WATER AND OIL

The quote from Azzam Alwash, director of the Eden Again Project, with which Christopher Reed’s article on Iraq’s Marsh Arabs concludes (“Paradise Lost?” January-February, page 30), bears little relationship to reality. Alwash says that “the water Turkey is holding behind their dams has nothing to do with irrigation. They want to exchange water for oil.”

I traveled through much of the Harran plain last year and saw thousands of acres of new cotton fields irrigated by water from the Atatürk Dam, providing jobs for numerous peasants and bringing many new cotton-processing factories to the area, along with prosperity to local cities like Urfa and Gaziantep.

Turkish industry has developed rapidly without Iraqi oil for a decade and a half, and Turkey will not need oil from Iraq in the foreseeable future, as it continues to convert from oil to natural gas and to expand the import of both fossil fuels from the Caucasus, Russia, and Central Asia. Turkey would like to see an early end to sabotage attacks so the pipeline from Kirkuk could function, but this would create a win-win situation for both countries: Iraq could export its oil easily through Turkey’s well-equipped facility at Ceyhan on the Mediterranean, and the Turks would pick up a nice chunk of pipeline royalties.

Neither, as Alwash suggests, can Iraq count on Turkey as a future source of electricity. Unhappily, Turkish authorities have concluded they will face an electricity crunch in less than a decade, despite the contribution of hydroelectric power, and are planning to develop a nuclear-power capability to meet the shortfall.

Turkey recognizes that it will have to act responsibly on the issue of water distribution. No responsible Turkish politician would today speak in the extreme terms former President Süleyman Demirel used in 1992, noted in your article. If nothing else, Turkey recognizes Syria and Iraq as splendid export and investment opportunities for Turkish entrepreneurs and is eager to maintain good relations with both. That the parties involved do not agree on what acting responsibly might mean is unfortunate, but could be resolved through effective international negotiation.

FRANK RETTENBERG ’52
San Rafael, Calif.

DANIEL PIPES AND “ISLAMISM”

Congratulations to author Janet Tassel and to Harvard Magazine for “Militant about ‘Islamism’” (January-February, page 38), that sets forth the thesis of Daniel Pipes that militant Islam (Islamism)—not Islam and not “terrorism”—is the problem and that traditional, moderate Islam is the answer that needs maxi-
mum support and encouragement by the civilized world. While Harvard has thankfully avoided the “beyond the fringe” excesses of the departments of Middle East studies at Columbia and several other major universities and colleges, even at Harvard it is exceptional to see such a fair and balanced exposition of an honest and rational approach to defining the problem and seeking the intelligent solution.

Peter L. Malkin ’55, J.D. ’58
New York City

I am sure there have been articles in the magazine in the past about hate-mongering, repugnant personages, but somehow I missed reading them. You included this particular vicious human specimen in this issue, and I wonder why.

Kathryn L. Wilk, A.B.E. ’78
Marblehead, Mass.

Pipes’s agenda is clearly to intimidate and silence those in academia with whom he disagrees, and he employs sinister methods to do so. You should be more discerning than to publish this kind of anti-intellectual tabloid garbage.

Leila Kawar ’98
Brooklyn

At my recent forty-fifth reunion, several of the speakers expressed the view that there is no important clash between the Western world and the world of Islam. I am no political theorist or economist, but my common sense tells me that: (1) we have fundamental differences in values; (2) many leaders in the Arab world are teaching an entire generation of young people that their values are repugnant and should be eliminated; (3) the number of people and nations that are involved is huge; (4) these nations have a vast array of means to bring down our system, ranging from control of our vital resources to dispatching large numbers of immigrants to live here and potentially disrupt our political process.

Pipes’s views on militant Islamism seem very much on target to me. I cannot understand how objective and rational persons who live in the United States and hold lovingly yet tenaciously to our democratic system can blithely dismiss them.

