysfunction of a flaccid "one-eyed-willy" when put to the challenge. This accords with the real questions about whether the Coalition of the Willing would be able to get its act together -- justifying questioning reference to it as the "Coalition of the Willy".

Challenge of civilization: freeing Willy?

The major justification advanced for the actions of the Coalition of the Willing is that of ensuring liberation and freedom of oppressed peoples. The fundamental freedom of the will has been defended by Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, René Descartes, John Locke, and many others of very different schools of thought [more]. It may be understood in terms of the preoccupation of theologian Jonathan Edwards (*On the Freedom Of Will* (1725-1726) and others, including Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Arthur Schopenhauer (*The World as Will and Idea*, 1818) and Ludwig Wittgenstein. It has thus proven to be a primary theme of western philosophy.

The challenge of the freedom of the will is that of overcoming the means by which it tends to be constrained -- notably under conditions of oppression or where choice is limited arbitrarily. Arthur M. Young. (*The Geometry of Meaning*, 1976), in discussing free will, traces the origins of the challenge to the Egyptian myth of the dismemberment of Osiris by Set:

Set throws the pieces into the marsh. Isis, Osiris' sister and mate, gathers them up and finds all but the penis [for which she provides a reasonable facsimile]. Despite this deficiency, Isis conceives from the assembled corpse the infant Horus, the hero who conquers Set and becomes the Sun God. What is the penis of Osiris? We have by this time become accustomed to the Freudian ploy: "What is the meaning of (the Tower of Pisa, climbing Mount Everest, a golf club, kitchen knives)?" "A sex symbol," says the shrink. But now we have a myth about the penis. What does that mean? We can no longer say simply that it is a sex symbol. That tells us nothing. *Taking the myth in its totality, we can see that what is lost when Osiris is dismembered is wholeness*. Like a car disassembled and no longer a car, Osiris is not capable of generation, not because he lacks a penis, but because, since he is not a whole person, he is not able to initiate, to be cause. This, then, is the meaning of the penis [ie free will]. It is the power of generation, and it is the person in his capacity to initiate new endeavors, to create, to make things happen. [emphasis added] [more]

Clearly, in its defence of freedom, the Coalition of the Willing is effectively defending the wholeness exemplified by the freedom of "willy" -- further justifying any framing of it as a "Coalition of the Willy". The question is whether the focus of the Coalition has taken on a form of misplaced concreteness -- exemplified by the desperate promotion of freedom for "willy" in all matters sexual, as much regretted by cultures that perceive western civilization as hedonistic. It is in this sense that it is far from surprising that the recreational activities of Coalition military forces have been so controversially associated with sex and rape (Saigon, Okinawa, Kosovo). However it is

the unconstrained freedom of "willy" that is contributing so directly to overpopulation and the degradation of conditions on the planet -- with the full support of the Christian-inspired leadership of the Coalition.

It is profoundly ironic that the "Coalition of the Willy" so fiercely defends such physical freedom -- to the extent of curtailing and penalizing any form of contraceptive. And yet, in subtler matters conceptual, the Christian-inspired leadership seeks to impose what can best be described as "conceptual contraceptives" -- severely constraining dissidence and fruitful intercourse with other cultural perspectives. The justifying slogan is "Either with us, or against us" as announced by George Bush (21 September 2001; 6 November 2001) [more]. This might be seen to follow from one definition of "will" as: "not opposed in mind" (*Webster's 1913 Dictionary*). How then does any Coalition of the Willing elicit any fruitful mutuality from others who do not share its views? This of course is the fundamental challenge of "willy" -- if he is to avoid being an instrument of rape. From the perspective of the "Coalition of the Willy", the subtext of the slogan could be better understood as "Either you are willing, or we rape you".

