WASHINGTON — I CAN’T wait to read the book W. won’t write.

Not since Beyoncé dropped a new digital album online overnight with no warning or fanfare has there been such a successful pop-up arts project.

Crown Publishers startled everyone Wednesday by announcing that the 68-year-old W. has written a “personal biography” of his 90-year-old father, due out in November.

I guess he ran out of brush to clear.

“Never before has a President told the story of his father, another President, through his own eyes and in his own words,” the Crown news release crowed, noting that W.’s “Decision Points” was the best-selling presidential memoir ever and promising that 43’s portrait of 41 will be “heartfelt, intimate, and illuminating.”

It is certainly illuminating to learn that W. has belatedly decided to bathe his father in filial appreciation.

Like his whimsical paintings and post-presidency discretion, this sweet book will no doubt help reset his image in a more positive way.

But the intriguing question is: Is he doing it with an eye toward spinning the future or out of guilt for the past?

Just as his nude self-portraits are set in a shower and a bath, this book feels like an exercise in washing away the blunders of Iraq, Afghanistan and Katrina.

Are these efforts at self-expression a way to cleanse himself and exorcise the ghosts of all those who died and suffered for no reason? It’s redolent of Lady Macbeth, guilty over regicide and unable to stop rubbing her hands as though she’s washing them, murmuring “Out, damned spot!”

But some spots don’t come out.

I know that George H.W. Bush and his oldest son love each other. But it has been a complicated and difficult relationship and a foolishly and fatefully compartmentalized one.

Even though both Bushes protested that they didn’t want to be put on the couch, historians will spend the rest of history puzzling over the Oedipal push and pull that led America into disasters of such magnitude.
It would be awesome if the book revealed the truth about the fraught relationship between the gracious father and bristly son, if it were titled “Mano a Mano: I Wish I’d Listened to My Dad.”

Because, after all, never in history has a son diminished, disregarded and humiliated a father to such disastrous effect. But W. won’t write any of the real stuff we all want to hear.

The saga began when W. was 26 and drinking. After a rowdy night, the scamp came to his parents’ home in D.C. and smashed his car into a neighbor’s garbage can. His dad upbraided him.

“You wanna go mano a mano right here?” W. shot back to his shocked father.

It was hard, no doubt, to follow the same path as his father, in school, in sport, in war and in work, but always come up short. He also had to deal with the chilly fact that his parents thought Jeb should be president, rather than the raffish Roman candle, W.

Yet W. summoned inner strength and played it smart and upended his family’s expectations, getting to the governor’s mansion and the Oval Office before his younger brother. But the top job sometimes comes with a tape worm of insecurity. Like Lyndon Johnson with hawkish Kennedy aides, W. surrounded himself with the wrong belligerent advisers and allowed himself to be manipulated through his fear of being called a wimp, as his father had been by “Newsweek.”

When he ran for Texas governor in 1994 and president in 2000, W. basically cut his father adrift, instead casting himself as the son and heir of Ronald Reagan, the man who bested his father. “Don’t underestimate what you can learn from a failed presidency,” he told his Texas media strategist about his father.

His White House aides made a point of telling reporters that Junior was tougher than his father, pointedly noting he was from West Texas and knew how to deal with “the streets of Laredo.”

He was driven to get the second term his father had not had. And he was driven — and pushed by Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld — to do what his dad had shied away from, toppling Saddam Hussein. This, even if it meant drumming up a phony casus belli.

He never consulted his dad, even though H.W. was the only president ever to go to war with Saddam. He treated the former president and foreign affairs junkie like a blankie, telling Fox News’s Brit Hume that, rather than advice on issues, he preferred to get phone calls from his dad saying “I love you, son,” or “Hang in there, son.”

And he began yelling when his father’s confidante and co-author, Brent Scowcroft, wrote a Wall Street Journal op-ed piece cautioning that invading Iraq
wouldn’t be “a cakewalk” and could be destabilizing to the region and mean “a large-scale, long-term military occupation.”

He never wanted to hear the warning that his father was ready to give, so allergic to being a wimp that he tried, against all odds, history and evidence, to be a deus ex machina. He dissed his father on Iraq, saying “he cut and run early,” and he naïvely allowed himself to be bullied by his dark father, Cheney, who pressed him on Saddam: “Are you going to take care of this guy, or not?”

As Jon Meacham, the historian who is writing a biography of Bush père, wrote in Time a week ago, H.W. was a man who knew that Woodrow Wilson was wrong in thinking that a big war could end all wars.

“The first Bush was closer to the mark when he spoke, usually privately, of how foreign policy was about ‘working the problem,’ not finding grand, all-encompassing solutions to intrinsically messy questions,” Meacham wrote.

So now, symbolically washing his hands, W.’s putting out this cute little disingenuous book about his father that won’t mention that he bollxed up the globe, his presidency, and marred Jeb’s chances, all because he wasn’t listening to his father or “working the problem.”

W.’s fear of being unmanned led to America actually being unmanned. We’re in a crouch now. His rebellion against and competition with Bush senior led directly to President Obama struggling at a news conference Friday on the subject of torture. After 9/11, Obama noted, people were afraid. “We tortured some folks,” he said. “We did some things that were contrary to our values.”

And yet the president stood by his C.I.A. director, John Brennan, a cheerleader for torture during the Bush years, who continues to do things that are contrary to our values.

Obama defended the C.I.A. director even though Brennan blatantly lied to the Senate when he denied that the C.I.A. had hacked into Senate Intelligence Committee computers while staffers were on agency property investigating torture in the W. era. And now the administration, protecting a favorite of the president, is heavily censoring the torture report under the pretense of national security.

The Bushes did not want to be put on the couch, but the thin-skinned Obama jumped on the couch at his news conference, defensively whining about Republicans, Putin, Israel and Hamas and explaining academically and anemically how he’s trying to do the right thing but it’s all beyond his control.

Class is over, professor. Send in the president.