Daniel Musher ’59
Houston

I do not expect anything but ideological extremism from Daniel Pipes. What I did not expect is the promotional profile of him in Harvard Magazine. As an American Muslim and civil-rights lawyer, I was appalled.

The author quoted Pipes vilifying several prominent American Muslim organizations as “militant,” “totalitarian,” and “Wahhabi.” Despite these defamatory accusations, you quote not a single representative of any of these organizations—or of the American Muslim community at large—in response. Surely, simple fairness requires that when you provide a platform for modern-day red-baiting, you give an opportunity for those targeted to speak for themselves.

While Pipes claims to separate moderates from militants, he regularly condemns as militant a broad segment of the American Muslim community, including many on the basis of guilt by association, and others based on their forceful defense of civil rights. Historian Ellen Schrecker wrote in her account of McCarthyism that although Senator McCarthy could not prove that individuals he accused were communist, he succeeded by making them controversial. “And by the early 1950s, controversy was almost as damaging to the men and women tainted by it as communism.” We live in a similar time, where charges of religious extremism tarnish the reputations of American Muslims regardless of their veracity. In this context, Harvard Magazine’s casual repetition of such charges was irresponsible and unfair.

The sidebar, “Questions for a Friend,” adapted from an article by Pipes purporting to provide guidance on “separating enemy from friend,” was even more chilling. Whether or not intended by your editors, the sidebar promoted the message that every Muslim is a potential militant who ought to be subjected to interroga-
tion. In today’s America, Muslims regularly face questioning by law enforcement authorities at airports, in our homes, and at work. Our loyalty, and even our respect for human life, is constantly challenged. It is frightening that you would compound the inquisition by encouraging your readers to test whether their Muslim peers are “friends” or “enemies.”

Finally, your article said next to nothing about Pipes’s advocacy of a rollback of civil rights for Muslims in this country. Pipes has long advocated intense profiling of the Muslim community and denounced civil-liberties advocates as sympathetic to terrorism. Indeed, shortly after your article was published, Pipes wrote that he was “encouraged” by a recent Cornell University study showing that almost half of Americans polled believed that the government should curtail civil liberties of Muslims. Pipes also came out publicly in support of the Japanese internment. Those statements were only the latest demonstration of his hostility to civil rights.

Shirin Sinnar ‘98
Milpitas, Calif.

Personally, I’d like to be Daniel Pipes’s friend. I take at face value his “enormous respect” for my faith as a Muslim, and I certainly respect his faith as a “Jewish conservative.” But, gosh, I hope he likes my answers to his “Questions for a Friend.” I’m not sure he will like my answers to some of them because, in keeping with Socrates, revered both in Western and Islamic intellectual history, I might be tempted to answer with questions of my own. If we were to meet someday, maybe our conversation would go something like this:

Ij: Hello, Dr. Pipes.
DP: Is jihad, meaning a form of warfare, acceptable in today’s world?
Ij: Do you mean “jihad” as defined by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) or as defined by Osama bin Laden?
DP: Do you accept the laws of a majority non-Muslim government and unreservedly pledge allegiance to that government?
Ij: I do my best to obey the laws of this government, but do you think it is moral or even reasonable to pledge allegiance unreservedly to any government?
DP: Do Muslims have anything to learn from the West?
I: I sure have learned a lot from the West. Do you think the West has anything to learn from Islam?

DP: Do you agree that institutions accused of funding terrorism should be shut down?

I: Do you deny that such institutions are entitled to due process?

DP: Do you accept that Western countries are majority-Christian and secular or do you seek to transform them into majority-Muslim countries ruled by Islamic Law?

I: Do you accept that non-Western countries may adopt legal systems different from our own, or do you seek to transform them through invasion or occupation if necessary?

I'm hopeful he'd respond with still more questions. Danny, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Imran Javaid '00
Charlottesville, Va.