There may be a case for recognizing American presidential womanizing, culminating in Bill Clinton's use of his cigar, as having pioneered a new breakthrough in freeing "willy". This builds on the traditional practices of governance down the ages -- notably the selection and seclusion of concubines. From covert activities in the White House in the 1990s leading to impeachment [more], and thanks to George Bush's rapid implementation of what could be more correctly known as the Patriarch Act, the agents of the US government are now personally empowered to penetrate the cavities of any citizens they select and to hold them in seclusion at their pleasure -- photographing them under any conditions for later perusal. Special facilities to this end have been constructed at every airport. The general population has largely been persuaded to accept such government intervention willingly -- as was presumably the case in past eras, notably with respect to *droit de seigneur*.

The curious contrast to the traditional prerogative of rulers is that penetration of cavities is done either by penile substitutes (in interrogation facilities), as notably pioneered by Clinton with his cigar, and/or manually with the use of latex gloves as condom-like protective coverings. More curious however is that the same recent period saw rapid imposition of legal constraints on the previously widespread freedom of the population to celebrate and enjoy the use of the most visible symbol of the freedom of "willy", namely the cigarette (or the cigar). This has been in many respects the population's ideal symbol (and reminder) of the capacity of "willy" to transform freely from flaccidity into a firm vehicle of white hot passion under any conditions.

It would appear that, although "willy" continues to be freed symbolically, this freedom is increasingly a prerogative of government. The challenge of increasing population on the one hand, and increasing sexually related violence on the other, suggests that this symbolic freedom is however inadequately integrated with its physical dimension.

The derivation of willy-nilly also points to a transcendent form of freedom quite distinct from the "either with us, or against us" mentality of the Coalition of the Willing. Willy-nilly may then be understood in terms of the Sanskrit expression *Neti Neti* ("Not this, Not that") indicative of a degree of freedom that is not associated with any particular form, action or understanding of reality. It points to the wholeness dismembered in the myth of Set-Osiris-Isis -- as symbolized by the missing penis and its facsimiles (see above). It is the experience of actual reality that arises when the mind ceases its habitual tendencies to judge, categorize, distinguish, and divide. [more]

The challenge is how to transform the misplaced concreteness of phallic spatial exploration in rockets into an exploration of more highly integrated dimensions (*Entering Alternative Realities -- Astronautics vs Noonautics: isomorphism between launching aerospace vehicles and launching vehicles of awareness*, 2002). It is unfortunate that George Bush, Tony Blair and John Howard all reduce such inner exploration to the only faith of which they have any comprehension -- avoiding the multidimensional challenge of integrating the understandings of the variety of faiths as a means of transcending the religious conflict on which they personally thrive.

Given the derivation of "William" noted earlier (as "will" plus "helmut", as "protection"), it might of course also be said that the challenge for the international community is to find a means of freeing the suppressed "William" in its leader, George W Bush, as the most powerful man in the world -- after the mishandled attempt at this transformation by his predecessor William Jefferson Clinton! How can the will transcend its need for protection -- its "contraceptive" from a "willy" perspective?

Willy's Search of an Exit Strategy from Iraq (November 2006)

A report in the *Washington Post* indicates that the Pentagon is likely to employ a hybrid exit strategy between three broad options identified as: "Go Big", "Go Long" and "Go Home". The hybrid has been dubbed: "Go Big but Short While Transitioning to Go Long". (Julian Borger, *'Go Big but Short While Transitioning to Go Long'*, *The Guardian*, 21 November 2006)

They lied their way into Iraq. Now they are trying to lie their way out Bush and Blair will blame anyone but themselves for the consequences of their disastrous war -- even its victims (Gary Younge, *The Guardian*, 27 November 2006)

Spirit of change: learning from Willy

The response of the Christian-inspired Coalition of the Willing to terror may be usefully described in the light of the biblical insight (*Matthew 26:41*): Whilst the spirit may have been willing, the flesh was weak -- as with "willy"!

The challenge of the "will" in collective terms is of course fundamental to the "political will to change" -- a challenge faced by many as individuals, not only with respect to sexual performance. But from this perspective, given that "getting it up" is only rarely an act of will, there are perhaps lessons to be learnt about the appropriateness of the relationship with any pattern of environmental stimuli and how they may evoke collective response. The perversions necessary in the case of the torturers of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay of course point to one extreme approach. The desperate attempts to beat flows of information out of people treated as meat are perhaps

indicative of psychological dimensions of the process -- more familiar in the case of some violent forms of masturbation..

