

spinning out of control.

No doubt some scientists will view this book as sensationalistic. Plainly, huge advances have been made, or are just beginning to take place, in identifying and curing diseases that have resisted treatment. Utilitarians have no problem with what is taking place; thus Robert Wright, in *The New Republic*, even defended the apparent Chinese practice of selling the organs of executed prisoners as a sensible measure that shouldn't cause a flurry of indignation. In the vein of numerous recent books on privacy, the authors seek to sound alarms about where society is headed. But some measure of alarmism is perhaps justified when ethical boundaries remain murky and scientific progress has outpaced our ability to comprehend it. In their conclusion, Andrews and Nelkin envision a time when genetic testing becomes mandatory and our DNA becomes the Social Security number of the future. However concerned Andrews and Nelkin may be about the direction of the \$17 billion biotechnology industry, they are seldom less than elucidatory, and their tone remains calm and convincing.

At the outset, Andrews and Nelkin show how bodies have become a booming business. They tell the story of John Moore, a Seattle businessman, who fell ill with hairy-cell leukemia and went to a specialist at the UCLA School of Medicine. He underwent surgery and thought he was cured. For the next seven years, the UCLA doctor insisted that he return periodically to Los Angeles for further tests. Moore believed the tests were necessary to monitor his condition. But that wasn't the whole story. His physician, it turns out, was patenting unique chemicals in Moore's blood and setting up contracts with a Boston company worth an estimated \$3 million. According to Andrews and Nelkin, "Sandoz, the Swiss pharmaceutical company, paid a reported \$15 million for the right to develop the cell line taken from Moore—which the doctors had named the Mo-cell line."

Is this a horror story? The California supreme court didn't think so. In 1990, it ruled that hospitals had to inform patients that their tissue was being used, but that Moore and others

had no right to profits. The doctor and the biotechnology company that took the financial risk to extract something of value from his body deserved them. Venture capital investment had to be encouraged. But, as the authors observe, the matter is not settled there. A host of other questions surround the harvesting of tissue. For example, "Doctors may—and do—subject patients to greater physical risks than are strictly necessary for the patient's own health care in

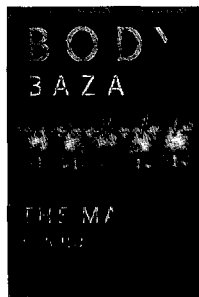
order to obtain valuable tissue. Certain risky procedures can enhance the quality or quantity of the tissue recovered."

Indeed, tissue has become so desirable that bodysnatching has apparently made something of a comeback. In the 19th century, grave robbery and the murder of beggars took place. Anatomy departments would pay between \$10 and \$35 for a body—more than a worker could earn in a week. Now, a brisk business is taking place in organs and tissue. According to Andrews and Nelkin, "[s]cores of coroners, morgue workers, and physicians have removed

organs and other tissue without consent to sell for transplantation. Organs have even been stolen from the victims of accidents, such as the devastating earthquake in Turkey in 1999?

The litany of horror stories that Andrews and Nelkin produce does, however, leave one wondering how widespread the problem is. Hard numbers are few and far between. Still, the sheer variety of episodes that they describe, coupled with the obvious financial incentives, suggest that much mischief is taking place in the medical world. It may not have been their intention, but Andrews and Nelkin have provided another good reason to avoid hospitals.

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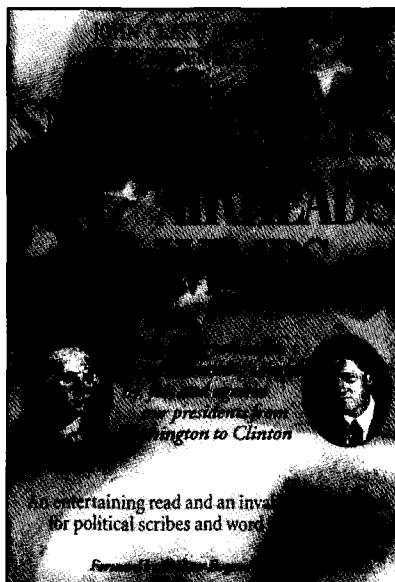
BODY BAZAAR:
The Market for Human Tissue
in the Biotechnology Age
by Lori Andrews
and Dorothy Nelkin
Crown Books, \$24.00

Weird Science

By Joe Dempsey

IN 1935, AS CONGRESS BEGAN investigating lung disease among workers digging silica at Hawk's Nest, W. Va., an organization known as the Air Hygiene Foundation emerged to question the disease's severity, suggesting that quack doctors who diagnosed workers with the disease deprived them of their only livelihood.