Pipes is right on target when it comes to radical Islam. Having wrapped up that subject, though, he should turn his attention to the mirror-image religious militants who take their inspiration from such passages as Deuteronomy 7:1-5 (“thou shalt...utterly destroy [competing tribes]; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them”) and 20:16 (“thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth”), and Numbers 33:50-56 (“then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you...[and] ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein; for I have given you the land to possess it”). What would Pipes say, after all, if he encountered such a program of war, ethnic cleansing, and genocide in the Koran, rather than the Bible?

John Hellegers, L '69
Jenkintown, Pa.

Those gullible enough to believe Pipes's assertion that he supports moderate Islam may consult his own website www.meforum.org/article/pipes/2309 on his support for the curtailing of the civil rights of all Muslim Americans as a means of identifying possible terrorists lurking in their midst. As his title suggests (“Why the Japanese Internment Still Matters”), Pipes agrees with right-wing Fox News Channel contributor Michelle Malkin, who has recently published In Defense of Internment: The Case for ‘Racial Profiling’ in World War II and the War on Terror. Pipes's article necessarily implies support for internment of Muslim Americans as a potentially acceptable recourse in the current situation, since he thinks it was unobjectionable in the case of Japanese Americans in the 1940s.

The rigor of Pipes's thought is apparent from his uses of the Cornell opinion survey that recently found some 44 percent of Americans to be, like him, in support of profiling, monitoring, and infiltrating the (lawful) organizations of Muslim Americans, a statistic he finds “encouraging.” To many of us those survey results are of course deeply disturbing, not for what they say about the terrorist perils that American Islam poses for us, but rather for what will indubitably and emphatically happen to civil rights, and not just those of Muslim Americans, in the (likely) event the unimaginable in fact happens. I don't know whether Pipes is being disingenuous or deluded when he writes of the Cornell survey, “Also en-

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LETTERS  
(continued from page 8)

couraging, the survey finds the more people follow TV news, the more likely they are to support these common-sense steps. Those who are best informed about current issues, in other words, are also the most sensible about adopting self-evident defensive measures.” That is a gross misreading, willfully so or otherwise, of the survey’s results, as of reality. Erik Nisbet, senior research associate of the Survey Research Institute in Cornell’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations, concluded, “The more attention paid to television news [the meaning of this adjective-noun phrase is apparent to anyone who has been thinking for the last three years], the more you fear terrorism, and you are more likely to favor restrictions on civil liberties.” Few or none of my undergraduates would be fooled by Pipes’s three-card-monte shift identifying those who “follow television news” in one sentence with “those who are best informed about current issues” in the next, rather than with those most fearful of terrorism precisely because of television news’s remorseless dumbing-down and fear-mongering of the last few years. Maybe Pipes needs to get back into a classroom, where he can test the logic and plausibility of his views before sending them out into the world.

Richard F. Thomas  
Professor of Greek and Latin  
Cambridge

The author of your otherwise excellent article on Pipes errs in her assertion that he is shunned by academia. I appreciate and applaud his activities. In my view his detractors, including the apologists for militant Islam and Israel-bashing from my own department whose views are cited, have lost the good of the intellect. Lest any reader think the latter reproach mild, I might remind him that it is Dante Alighieri’s characterization of the damned.

James R. Russell  
Mashtots professor of Armenian studies  
Cambridge

SOCIETY’S GATEKEEPER

Professor Warner Berthoff does a service to the Harvard community by reminding us of the scholarly pursuits and standards of George Ticknor (“Vita,” January-February, page 48). On the lighter side, Ticknor contributed to the good humor of his fellow Brahmins by his chilling influence as the unofficial gatekeeper of Boston society. The imposing mansion that Berthoff mentions came to be known as the “Ticknor iceberg.” So it was that, as Van Wyck Brooks notes, the ever-witty Thomas G. Appleton, when asked where he had spent an afternoon, replied, “I’ve been calling on the Jungfrau, the Tête Noire, and the Mère de Glace”—Professor and Mrs. Ticknor and their daughter Anna.