The question is what are the viable approaches to collective action that honour the values that those directing the torturers of the "Coalition of the Willy" claim so vigorously to uphold?

Ironically, there may indeed be lessons to be learnt from "willy" in this respect -- jokingly recognized throughout the ages to have "a will of his own". It responds -- or fails to respond -- to stimuli which would enable it to perform its other prime function in the encounter with an "other". In humans, sexual health and function in relation to an "other" are important determinants of quality of life. The transformation of "willy" to this end, under certain circumstances, may offer valuable insights into the nature of the paradigm shift that is the desperate focus of so many change agents. Arguably "willy" certainly offers a very accessible model of transformation that is worth examining in some detail.

Proper erectile function depends on physical and psychological arousal, which then must be appropriately communicated to the body's nervous system. Its various components might be usefully compared to different communication systems in society -- effectively forming a "social nervous system", as notably envisaged with respect to an emerging "global brain" (*Simulating a Global Brain: using networks of international organizations, world problems, strategies, and values*, 2001). The question is how the environment arouses, or fails to arouse, and what is engaged in that process. How is the body politic aroused, and -- despite a plethora of environmental stimuli -- why is voter apathy so characteristic of the times?

The human nervous system is composed of two main divisions:

- **the voluntary (or central nervous system):** a large part of the brain and spinal cord, and most peripheral nerves, function to receive messages from the external environment (stimuli), and to respond to that stimuli. Erections occur in response to touch, smell, and visual stimuli (including photographs) that trigger pathways in the brain. Such so-called erotic stimuli are mostly learned and of cultural origin. In the case of the body politic, these are notably the **government-controlled information systems of the intelligence community**, like *Echelon* (that were used to interpret the stimuli from Iraq and triggered the processes that caused the US government to go into alert mode) -- the "peripheral" system being of course the networks of informants on the ground. The brain can also send signals directly to the erection center and cause it to kick into action, which is why looking at an exciting picture may cause an erection. Perhaps viewing of photographs by military intelligence should be understood in this light (causing military forces to move to a higher state of alert, eg "DEFCON 8"). The brain can also inhibit erection -- just as the military can be ordered to "stand down".
- **the involuntary (or autonomic system):** in conjunction with the endocrine system, controls internal organ functions and "homeostasis" of the body. It has two counter-balancing sub-systems:
 - **the sympathetic system:** responsible for such things as fear, the "fight or flight" reaction, and ejaculation. In the collective case this was the sympathetic response to the traumatic events associated with terrorist attack, notably fear and a "kick butt" reactivity. The media perform a primary, opinion forming role in evoking and sustaining such sympathetic responses in public opinion -- with the kind of government encouragement identified by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (*Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, 1988).
 - **the parasympathetic system:** responsible for calming and ensuring that organs cooperate -- but is also responsible for causing erections. In order to produce an erection, the parasympathetic nervous system must be "turned-on". In the collective case this might be understood as the more **orderly response of the organs and institutions of society**, outside direct government control -- notably the networks of civil society bodies, each governed by independent rules of procedure in dealing with events. The mutual reinforcement of such bodies then creates a culture or mindset supportive of collective (including military) action. People and institutions are then prepared to "stand up and be counted". It is triggering this response -- the mobilization of resources for change -- that is so problematic in response to the many challenges of the planet. As with "willy", the various organs do not necessarily cooperate as some would want, despite a plethora of creative approaches to achieving their mutual enhancement.