AHF's campaign, described by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber in *Trust Us, We're Experts! How Industry*



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Manipulates Science and Gambles With Your Future, succeeded on two levels. First, it downplayed silicosis so well that it has been until recently regarded as a disease of the past (even though the National Institute for National Safety and Health estimates that 100,000 workers are still at risk).

Secondly, since AHF appeared to be independent and scholarly but was actually funded by industry, it paved the way for what public relations professionals today call the third-party technique—funding a seemingly independent expert or non-profit organization to dispute findings that may harm an industry.

Working from news reports, interviews, PR industry promotional materials, and many leaked internal documents, this follow-up to 1995's *Toxic Sludge is Good For You: Lies, Damn Lies, and the Public Relations Industry* includes countless examples of the third-party technique influencing (distorting) debate on public issues ranging from bankruptcy reform and the Microsoft anti-trust case to the potential dangers of genetically modified foods.

But Potemkin nonprofits are only one problem. There's plenty of other biased and distorted information out there: The book includes tales of questionable scientific rebuttals and legitimate university scientists having to tailor—or bury—research to suit the ends of their corporate sponsors. Opposing a global warming treaty, Sen. Chuck Nagel (R-Neb.) cites the Oregon Petition, supposedly signed by 15,000 scientists skeptical of global warming's severity. To demonstrate how easily names could be added to the list, environmental activists added Dr. Red Wine, John Grisham, and Spice Girl Geri Halliwell.

Rampton and Stauber pay close attention to the interplay of media, corporations, the public, and to a lesser degree, the government. But since they write more to expose than to argue, they sometimes get a little too wrapped up in the tales they're exposing. The

middle third of the book, for example, examines the ways in which corporations analyze risk, but would have benefited from a summary of conclusions.

On the whole, as the authors consider the ways in which PR maneuvering hinders a genuine discussion of problems like global warming, the reader gets a good summary of contemporary environmental problems, and a few themes emerge.

They support the precautionary principle, which advocates using safety measures when a new product or drug may plausibly pose serious risks that haven't been definitely determined. Accountability is crucial. Journalists have a responsibility to thoroughly investigate the sources of information and perspectives they write about; scientists should disclose conflicts of interest—financial connections in particular—when commenting on matters critical to industry.

Government alone will not always solve these problems: "With respect to the planting of genetically modified crops, the U.S. government has done just about everything except help drive the tractor," Rampton and Stauber write. Some Clinton environmental and trade appointees left to serve on Monsanto's board; they in turn were replaced by executives from Monsanto and other companies. Elsewhere, some government technology experts are like the Sorcerer's Apprentice: "They are enchanted with the possibilities of this power, but often lack the wisdom necessary to perceive its dangers."

What about the "good guy" nonprofits, those that aren't fronts for industry? When Rampton and Stauber write about the Center for Science in the Public Interest, which monitors fat and sugar content in food, the authors seem to admire the organization's media savviness, even sharing a snappy sound bite—fettuccine Alfredo is "a heart attack on a plate." Elsewhere they acknowledge that some environmentalists use the same scare tactics as industry, and that some public interest groups can cook statistics as well as industry. They chalk this up to "the

constraints and visual nature of television." But they rule neither on whether the white hats should aim for higher standards, nor on whether these tactics are acceptable when used for ends nobler than protecting market capitalization.

The final chapter, which calls for greater citizen participation in public policy issues, seems to explain why. Here, the authors list tips for seeing through corporate-funded think tanks and questions one might ask a local university professor about the integrity of a corporation's scientific study. They support the "citizens' juries" some nonprofits create by convening a panel of average citizens to hear testimony from experts and pass judgment on public policy issues. They call activism "a path to enlightenment" that "brings us into personal contact with other people who are informed, passionate, and altruistic in their commitment to help make the world a better place."

A bit romantic, perhaps, but their commitment to this type of involvement is admirable. They wouldn't want Americans to simply sit back and watch as advocacy groups battle industry via press releases and sound bites.

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TRUST US, WE'RE EXPERTS:
How Industry Manipulates Science and Gambles With Your Futures
by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber
J. P. Tarcher, \$24.95

Forgotten Founder

By Michael Waldman

HISTORIANS WHO WRITE ABOUT John Adams often fall in love with him. In part, that's because he is such good copy. In his private letters, he is opinionated, grouchy, neurotic, and scathing about himself and others. (Think George Costanza in a powdered wig.) He is also the overlooked hero of the American Revolution. There are no marble monuments to John Adams on the Mall. But it was Adams who picked George Washington to head the Continental Army, and who chose Thomas Jefferson to write the Declaration of Independence.

Adams himself endlessly fretted that he might be ignored by posterity. "The essence of the whole," he once wrote, "will be that Dr. Franklin's elec-