Robert W. Haney ’56, B.D. ’59  
Cambridge

MONEY MANAGERS’ DEPARTURE

The recent decision by Harvard Management Company chief Jack R. Meyer and colleagues to depart the school [see page 59] is a sad day for the University. The performance of the endowment under Meyer’s tenure has been remarkable in its consistent outperformance. He has been worth every penny and then some (“Compensation Flap Continued,” September-October 2004, page 64). William Strauss and his dissenting group of alumni who put some of the most public pressure on Meyer should all be ashamed of themselves. Best wishes to Meyer—may your annual income never be published in the Boston Globe again!

Michael Barry, M.B.A. ’99  
Greensboro, N.C.

ACCESS TO HARVARD

I applaud President Lawrence H. Summers’s sentiment on broadening access to Harvard (“Committing to Equal Opportunity,” January-February, page 83), yet his actions will hardly send “the strongest possible message” he says they will.

Eliminating tuition for those families making less than $40,000 annually is a nice gesture (and probably long overdue), but how about some concrete commitment to shape Harvard’s undergraduate student body to better reflect the society it ostensibly serves? As Summers writes, 10 percent of undergraduates at elite schools such as Harvard come from the bottom half of the income scale. So how about an institutional commitment to (1) concretely measure Harvard students’ socioeconomic status, and (2) move it toward a specific goal, one that creates more seats for students from poor or middle-class families, in a set time frame? Then we can talk about how to get there. In the absence of such clear goals, talking about programs, outreach, etc., is just rhetoric and symbol.

I understand why there is no firm commitment to opening up seats for poor or middle-class students: it means saying no to Harvard’s number-one constituency, wealthy families. But it would be this “no” and a corresponding “yes” to a larger proportion of poor and middle-class students, that would truly send the strongest possible message. Does Summers have the courage of his convictions?

Seattle

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

In a commentary on “The Future of Marriage” (November-December 2004, page 38) in the January-February issue (“Letters,” page 5), Jonathan Reiff ’60 wrote that “gay men are highly susceptible to AIDS.” His logic from this faulty premise resulted in the following declarations: (1) “...gay marriage will require employers’ health plans to pay the devastating costs of a voluntarily incurred health problem for the new gay spouse of the employee”; (2) “All the rest of us will pay higher premiums”; (3) “Small plans could fold if required to accept whatever sick partner a gay person might marry.”

According to Center for Disease Control statistics, fewer than 2.5 percent of gay men in America are HIV positive. Since 97 percent plus are disease free, this dramatically contradicts Reiff’s assertion. Furthermore, it has been shown that inclusion of AIDS patients in health plans does not much change premiums for all the other enrollees, since such patients...
are now, and would be if gay marriage were allowed, a tiny, tiny minority of all enrollees. Finally, Reiff has chosen to ignore the fact that most small plans exclude pre-existing conditions for new enrollees, so his assumption that a small plan might be required to “accept whatever sick person a gay person might marry” is nothing short of venal.

Reiff states that there is no reason same-sex partners should get Federal Code benefits since they cannot have children and both partners can work. Overlooking the fact that one million children in this country are being raised in gay households, is he suggesting that any heterosexual union in which both partners work should not receive these benefits?

Reiff does hit an important note when he writes that “It is all about the money, honey.” Yes, financial benefits are a very important part of equality, including but not limited to Social Security benefits, the spousal inheritance-tax exemption, Medicare payments, and pension benefits. But Reiff is wrong to imply that gay activists are somehow hiding this. On the contrary, it is a critical part of the package. Thus the question remains: because all of the thousands of pages of marriage law in this country speak to two people only, why shouldn’t two people of the same gender be allowed equal treatment financially?

Walter T. Burr ’84
Los Angeles

Highwheelers and fashion

“Highwheel Harvard,” by David Herlihy (November-December 2004, page 60), reminded me of how Alfred Church Lane, A.B. 1883, Ph.D. ’88, referred to highwheels as an example of the rapidity of changing fashions. He said that during his undergraduate years the men on highwheelers had looked so grand and sportsmanlike that the first time he saw someone riding a highwheeler look like a monkey on a stick!”