Since these two autonomic sub-systems operate against each other, fear -- or an orgasm -- can inhibit erections (or curtail them after ejaculation) resulting in detumescence. Impotence in men, namely the inability to get (and maintain) an erection on demand, results (regardless of the capability of ejaculation) from anxiety that they will not be able to perform sexually (for satisfactory intercourse). The dominance of the sympathetic nervous system actually makes it more difficult. Such "performance anxiety" triggers the sympathetic branch that is required to be quiet, since it otherwise acts as a barrier to "turning-on" the parasympathetic (relaxation) that needs to be operating to produce sexual arousal and erection. Psychological factors are the cause of erectile dysfunction approximately 10% of the time. This is commonly due to anxiety, stress, depression, excess fatigue or dissatisfaction with the relationship with the partner.

The systemic principles of this interaction within the autonomic system are fundamental to the challenge of any "Coalition of the Willy" in transforming itself into a "Coalition of the Willing" capable of sustained effective action. There is an irony to the fact that the "Coalition of the Willy" has endeavoured, in the case of terrorism, to use fear as the prime means of eliciting response to terrorism -- when this may indeed have been the most inappropriate way of ensuring effective and satisfactory action in response to that global challenge (see *Transforming the Encounter with Terrorism*, 2002). On this counterproductive cultivation of fear, Robert Jay Lifton notes:

Stepping off the superpower treadmill would also enable us to cease being a nation ruled by fear. Renouncing

omnipotence would make our leaders themselves less fearful of weakness, and diminish their inclination to instill fear in their people as a means of enlisting them for illusory military efforts at world hegemony. Without the need for invulnerability, everyone would have much less to be afraid of. [[more](#)]

Many organizations and movements, seeking enthusiastically to act in response to local and global challenges, might choose briefly to see to what extent they too may constitute a "Coalition of the Willy" -- full of potential, but not quite able to get their act together so as to engage in fruitfully sustainable initiatives with an expectant environment. Despite resolutions, encouragements, exhortations and information stimuli (including the appropriate photographs), somehow integrated collective action is inadequate to the challenge of the well-being of the planet.

Learning from penile dysfunction may therefore be a key to social change. Points of relevance include:

- In the USA, penile dysfunction affects over 15 million men [[more](#)]. According to the [International Centre for Prison Studies](#), the USA currently has the largest documented prison population in the world, both in absolute and proportional terms: 2.03 million currently in prison, or 701 per 100,000 population. It is ironic, but probable, that the number of male US citizens with a "penal record" is of the same order as the number with penile dysfunction. Similarly it might be said that there is a serious problem of "institutional impotence" for many bodies -- with many others operating under prison-like constraints, if only conceptually. Of course some form of "conceptual masturbation" -- perhaps characteristic of many conferences -- may provide a short-term satisfactory substitute. Or, as Dave Barry humorously indicates: "To the rest of America, making policy is a form of institutional masturbation; to Washingtonians, it is productive work. They love to make policy." [[more](#)]
- At the other extreme, a rare form of erectile dysfunction is the permanent erection ([priapism](#)) [[more](#)]. By comparison, the concern has been expressed, notably by Cynthia Mahmood, that US policies with regard to terrorism could lead to a world where the United States is in a permanent state of "military arousal", perpetually fighting an ill-defined and elusive enemy [[more](#)]. This could then be suitably named as "priapic warfare" [[more](#)]. Given US military admiration for Roman imperial endeavours, this suggests a line for further research (see Amly Richlin. *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humour*, 1983)
- Non-sexually related spontaneous erections happen often, especially in young men. These may perhaps be compared to the momentary enthusiastic responses of the young to social challenges. Premature ejaculation is often confused with erectile dysfunction. It is a condition in which the entire process of arousal, erection, ejaculation, and climax occur very rapidly, leaving the partner unsatisfied. This might usefully be compared to premature human responses to the challenges of the planet

Given that it is the ever increasing pressures of overpopulation that are exacerbating the problems of the planet -- and the irresponsibility of "willy" in the process -- perhaps there is a case for learning more from the paradigm shift in which he so readily engages in response to his micro-environment, when sensitively understood. Humanity's failure to do so, despite the stimuli of the macro-environment of nature, may continue to leave Gaia yearning and unsatisfied -- she may seek another lover!

In memory of :
George William Bush
William Jefferson Clinton

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