Ursula B. Marvin, Ph.D. ’69
Cambridge

Thinking small

“Thinking small,” by Jonathan Shaw (January-February, page 50), which describes the work of Federico Capasso and others, is something of a breakthrough for Harvard Magazine. It’s not easy to make really advanced technology intelligible to your usual readers. However, as significant as Capasso’s work has been, it is a real stretch to credit him with having been the first to have designed a new material.

His work is based (as best as I can recall) on the pioneering superlattice publications by Nobel prize winner Leo Esaki and his team at IBM Research, which included Webster Howard, a 1962 Harvard Ph.D. graduate in the Division of Engineering and Applied Physics. This work, which dates back to the 1970s, surely included the design and fabrication of new materials.

Robert Myers ’58, Ph.D. ’64
New York City

Editor’s note: “Materials design has a long history in several major industrial laboratories,” says Venkatesh Narayanamurti, dean of Harvard’s Division of Engineering and Applied Sciences, “but with the quantum cascade laser, Capasso took materials design to a new level. The QCL is a unipolar semiconductor laser and is recognized as both a unique invention and a materials tour de force. It goes well beyond the original work of Esaki and others on superlattices, which started in the 1960s and ’70s.”

Football’s winning ways

Your account of the perfect Harvard football season (“A Perfect 10,” by Cleat,” January-February, page 78), with an action shot of Ryan Fitzpatrick, brought joy to this longtime Harvard football fan. It is delightful to read of four victories in a row over Yale, nine in a row over Princeton, two undefeated seasons in the last four, 11 Ivy League titles since 1956, and so on.

To these happy statistics, let me add another. As a result of this season’s seven league wins, Harvard now has a winning record against every other Ivy League football team since league play was formalized in 1936. The Harvard records in wins, losses, and ties against Ivy opponents are:

Brown: 32-17-0
Penn: 29-10-1
Columbia: 40-8-1
Princeton: 24-23-2
Cornell: 24-23-2
Yale: 25-23-1
Dartmouth: 25-22-2

Robert B. Spindle ’52
Denver

E.e. cummings (continued from page 53)
towed away. As Sawyer-Laucanno tells the story, the woman, “thinking she was doing a good deed…rang the Reverend at three in the morning to tell him his car had been seized by the Boston police.”

This was a rude awakening in more senses than one. In the ensuing fight, Edward Cummings wailed to his errant son, “I thought I had given birth to a god.” This seems like a peculiar bit of hyperbole coming from a minister. But even if Cummings was exaggerating his father’s reaction in retrospect, it is true that Cummings senior and junior often thought about each other in quasi-blasphemous terms. In his novel The Enormous Room, which details his experiences in a French detention camp during World War I, Cummings printed an introduction by his father, which turns the son into an unmistakably Christ-like figure:

He was lost by the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Corps. He was officially dead as a result of official misinformation. He was entombed by the French Government. It took the better part of three months to find him and bring him back to life with the help of powerful and willing friends on both sides of the Atlantic. And if Estlin was God the Son, it was only natural for Edward to become God the Father. “My father,” the poet recalled as an adult, “is the principal figure of my earliest remembered life; when he cradled me in his arms, I reposed in the bosom of God Himself; when I rode on God’s shoulder I was king of the world. His illimitable love was the axis of my being." It must have been difficult for this God to learn that his only son was, in fact, all too human.

But it was a necessary shock, and it didn’t permanently fracture their relationship. To the end of his life, Cummings declared his profound respect for his father. Certainly any father would be proud to receive the kind of encomium Cummings delivered in one of his Norton lectures:

He was a New Hampshire man, 6 foot 2, a crack shot & a famous fly-fisherman & a first-rate sailor (his sloop was named The Actress) & a woodsman who could find his way through forests primeval without a compass & a canoeist who’d still-paddle you up to a deer without ruffling the surface of a pond & an